



The Spirit

November 2023

Giving thanks to God since 1948.

From the Rector

REV. ROB HARRIS

The season of Advent has its focus on the return of Christ. We hear stories of bridesmaids, prophets, and wise slaves. The season of Advent is about faithfully...waiting.

Although many Christians today consign talk of the Last Day to the realm of eccentric individuals with cult-like followings, the message of this passage suggests otherwise. The lives of Jesus' disciples are to be shaped by knowledge of his return.

Like the other Gospels, Matthew is clear that the timing of Christ's return is unknown. Although Jesus speaks of signs of the end time (Matthew 24:3-35), he goes on to say that no one but God knows the day or hour of its arrival (Matthew 24:36; see also Mark 13:1-37). In this sense, the Gospel's view differs strongly from that of modern sages who claim to predict Christ's second coming. Matthew states clearly, "you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" (Matthew 24:44).

The unknown timing of the Son's return makes readiness essential. The parable of the ten bridesmaids is sandwiched between two passages that emphasize preparation for the master's return. The prior passage, Matthew 24:45-51, contrasts the "faithful and wise slave" who is at work when his master comes (Matthew 24:45-46) with the self-indulgent slave who mistreats others and is surprised by the master's return (Matthew 24:48-50). The passage that follows this one, Matthew 25:14-30, is a parable in which the master entrusts his property to his slaves and expects their diligent investment of it. Both parables emphasize the actions of the slaves in the absence of the master. Their faithfulness is known through what they do when he is away.

The bridesmaids parable also points to the importance of readiness. Its last verse, "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour," points readers toward a message of watchfulness. It suggests that the foolish bridesmaids were not sufficiently prepared.

However, the point of the parable is not constant readiness. "Keep awake" does not imply that the disciples should never sleep, standing vigil through the ages for Christ's imminent return. In fact, all of the bridesmaids, wise and foolish, are asleep when the shout announces the groom's approach.

What is distinctive about this parable is its focus on the delayed return of the expected one. The passage does not simply call for right action in the groom's absence. It calls for recognition that he may be delayed.

In this parable alone, the wise or prudent disciple is the one who prepares not only for the groom's return, but also for his delay. If the groom was coming quickly there would be nothing wrong with taking one's lamp full of oil to meet him. But the wise disciple packs a supply of oil, knowing that her wait may be unpredictable.

It is difficult for many of today's disciples to be anything like the bridesmaids, wise or foolish, because we have stopped waiting. We give little thought to Christ's return, let alone what we should do to prepare for it. If we were to contemplate ourselves in relation to the end time, it might be easier to imagine ourselves as the slaves who work diligently while the master is away than as the bridesmaids whose primary job is to await the groom's return. This is not necessarily something for which modern Christians should be chastised — after the passage of two millennia, we have grown accustomed to the master's absence. It's a long time to wait expectantly. Nevertheless, there may be something we can gain from the parable's perspective.

The parable asks us to imagine ourselves as those who wait for the groom's return. When the groom comes, the wedding feast may begin! The age-old promise of the marriage between God and Israel (for example in

Hosea 2:16) will come to pass. Speaking as one who has already realized the promises, the prophet Isaiah writes, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations” (Isaiah 61:10-11). The prophet sees a restored Israel, where human unfaithfulness has faded away, and is replaced by righteousness and praise.

This is the wedding the bridesmaids await. Another voice proclaims the promise this way: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4). The bridesmaids await not only the groom but the removal of pain and suffering. The wedding feast initiates the reign of God’s justice and mercy, the realization of all the hopes of Israel.

To act as wise bridesmaids is to affirm our faith in the coming Christ. Doing so shows our trust that God is a God of justice and mercy. The eschaton encapsulates the ideals of God’s reign. It is the vision against which we judge our efforts in the meantime to live according to God’s principles. It is a vision of God’s ultimate justice and righteousness without which our world appears very bleak.

The wise bridesmaids keep the vision of Christ’s return, and all that it stands for, alive through their faithful waiting in the midst of delay. By preparing for the day, the timing of which no one knows but God, they proclaim that God’s promises are true. They act out their hope for that day when God will establish justice and righteousness and peace.

May we hold fast to that hope this Advent season.

What’s Coming Up

November

- 11: Cork and Fork
- 12: Consecration Sunday
One Service at 10:00 a.m. with luncheon to follow.

December

- 1: The First Sunday of Advent
- 6: 5:30 p.m., Advent Gathering

Consecration Sunday

Join us on November 12 for our Consecration Sunday celebration.

There will be one service at 10:00 a.m. with a luncheon to follow.

Please make sure to get your RSVP in to the office as soon as possible.

“All is yours, O God; and of thine own have we given Thee.”

Server Schedules

8:30 a.m.

	Reader	Prayers/Chalice
5	Terry Patrick	Terry Patrick
12	Bill Davidson	
19	Terry Patrick	Terry Patrick
26	Bill Davidson	Bill Davidson

10:30 a.m.

	Reader	Prayers/Chalice
5	Denise Collyer	David Collyer
12	Sandra Haldeman	Sandra Haldeman/Bob Vance
19	Milam Boyle	Milam Boyle/Margaret Vance
26	Mary Beth Wright	Don Wright

Birthdays

- 2: Susie Crews
- 20: John Boyle
- 21: Don Lee
- 22: Caroline Harris
- 24: Donna Setzer

Anniversaries

- 19: Terry & Scarlett Leick

PRAYER LIST

Christy Janes-Sweda, Rick Janes,
 Melanie Routh Bendele (Julie Allen),
 James Teunant (Katie Bussineau),
 Dean Flinn, Mike Tarr (Bunny Bond),
 Charlene Kuhler, Al Lubbers,
 Shirley McFarland,
 Larry McFarland (Lee & Linda Parsons),
 Rachel Mulherin, Herman Newman,
 James Stangeland (Mike Mulherin),
 Debbie Woodall Krause (Bruce Woodall),
 James Crews (Susie Crews),
 Jeanne, Cathy, Leo (Sandra Haldeman),
 Vicki Jowell (Billye Bertram),
 Dan Hatfield, Tom Rothe (Jimmy Jordan),
 Kyle "Bud" Welborn (Holly Boyle),
 Nette Foster, Anne Cassidy,
 Susie Birdsong, Katie Bussineau,
 Amber Campbell, John Bohannan,
 Ben Olive (Betsy King), Linda Parsons, Holly Boyle,
 Joe & Virginia Davis, (Milam Boyle), Wanda and
 Heavenly and all our military & first responders.

Join us for Christian Education every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.
 We are currently studying *Cranmer's Church*
 by The Reverend Canon Chuck Collins.

Outreach Spotlight

Hill Country Crisis Council

Hill Country Crisis Council is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 organization incorporated in April of 1984 to serve victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Hill Country Crisis Council originally operated as a volunteer organization with a 24-hour hotline staff, ran by willing community members who also transported clients to the nearest shelter which was in Marble Falls, Texas. By the end of 1984, a director was hired to develop the program. It was during this initial stage that several accomplishments were realized, including enlistment of a Board of Directors, securing government contracts for operating funds, and purchasing facilities, which serve as the current shelter and the counseling offices. Over the next several years it became necessary to expand the Hill Country Crisis Council staff to include a volunteer coordinator, outreach counselor, and a counselor specifically for children. Services were expanded to add programs for incest survivors, a school-based anti-victimization program, as well as a program for batterers. Eventually the service area was expanded from Kerr County to include the counties of Gillespie, Kendall, and Bandera.

In 1990, the existing facilities were partially renovated, and in 1994 an additional building was purchased which still serves as the administrative office. That same year a complete analysis of all the programs resulted in streamlining costs. By restructuring staff, a more cost-effective delivery of services was obtained without a reduction in quality or quantity of those services. A school and family advocate were also added to the staff. The public education effort was increased with emphasis on presentations in the local schools. Expanded services then began to be delivered to the outlying counties, rather than having clients travel to Kerrville to receive services.

In 2009 Hill Country Crisis Council began discussions with the Kids' Advocacy Place regarding the merger of the two organizations. Kids' Advocacy Place (KAP) had been in

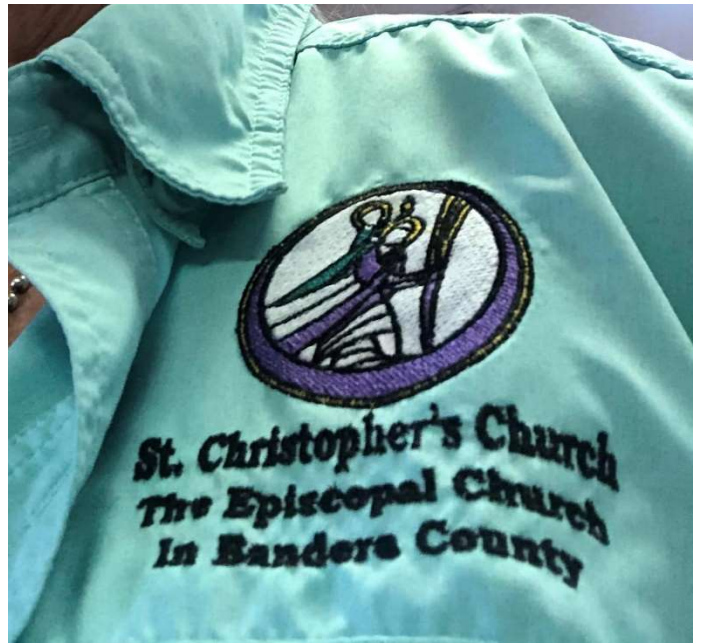
existence for 12 years, providing forensic interviews and serving abused children and their non-offending caregivers in a five-county area now including Kimble County in our service area. This merger strengthened both organizations in terms of services provided for clients as well as strengthening financial stability. They continue to work hand in hand taking a multi-disciplinary approach including area law enforcement agencies, the 198th, 216th, 451st and 452nd District Courts and the Department of Family and Protective Services.

We look toward the future with high expectations of expanding our services and building new facilities and maintain our status as one of the top agencies in Texas that provide safety and healing and positively affect long-term health for generations to come.

If God is making you
wait, then do what
waiters do....

SERVE!





You Can be a SAINT!!!

KRISTIN WILSON

We are all called to spend our lives striving to fall more and more deeply in love with Christ. We are meant to seek, to find and to follow our paths that lead to our vocations. We are meant to truly love God, to seek and to do always and only his will. Again we are meant to fall in love with God. We are called, just as the famous, canonized Saints we honor today have been called, to spend all our Christians lives, from the time we realize Him, to the time we enter eternity, loving, serving, and giving our everything to Him and to those in most need of his mercy. As Christians we ought to have a deep personal relationship with Christ. We must have a prayer life that reflects that relationship. That relationship will help us to become like St. Mother Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila or St. Therese of Lisieux.

You Can Become a Saint Just Like Them.

Nice words, right? Nice, beyond nice though. Is this easy to accomplish for most of us?

NO!

We are all sinners. Even the canonized saints were sinners. Some of them, before their conversion, or reversion were notorious sinners. If you tell me you don't sin, that's just not true because you are a sinner. As a sinner you may not realize the depth of love Jesus has for you and until you do you may not know what you need to change in your life that you may sin less and become saint-like just like the saints. By the way saints don't consider themselves saints. They look at their imperfections and know they need to continue seeking God's will and become still more holy.

Some sinners turned Saints are in the Bible. Look at Saint Peter. He denied being a follower of Christ, a friend of Jesus and yet he is a Saint and for Catholics the first Pope. Saint Paul was an avid hater of the followers of Christ. But he has an incredible miraculous conversion story. He not

only became a follower of Christ but wrote letters of encouragement to people in the early Church which made their way into the New Testament.

We could argue about who gets to go to heaven, but that would be fruitless, and perhaps turn into angry disagreements as opposed an act of love. All the Saints were madly in love with Jesus. Yes, some were priests, nuns, married, or single. Some held down simple jobs and others were renowned scholars. Some started their childhood poor and others were from wealthy, even noble families. Some died as martyrs, some at a quite young age of illnesses or still others "old age". So, there is no mold, no one lifestyle. You can't truly look at an infant and say a hundred years from now he or she will be a canonized Saint. Recently a Polish family of 9 killed for hiding Jews during World War 2 were beatified by Pope Francis including an unborn baby.

So, what do they have in common? Well as I said, they were madly in love with Christ. They made sacrifices for those in need. They, based on their own time and place in history, gave their whole lives to Christ, always putting the needs of other before their needs. They gave up what they had, including what most of us would consider what they may need, for the love of others. Perhaps it was food or clothing for the monetarily poor or they may have offered up their sufferings without complaining. They had such a wonderful relationship with Jesus. A true Saint would go against the grain even giving up family expectations, or an easier life to live humbly, simply and to seek God no matter the cost.

I don't doubt that there are unsung Saints lost to history who lived just as holy a life as the ones that can be seen as statues, icons, on banners and prayer cards. These are the ones who were never canonized or even considered because they were never known beyond the people they interacted with and who are also lost to time and history, but not lost to God.

So, now what?

Well now it is my turn and your turn to be a saint. What changes can YOU make in your life

that will enhance your relationship with our Triune God? It is a lifelong process and a forever commitment. How can you better serve the panhandler, the sick, the downtrodden etc.? What can your prayer life be like if you put in more time and effort? What changes can each of us as individuals make given our current state of life? Do we need to change our state of life?

I have to answer these questions for myself and aside from the general principle of loving God and neighbor more and acting differently to do so, all our specific individual answers will not fit into the same mold as someone else's. It's easy to look at the lives of the saints. There is plenty of information online about saints from different rites and churches as well as from the Bible. What did they do that showed their holiness? How can you mirror some of their actions, their deep committed love for Christ above all?

We don't just read this and declare, interesting or boring, and judge by complaining that my grammar may be imperfect. If you do those and walk away you are missing the point. Read it over and answer the questions for yourself, look in the mirror, look at the Saints and look in the mirror again. I'm no saint but all I can do is keep trying. I know God loves me no matter what, but I must become more like the saintly children of God and not just out of fear of hell. No Saint ever became so out of fear, but only from a deep love of God and neighbor.

Remember You Can Become a Saint!!!



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