I have a question for you this morning and you can just raise your hand in response. Who here likes to wait? I thought so…

I am right there with you. Patience may be a virtue, but I am sorely lacking it at times. Bob will corroborate for me that there is nothing I dislike more than sitting around an airport. He, on the other hand has the patience of Job. It doesn't bother him much at all to have hours between flights. Me, I would rather risk a tight connection than spend any more time that I have to sitting in the terminal.

The reality is, we spend a lot of time waiting. Waiting in the line at the grocery store. Waiting to hear about a new job. Waiting for our next vacation to come. Waiting for news of from loved one serving in the military. Waiting for the birth of a grandchild.

Waiting is simply a fact of our lives.

In Matthew’s and Paul’s communities, the faithful are waiting. They are living their daily lives in anticipation of the glorious time when the Christ will come and take them up with him to his Father in heaven. But the time they anticipated as imminent has not yet come to pass. Some are falling away from the community of faith and others worry that they and many will die without the hope of being taken with Christ into God’s new creation.

Is that not true for us, the church in our 3rd millennium of waiting as well? For many, this time of waiting on the coming of the Kin-dom of God has become tiresome and irrelevant in their lives.

It may seem to us at times that life is simply a series of events interspersed with *nothing happening* in between. There is a woman that I have been on retreat with many times over the past 15 years who speaks about the challenge and the possibility that comes from *“being in the wait”.*

*Being in the wait.* Perhaps we have been through a tough time or a period of challenge, and have come out the other side. Now, we have time to breathe a bit. Maybe we have made a difficult and rewarding decision and now need to take a moment for other elements to fall into place.

Sometimes we don’t have any idea what it is we are waiting for. It may even feel as though God is silent in “the wait”. Dutch priest Henri Nouwen, in his talk entitled, “The Spirituality of Waiting” emphasized the importance of not dismissing times of waiting as unused or wasted time. He challenges us to be “fully present to the moment – the moment we are in right now.” In “active waiting”, as he calls it, we trust that the moment is pregnant with possibility because God is ever at work.

Nouwen writes, *“The secret of waiting is the faith that a seed has been planted, that something has begun. Active waiting means to be fully present to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening.”*

So as we consider Jesus’ parable today, Episcopal priest Kirk Kubicek reminds us not to become distracted by the oil, or even by the foolish or wise maidens and the particulars of what each has done, or not done. He asks, *“What if Jesus meant to simply shock us with details such as closing the door on the foolish ones only to deliver the real message: Keep awake?!*

*One suspects Jesus really did not want us spending hours of Bible study dithering over questions such as “How could Jesus do that? Why would he close the door on anyone?” when we already know the answer is that he closed the door on no one. Not prostitute, not tax collector, not sinner. His door is always open. The disciples to whom this little tale is told know that and have witnessed it every day. And like them, we ought to be those who recognize that what seems like his coming again is simply our awakening to the very* *real Good News of Jesus that he is with us always to the end of the age.…..He is here. Forever and always. We might even say forever and in all ways.“*

What is Jesus calling us to do? **To be awake and stay awake!**

True wisdom lies in our active awareness to the reality that God is present “in the wait” with us. We can look to our Judeo-Christian Wisdom tradition that is rooted in the simplicity and sacramental significance of the everyday-ness of living. Wisdom is not the result of intellectual exercise, but a down to earth expression of our commitment to God, and God’s commitment to us. Wisdom or Sophia, as she is known in Greek, was present with God, and Christ Jesus, the Word, at the beginning of all things.

Let’s listen again to our Scripture from the Book of Wisdom today, (Wisdom 6:12–16)

*Wisdom is radiant and unfading,*

*and she is easily discerned by those who love her,*

*and is found by those who seek her.*

*She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.*

*One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,*

*for she will be found sitting at the gate.*

*To fix one’s thought on her is perfect understanding,*

*and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care,*

*because she goes about seeking those worthy of her,*

*and she graciously appears to them in their paths,*

*and meets them in every thought.*

Wisdom is not so much about amassing knowledge, as about openness and curiosity. It is not forced or controlling in nature. She is present for the seeker, as well as for those she seeks. Wisdom is all around us, inviting us to hear her and understand. Wisdom awakens us to our right-sized place in God’s Creation that we might *act as if* we honor God in all that lives and exists.

So, let us ask ourselves and each other….

What is burning up the oil in our lamps right now?

What has become for us more pressing than Christ?

What has become for us more interesting than the Gospel?

What has become for us more distracting than our neighbor’s need?

Christian hope is the true oil for our lamps. Paul assures the worried Thessalonians that they will not grieve as people who have no hope. Their hope, and the hopes of all who live and die in the faith, lives in the present time through Christ who exists within and beyond all time. Let us not become so focused, as some do, on the end of times, that the present, which is right in front of us, slips right on by. Let us not allow our impatience, or even more perilous, *our boredom*, draw us from the *“patient expectation”* that French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil calls *“the foundation of spiritual life*”.

Just think about the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands who, while waiting for aid from outside their devastated communities, drew strength and courage and endurance from the collective spirit of their communities, looking after one another, and sharing what they have.

I know we mention this often, but it is so worth talking about again. The healthy snacks we provide are so appreciated by the Food Pantry. We may begin to think, “not this announcement again” and dismiss the repetition or look for the next pressing need. But I need to tell you this… I dropped some items by at the Pantry this past week. The contribution was so enthusiastically received! As I left the building I heard one volunteer remark to another…”That’s from All Saints’ Church; they are so faithful with keeping up with the healthy snacks for our kids.” Friends, this is the sacrament of being awake to everyday living in God’s “wait”.

Staying awake to Christ takes endurance and patience for sure. It may seem some days as though we fight a losing battle with troublesome and devastating events in our communities. Just as Paul urged faith in the waiting Thessalonian community that Jesus would come for all, living and dead, we too live by faith rooted in the promise that Jesus is with us *always and in all ways*.

Our faith is faith rooted in the Wisdom of everyday sacredness found in our shared lives and in the oil of Christian Hope burning within us. It is that faith instilled within our hearts and minds, a flame lit by our Creator, that allows us to lie down in peace to sleep, knowing Christ and being known by him.

As we move through this next week, perhaps we might ask ourselves,

What am I waiting for right now and what possibilities lie with God for me *in the wait*?

Amen.