

“Midnight Is Coming”
23rd Sunday after Pentecost
Stewardship Sunday
November 8, 2020
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Iao United Church of Christ

1st Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

Poem “*God’s Stewards*” by John MacArthur

*“All Christians are but God’s stewards.
Everything we have is on loan from the Lord.
Entrusted to us for a while to use in serving God.”*

I was remembering this week when I lived in Idaho around this time of the year and the weatherman was talking about the impending snowstorm coming over the weekend. In my mind I was saying to myself – “I should get a new snow shovel, and maybe some salt for the ice.” “I probably should get some bags of pellets for the pellet stove.” This wise, all-knowing weatherman was trying to get us all prepared for the impending snowstorm. “Get ready, it is coming” he said! In my mind again, I was going through all the checklist of what needed to happen. “Okay, I have a few days to prepare so no need to rush.”

Beloved community – beloved virtual world, when we think we have everything prepared and ready – life happens – Amen? Life happens when we least expect it and life has a way in catching us ill prepared. Beloveds – are we prepared for the next storm that may come? Are we physically ready for a possible hurricane, a tsunami, earthquake? Were any of us really prepared physically for covid19? How about spiritually? Are we spiritually ready for a hurricane, tsunami, earthquake? Were any of us spiritually ready for what covid19 has done to us, our families, our communities, our church? “When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them.”

I believe since March, we have grown in some ways on how to be House Churches and still growing. How to be deployed people of God and still learning. But this has also shown us how unprepared we might have been in some ways. The “ready or not here I come” type of ideology. We have had to learn a new way of doing worship – but was everyone prepared or has everyone been able to keep up church? Some of our Kupuna have not been able to join us for worship because of technology. As Rong and I learned from last Sunday – we are lacking in technological skills and know how. But here is the thing about not knowing beloved Church,

when we put all of our skills, all of our time, talent and treasure together to solve problems and for the sake of our community, our people, our church – we move mountains Iao Church! Amen?

When Rong and I put our heads together to figure out how to solve the audio problem we encountered last Sunday, we were able to come up with a solution. When we have the “we can do” attitude as a whole church and community – there is no mountain or barrier high enough! Amen and praise be to God! Our problem at times is believing in the “we can do” attitude – even from our House Churches. Another problem we may have at time is humbling ourselves when it comes to asking for help and admitting that we need help – Amen? Let us not be like the foolish bridesmaids and find ourselves spiritually unprepared.

We do not know when Christ shall come but he does give us the Gospel to prepare. As we wait for the bridegroom to come, we prepare ourselves spiritually, just like we would be physically for a natural disaster. Some say “we can never be prepared to lose a loved one” – but I say if we believe in the resurrection as stated in the Gospels we can be spiritually ready and take comfort knowing that our loved ones have the same resurrection promise. The Gospels then become the oil we need in our spiritual lamp.

This being the Sunday in which we remember, honor and celebrate our Veterans, I am remembering the preparedness we went through while serving. The training was one thing – but remembering to take our equipment we need was another. It was foolish to go out to the field to dig a foxhole – if we left our entrenching tool back in the barracks. We had to wait until our buddy next to us finish digging their fox hole so we could borrow his entrenching tool – foolish! The spiritual part was the camaraderie we established with one another – taking care of each other, like the wise bridesmaids, meant that we checked each other’s equipment before going out to the field.

Beloved church – let us be like those wise bridesmaids and be spiritually prepared. Let us be like the soldiers in our families who checked in on their fellow soldiers. Let us check in on one another during this pandemic to make sure our church is physically and spiritually prepared. Have we called and checked in on each other on our church directory? How is it with the soul of our church beloved Iao?

Back to the story I was telling you about when the weatherman was heeding us to prepare for the impending snowstorm. Recalling that in my mind – I had a mental checklist of

the things I needed to get before the snow storm arrived and no need to rush since I still had a few days before the storm hit – foolish! Thinking I had enough time, I procrastinated in getting the items on my list. Like the coming of Christ – as in Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Creator only.” The weatherman was off by a day – waking up on Friday morning with a lot of snow on the ground and still falling. Here I am like a foolish bridesmaid unprepared. Jump in the truck – travel in the snow to get a snow shovel, salt for the ice and pellets for the stove. Get to the store and the shovels and salt are sold out! Those wise bridesmaids got there first! Next store – same thing – until finally I gave up and decided to use my old shovel in the storage room. Driving back home I thought how foolish of me to wait until the last minute, unprepared – get home and open up the storage shed only to find a brand new snow shovel, a bag of salt and a bag of pellets left over from last year. I had forgotten I had purchased a snow shovel on sale at the end of last year’s winter season and had a bag of salt and pellets left over. Memory was my failure and procrastination had gotten the better of me. When the weatherman says it is going to snow

this weekend – go now and get the things you need – no one knows the hour nor the day.

Let us close with this beloved church. WE may not know the day nor the hour in which Christ will come. What we do know is that Christ lives in and through us in everything we do in our daily lives. What we also know is to always be spiritually prepared and ready. Let us be wise in what we focus on in our lives and fill our hearts with love – and do not forget the oil...for the bridegroom will come soon.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.