

## Are We Awake?

### Scripture Background

*This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.*

We are nearing the end of the church's liturgical year, the last Sunday of which is November 22. (The new year for the church begins on the first Sunday of Advent, which is November 29 this year.) Always near the end of the church year, the readings turn toward reminders that we must stay awake and alert to the Lord's coming. All three readings today speak to the call for us to be patient, vigilant, and hopeful as we seek wisdom, look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and watch for Jesus' coming into our world.

### Opening Prayer

*Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:*

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gracious God, help us to know you and trust you deeply, so that we can continue the work of your son, Jesus, with courage and grace.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

*Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.*

*Ask:* What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

*Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.*

### Reflections on the Reading

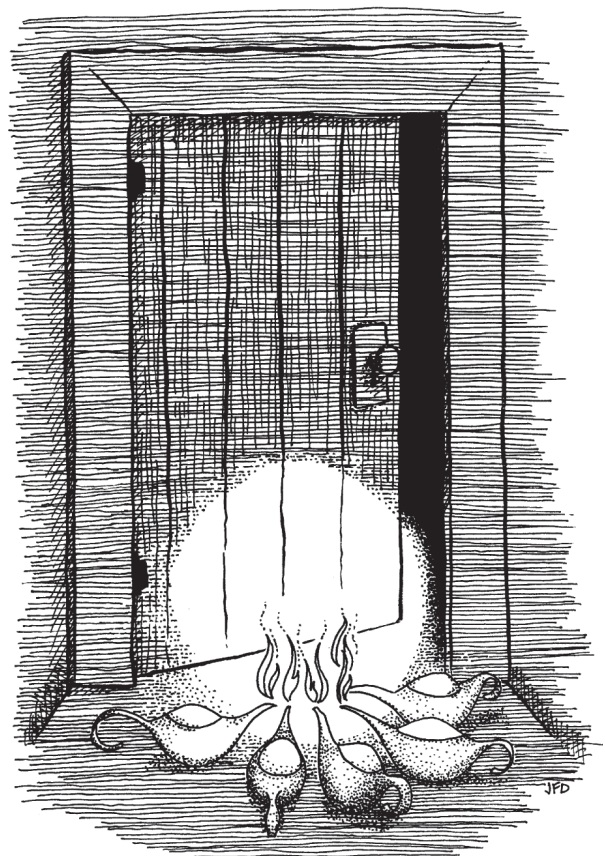
*Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:*

The wedding customs of Jesus' time may be unfamiliar to us, but the point of the parable today isn't the details about how wedding ceremonies worked. The parable focuses on Jesus' teaching to remain alert and vigilant as we await the full coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.

November 8, 2020 • Year A

**32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

- ▶ Wisdom 6:12-16 - Wisdom for those who seek
- ▶ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - Resurrection of the dead
- ▶ Matthew 25:1-13 - Parable of the ten virgins



There is debate about whether this parable points to our need to be watchful for Jesus' second coming at the end of time or is making another point. We know from other New Testament writings that St. Paul, Jesus' other apostles, and the whole early Christian community expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. The second reading today gives us Paul's version of how he imagined this happening. "The Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven..." (Thess. 4:16). The early Christians understood this parable as the need for vigilance for the end of the world.

Perhaps that isn't the meaning of it for us today, however. Assuming Jesus doesn't return in our lifetimes, what might he be urging us to prepare for? What are we called to stay awake to? Many of Jesus' teachings focused on the Kingdom of God, which he repeatedly said "is at hand." Perhaps that is the invitation to us—to be alert to how the Kingdom of God is breaking into our world today, right where we find ourselves. As we near the end of a tumultuous 2020, we may be challenged to see how God is active in the world right now. Yet Jesus, too, lived in a world racked by racial and economic injustice, military domination, and sickness and suffering, yet he still saw ways God was active and working. Can we?

## Questions for Discussion

*Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.*

- ① Do you ever find yourself wondering about how and when the world will end? If so, how does thinking about it change the way you live?
- ② What might God be inviting you to be more alert and awake to in your life now?
- ③ Despite all the bad news in our world this year, how do you see the Kingdom of God breaking in?

## Closing Prayer

*Pray the following aloud together:*

Lord, help us to see you more clearly, love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly.

We ask this in your name,

Amen.