

Keep Watch

Many groups have “mottos” that they live by:

Presbyterian (USA): reformed, always reforming; we do things decently and in order; everything in moderationD

Have any of you heard these before?

Well, Veteran’s Day was yesterday so I thought I’d take a minute to remember all of our veterans today. Would anyone who has served in our nation’s armed forces please stand. Let’s give them a hand. (clapping)
You may be seated.

Now a quick test. If you know the motto, shout it out!

U.S. Army: “This We’ll Defend”

U.S. Marine Corps: “Semper Fidelis” – Always Faithful

The U.S. Navy technically does not have an official motto, and there are even disagreements over what its unofficial motto might be. Some sources claim that the unofficial motto is “*Non sibi sed patriae*” – Latin for “**Not self, but country,**” Some incorrectly assume that the title of the **unofficial song of the U.S. Navy, “Anchors Aweigh,”** is its motto, which it is not. Other sources claim that “*Semper Fortis*” – Latin for “**Always Courageous**” – is the Navy’s unofficial motto; considering that the Navy was founded in the 18th century, when sailing in a Navy required venturing out into the unknown of the vast oceans, some still uncharted, this emphasis

on courage seems fitting.

U.S. Air Force: "Aim High ... Fly-Fight-Win"

U.S. Coast Guard: "Semper Paratus" – Always Ready

U.S. Space Force: "Semper Supra" – Always Above

Boy/Girl Scouts -Be Prepared

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus admonishes Christians to "Keep Watch" or "Keep Awake."

Since it's All Saints' Sunday, I'd like to ask two questions: What's a saint?
And how can we become a little more saint-like ourselves?

Why would Jesus pick that particular motto?

Let's take a look at his situation.

Matthew 25: 1-13 is written at the end of the Judgement discourse. People are hearing different things about who this man is. Some say prophet, some say teacher; some call him the Son of David, some the Son o Man, and then there's the illusive "He is the Messiah – God's chosen one." So Jesus tells another parable about a wedding. Historians haven't shared a whole lot about weddings in Jesus' time, but Jesus tells us 10 "virgins" are waiting to greet the bridegroom. No mention of where the Bride is at this point. But, as in today's weddings, some of the bridesmaids are wise and some are foolish. The wise women have everything that they need to greet the bridegroom who traditionally shows up whenever he chooses, They have oil for their lamps and dry matches. They're probably resting carefully in their special dresses so they can jump right up and attend to their duties (whatever they may be). The foolish girls don't seem prepared at all. So when the groom arrives, they are running around like chickens trying to

gather what they need. By the time that's accomplished, the rest of the party has moved on without them. *Oh, the frustration! They cry out, "Lord, Lord, open the door for us!" The reply was "Truly I tell you, I don't know you." "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." . . . (your Lord will come.)

Now all this preparation and being ready is no strange thing to most of us. Many lay out their clothes the night before work or a trip so they don't have to look for what to wear the morning of the leaving. Others prepare a long time in advance-just to be sure. . . .especially if it's a special trip like a vacation in paradise or having a baby. That suitcase will be packed weeks in advance. One of my former students used to talk about her mom's "show me guest towels" that weren't supposed to be touched so they were always ready for unexpected guests. My mother had a special casserole frozen just for those unexpected drop ins at dinner time. But what happens when an expected guest is late . . .and you don't know when to expect them?

This is the scenario Jesus is creating. The "Lord" of all is not exactly sure when he is returning. Only God knows that. This is when we need to check out prophecies and other records to see if there are any other clues to help us.

Amos was a frustrated prophet. He had been preaching and prophesying for a long time and Israel still wasn't getting the message. So he gets downright rude! He says that all that the people have been doing to get ready is WRONG! God will not accept their offerings and songs and festivals because the people have forgotten about justice, mercy, and righteousness. That's why God sends Jesus to show them the way.

Jesus comes and tells them to be ready. . . . just in case it's soon.

By the time Paul is writing letters to the Thessalonians, people have been “ready and waiting” for quite a while. They believe that they were going to “sleep in the Lord” and “rest in peace” knowing that one day the Messiah will come back to take them all to heaven. Paul wants to encourage their faith so he tells them that “the trumpet will call and the dead in Christ shall rise first and then, those who are still alive will be caught up in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air to be with him forever. He implores them to take comfort in that.

So where do we fit in all of this? We know we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus. We know we may have to wait for his return. Soooo what now? As we have been studying for the last few Sundays, we are to imitate Jesus. We are to live modestly, walk humbly, help when asked to help, show justice, and MERCY! We are to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. Not too bad, right?

If you’re like me, I have a hard time waiting and watching. So I ask God everyday to guide me in my life so I’ll be on the right track. It’s also important to remember: We are God’s children! We receive God’s mercy everyday! And Jesus justified us by faith so we will be counted as righteous! Thanks be to God! Amen.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Thess.4.13,1Thess.4.14,1Thess.4.15,1Thess.4.16,1Thess.4.17,1Thess.4.18&version=NIV>

Matthew 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.25.1,Matt.25.4,Matt.25.3,Matt.25.2,Matt.25.5,Matt.25.6,Matt.25.8,Matt.25.7,Matt.25.9,Matt.25.10,Matt.25.11,Matt.25.12,Matt.25.13&version=NIV>

Amos 5:18-24

Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light—pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness? “I hate, I despise your religious festivals your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river righteousness like a never-failing stream!