The readings for Sunday, November 8 , 2026:
First reading and Psalm
Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25
Psalm 78:1-7
Alternate First reading and Psalm
Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16 or Amos 5:18-24
Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20 or Psalm 70
Second reading
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Gospel
Matthew 25:1-13

How mystifying, this parable of the wise bridesmaids with more than enough oil and the foolish, unprepared bridesmaids! I would have expected Jesus to make a different point, one about those with abundant resources sharing with those who have a lack.

But once again, Jesus is full of surprises. It's not a parable about sharing. And if you reread it again, you may realize, as I did this morning, that it's not a parable about staying awake either--all of the bridesmaids get drowsy and sleep.

Through his parables and more importantly, through his life, Jesus shows us that we're allowed to have down time. We're allowed to sleep. Jesus retreated periodically to recharge, and we should do.

But those foolish maidens aren't going on a women's retreat at a nearby church camp. No, they have come to their task unprepared. It's not like the task was unknown. I assume that one of the basic job requirements of being a bridesmaid is to have oil for the lamps.

Or maybe it's not one of the basic tasks. Note that the bridegroom is delayed. Maybe the foolish bridesmaids assumed the wedding party would come by the time it was dark. Maybe their fault lies in not anticipating the unforeseen.

So, what does this parable tell us for modern life? For those of us who are waiting and watching, what does it mean?

Too many people will read this text and see the wedding party as a metaphor for Heaven. Perhaps it is, although I imagine Jesus would have had a very different idea of Heaven than that of 21st century folks. Too many people will focus on the possibility of a second coming in our lifetime, and that's why they keep the lamps ready.

But God did not create this planet just to wreck it out of displeasure. Absolutely not. The Good News that Jesus gives us again and again is that the redemption of creation breaks through into our daily lives.

If we wait for a distant Heaven, we've missed the point. The Good News is that we don't have to wait. It's happening right now, in all sorts of ways.

But many of us will miss it, because we're not looking or we're not used to seeing God in our daily lives. Perhaps instead of keeping a gratitude journal or instead of asking how our days have been, perhaps a better question would be, "Where have you seen God today?"

In this way we'll keep our oil replenished and our lamps ready. We will know the bridegroom, because we will have gotten in the habit of seeing him.