

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 12, 2017

By Deacon Nick Thompson

There were five wise virgins and five foolish ones. The five foolish virgins come unprepared. They bring lamps but no oil. They do not think and so squander their time. The five wise virgins on the other hand plan ahead and make the best use of every moment. The wise virgins enter in to the wedding feast, the banquet of the Master's love. The foolish miss their opportunity. What does it mean to be foolish? If you look up synonyms for foolish in the thesaurus you find words like: stupid, idiotic, witless, brainless, vacuous, mindless, unintelligent, thoughtless, half-baked, harebrained, imprudent, incautious, injudicious, unwise, ill-advised. Wow! Foolish is an adjective that we should avoid in describing our friends if we want them to remain friends. I hope never to be described as foolish. So then what does it mean to be wise? Again the thesaurus lists wise as having: intelligence, sense, common sense, shrewdness, astuteness, smartness, judiciousness, judgment, prudence, circumspection, logic, rationale, rationality, soundness. This list sounds better. Being wise I can handle. So then, how can we best strive to become wise? Well we invest our time judiciously preparing for what matters. It brings to my mind George Banks in Mary Poppins singing to his son Michael concerning the world's values when little Michael simply wanted to feed the birds:

If you invest your tuppence wisely in the bank

Safe and sound

Soon that tuppence safely invested in the bank

Will compound

And you'll achieve that sense of conquest

As your affluence expands

In the hands of the directors

Who invest as propriety demands

Consider this, every day we are given 86,400 seconds to make the best use of that we can. Every night, God writes off as lost whatever portion of this time we have not used well or have wasted. Every second used for love of God and neighbor becomes grace and fills our' souls. In the bank of time, there are no balances and no overdrafts. Each day a

new account is opened for us. Each night, what remains is written off, lost, gone forever like water under a bridge. Every day's 86,400 seconds should be invested wisely in behaviors that will hold their value from day to day, quarter to quarter, year to year and especially in the beyond, heaven or hell. Lasting values need to be found, values like prudence, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and love so that we like Mary might become full of grace, might become saints. If we don't become saints while living we won't make it to heaven.

How much time do you and I have left to become saints? We really don't know. Death is everywhere: as normal as birth. It is after all the only guarantee in life. Recently, we have had members of our parish die suddenly; a 16-year-old girl in a car accident, a 61-year-old man with a massive heart attack. This week we lift up our prayer for the twenty-seven people massacred as they prayed in Sutherland Springs. In our American denial of death, we all like to think that sudden death happens to other people. There is no reason why it shouldn't happen to any of us. And you know what? It does. God never guarantees how much time, how many seconds, we each will have. The proper Christian attitude is not to deny death, but to prepare for it, not to fear death but to look forward to heaven. Do not live as if there is no tomorrow rather live as if death is the beginning of immortality. This is the wisdom behind the five bridesmaids who were prepared to enter the wedding reception. They didn't know when the bridegroom was coming, but they were ready and they entered in to the banquet.

So how do we prepare for immortality for what matters? Society today measures success based on the amount of stuff a person has. Pleasure, even fleeting pleasure, is the goal of life. We have all witnessed the crazies coming out in force with warnings of the end of the world only a few months away. Survivalists are preparing secret places where they hope to live for months or years after what they figure will be a devastating war, the Armageddon. They are gathering supplies. Ask yourselves, if it's the end of the world what good are supplies going to do us? We don't prepare for heaven by doing a lot of stuff or having a lot of stuff or fulfilling our bucket list. We are fools if we live like we are dying; rather than living like we are preparing for eternity.

Paul tells us to take an attitude of life that is completely different from the attitude of the world. *"We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep."* We prepare by nurturing the proper disposition, a Christian attitude of life, a resurrection attitude; By investing in grace, in the loving relationship between ourselves, God and our neighbor. We form and nourish our Christian disposition by continually communicating with the Lord and examining our life for opportunities to serve

others. We feed the hungry, lift-up the lowly and care for the sparrows in life. We pray daily. We all need time when we are with the Lord and freed of the distractions of life. If we have a family, then we have the additional responsibility to pray as a family every day. We plant and nurture within our families the healing properties of the sacrament of Reconciliation. We focus our prayer lives on our Sundays. On Sunday we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord and receive the Eucharist. That should be the primary focus of our week. The presence of Christ within us in this sacrament gives us the strength to be who we claim to be, Christians. Today's first reading speaks about wisdom. Wisdom is a way of life. The wise are always ready for the Lord because they are always united to him. The gospel lesson is simple this Sunday. Be like the wise virgins. Be ready to celebrate the banquet of the Lord's love. Let us make him, not the world, the one for whom our flesh pines and our soul thirsts. Let us use our next 86,400 seconds wisely. Let us change our stony hearts into loving hearts and sing a new song:

Because when you deposit prayer and sacrifice in your heart

Soon you'll see

That it blooms into grace of a generous amount

exponentially

And you'll achieve that sense of stature

As your influence expands

To the high grace filled strata

That the kingdom of God now commands