

**Stockton Road Church News**



**November 2023**



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| ***Mark 12: 30-31***  *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself”.*  |
| We are a union of Presbyterian and Congregational churches at the heart of Sunderland city life, growing from a past rich in mission and hospitality. We embrace this heritage utilising the Five Marks of Mission to guide and enable us to take forward current opportunities for mission and service. |

**Matthew 25:1-13 (Lectionary Reading for 12th -18th November 2023)**

In Matthew’s arrangement of Jesus’ last days, Jesus has spent some time speaking out against the religious leaders who are leading people astray, lamenting the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which is God’s dwelling place, and talking about the ‘end of the age’, noted elsewhere in today’s readings as the ‘day of the Lord’. Having spoken of persecution, war, famine and earthquake, he warns his hearers to be ready for what will come. Today’s parable of the bridesmaids illustrates the need for this.

The role of bridesmaids in weddings at that time was to escort the bride and groom to the place where the wedding and feast would take place. Following the feast, which would last well into the night, the bridegroom would take his bride to his parents’ house, where the bridesmaids would await their arrival and escort them, with lamps, to the bridal chamber. At a surface level, then, this parable tells of the bridesmaids who prepared to carry out their role by ensuring they had plentiful oil to wait for the end of the feast, and those who were unprepared, ran out of oil and so missed out. Oil is sometimes used to symbolise righteousness, or living in keeping with the kingdom. In this picture of the kingdom of heaven, there is a great celebration of God’s kingdom. Jesus, the bridegroom, arrives (returns) for the celebration, and only those who have lived fruitful lives as God’s people are ready for him. For the others, it is too late.

Jesus tells several stories highlighting that the timing of his return is unknown: like a thief in the night, like a master returning from a long trip, like waiting for a bridegroom – or in today’s world might that be a bride? – to arrive, the timing is not made clear. It is necessary to always be ready.

Billy Graham once asked, if you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Drawing on his experiences of school inspections and oversight, someone once imagined an inspection body called OfGod and asked students how people might prepare if the world were to be inspected by God? If you knew that Jesus would return tomorrow, what would you do today? How do we balance this with not knowing, and needing to deal with the things that are pressing, as life continues as we know it for another few decades?

**A prayer**

Forgive us, Lord, for our complacency:
for putting oﬀ until tomorrow what needs to be done today;
for failing to prepare, relying instead on the generosity of others; for not turning to you, but seeking a quick ﬁx, only to be let down; for neglecting the needs of others or lacking commitment;
and for all the times we’ve let you down.
Lord God, forgive us.

Help us to live a better life of faith, and to be more disciplined, to discern and respond to opportunities made available to us, and to give hope, encouragement and comfort to those in need. **Amen.**

**Lectionary Readings November**

[**5 – 11 November – Authentic role models**](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2023/128-november-december-2023-ab/proper-26)

Micah 3.5-12; Psalm 43; 1 Thessalonians 2.9-13; Matthew 23.1-12

[**12 – 18 November – What is important and urgent now?**](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2023/128-november-december-2023-ab/proper-27)
Amos 5.18-24; Psalm 70; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18; Matthew 25.1-13

[**19 – 25 November – Using well what God gives to us**](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2023/128-november-december-2023-ab/proper-28)
Zephaniah 1.7,12-18; Psalm 90.1-8,(9-11),12; 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11; Matthew 25.14-30

[**26 November – 2 December – Do your actions reveal the real you?**](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2023/128-november-december-2023-ab/christ-the-king)
Ezekiel 34.11-16,20-24; Psalm 95.1-7a; Ephesians 1.15-23; Matthew 25.31-46

**Church Services November**

**Services at 10.45am in the Sanctuary unless indicated otherwise**

Nov 5 Coffee & croissants in the lower hall. Elisabeth Meikle

Nov 12 Remembrance Sunday. Barbara Ledger

Nov 19 Revd Dr David Whiting

Nov 26 Revd Jane Rowell

**Bible Study Group**

The Bible Study Group meets on Tuesdays at 10.30am in the Church and is open to anyone wanting to understand more about the Christian faith and to learn from one another.

Topics for study are always varied and interesting. Our current study, led by Rev Dr David Whiting, is ‘The Cost of Discipleship’ and we will be continuing with this into November.

A 4-week course for Advent will begin on November 28th to December 19th, which will also be led by David.

All will be made very welcome.

**Food Cycle**

A reminder that Food Cycle is now operating at Stockton Road Church every Tuesday at 12.30pm providing free food.

All you have to do is turn up and you will receive a warm welcome and a delicious meal.

**A prayer for peace in the Middle East.**

O God of all justice and peace we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths - Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen

This prayer was written by The Very Revd Canon Richard Swell, Dean of St George's College Jerusalem, published on the Christian Aid website Oct 2023.



Check website for more information and equipment safety sheet.[www.loveamelia.org.uk](http://www.loveamelia.org.uk)

