Homily – November 8, 2026

So most of the time when we look at this text, as we're getting close to the end of the liturgical year, we hear the message about waiting, about being prepared, having our lamps lit, our oil ready, because we don't know indeed when God will come. But I wanted to ask a different question today, because it's kind of been intriguing me. What would happen today if, as the church, as God's church, we asked the question, why did the bridegroom refuse to open the door?

You know, a lot of times we think about the bridegroom as Jesus. Maybe Peter was the image of the bridegroom. Because I just wonder: in Matthew 7:7, we hear Jesus say, "Knock, and the door shall be opened to you." In 7:12, we hear, "Treat others as you want to be treated yourself." And yet, the door is not opening. Is Matthew perhaps actually condemning religious authorities that won't open the door to all people at all times?

Because God does say, "Knock, and it shall be opened to you." Do we maybe, as the church at times, proclaim God's welcome on one hand, and yet, on the other hand, we decide who receives the welcome among us? Were they prepared well enough to be welcomed?

On one hand, thank God, we teach and practice forgiveness. And yet, on the other hand, in our broken humanity, we make judgments about failures and what failures define people. You know, as Lutherans, we certainly talk about grace, God's response at Christ's expense. But then we expect people to arrive with their lives all put together in a nice, neat package. We expect them to have brought more oil.

Perhaps even as the church, we might even be sending the message that you should already know this. You should already have your act together before you even walk in the door. But that's not really what God says. God says, "Y'all come, knock, and the door will be open to you."

So I'm wondering today, does the inbreaking of the kingdom of God look like a closed door instead of a door of welcome, where we invite others to experience God's love and mercy and grace? The gospel continues through the cross, through the resurrection, to a renewed commission. The church lives because Christ meets us, meets all people where they are. With extra oil or not, come on. This is God's place of mercy, of grace, and love.

I wonder what the church, the small c, and this church will do with the mercy that we receive when we are the ones charged with stewarding God's people.

Yeah, it's nice to think ahead. I don't know who here is a to-do list person. I'm a to-do list person. I have to-do lists to write to-do lists. It's nice to bring extra oil. It's nice to even read the instructions and do what we're supposed to do. But what do we do if someone runs into trouble? Do we make a judgment on that? Or do we offer them God's grace and God's mercy and God's love and say, "Knock, and the door is open to you"?

That promise in Matthew 7 of God meeting us where we are and opening the door for us is the message of the crucified Christ, the risen Christ who comes back to his disciples who were not prepared. He gathers them. He teaches them. He loves them. He promises to return. And he provides mercy for the journey.

I believe that gives the church a reason to answer the door without first trying to figure out who's outside the door and do they deserve to enter in. Can we, as the church, be the ones who help someone who has run out of oil? Can we stand beside someone whose plans have fallen apart? Can we welcome someone who arrives with questions, with doubts, with uncertainties, and very little to offer?

Christ, our Lord and Savior, entrusts us with this calling to open the door, to welcome the stranger, no matter who is knocking. How will we respond? Will we say, "Go away"? Or will we say, "Come, meet your Lord and Savior"?