

Our song to sing or to read: Lord I Lift Your Name On High

Lord I lift your name on high
Lord I love to sing your praises
I'm so glad you're in my life
I'm so glad you came to save us.



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You came from heaven to earth
to show the way
From the earth to the cross
my debt to pay
From the cross to the grave
from the grave to the sky
Lord, I lift your name on high

A Prayer



Our Father in heaven
we ask that you help us
keep Jesus in first place in our lives
so that we don't become distracted by the
world
and the unimportant things around us.
We acknowledge that we need your help
through the Holy Spirit.
Thank you for your promises to us.
We ask these things in the name of Jesus
our Lord.
Amen

With thanks to David Pattinson for preparing today's reflection



Church in a Bag

8 November 2020

Dubbo Uniting Church



Call to worship

Let us come to this time of sharing in the knowledge that we have differences, but we do share in a common yearning for acceptance. We all enjoy some individuality. As a sheep farmer, herding merinos with a good dog's help, it would occasionally result in one bold sheep breaking from the mob and then becoming fearful of being alone - being left out. When the sheep realised its danger, it usually returned to the safety of the mob. In the Matthew reading today Jesus tells a parable about being left out, being watchful and being prepared.

A Prayer

Great God of wonder
we pause our schedules to spend time with you
time out to refocus.
We give thanks for the many benefits of living in Australia.
We give thanks for your love, faithfulness
and the example you gave of servanthood in Jesus' life and teachings.
Help us to better understand what life is about
and your desires for us.
Sometimes we are full
of enthusiasm for you
and at other times you
seem distant.
Help us now hear you
and connect with you
and each other
as we read this
reflection.



Reading: Matthew 25:1–13

The Parable of the Ten Virgins



Reflection

Harper's Study Bible explains the teaching of this parable as the contrast between watchful preparation and careless security. The whole idea of the parable is it indicates that Christians should watch, be ready and be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

In way of explanation of this parable, the bridegroom is Jesus and the bride is the Church. Of the Ten Virgins, five were prepared and five were unprepared. All were expecting the bridegroom but only five were ready. This parable is a stark and blunt reminder that our preparation can be too late, and that we may be left out. A belief that is fairly common in society is that **all** will spend eternity in heaven. Jesus doesn't suggest this anywhere in his teaching, instead he is quite clear that this is not the case. Jesus told this parable a few days before his arrest and trial. The emphasis is on being ready; similar to the Guide and Scout motto which is "Be Prepared".

In today's old testament reading, Joshua 24: 1-3 and 14-25, Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land. He reminded them of their heritage and history, and the faithfulness of God. He warns them not to turn away from God nor to serve other gods. He reminds them of their blessings and challenges them to "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve". The Joshua and Matthew readings were both set just before the two leaders died and both contain warnings and advice.

Many times, as Jesus spoke, he said "*I tell you the truth*". He emphasises the profound things he told his listeners with these five words "*I tell you the truth*". His credibility was proven by things such as prophesy; angels being seen and heard at his birth; a voice declaring "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased"; and other miraculous signs and wonders. His teachings were so profound that the religious teachers no longer dared to query his knowledge of God and the accuracy of his teaching.

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment, his reply was, "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul and mind". This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second like it, "Love your neighbour as yourself".

So how does Jesus say we prepare?

- A** Acknowledge that He is who he says he is – the Son of God.
- B** Believe that He died to save us from the consequences of our wrong doings (from sin).
- C** Confess we have done wrong and turn away from our self-centredness to Jesus' way of life. Or, in the words of Albert Schweitzer, "Do something for somebody every day for which you do not get paid".

