24th S. a. Pentecost-Veterans' Day **November 8, 2026**
Text: Matthew 25:1-13 **Ready When the Call Comes**
Trinity Lutheran Church **Rev. Tom Boeck**

In the name of Jesus, who calls us to remain watchful and prepares us for His glorious return. Amen.

There are aspects of military service that most of us who've never worn the uniform probably can't appreciate. When a young man or woman enters the armed forces, one of the first lessons learned is the importance of preparedness. New recruits train, practice, learn to follow orders, and work together. Most of that preparation takes place long before they face danger. Because when the call comes, there may not be time to get ready.

As we approach Veterans Day, we recognize the men and women among us who have served in our nation's armed forces. Some served during war, others during peace. Their experiences may differ, but they shared something important: They answered the call to serve, preparing for whatever that service might require. And for that, we owe them our gratitude. But there's another kind of readiness Jesus wants us to consider this morning. It's the readiness of faith.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of ten virgins waiting for a bridegroom. In the wedding customs of that day, his arrival was an occasion of great celebration. The wedding party gathered with lamps, prepared to welcome him. In this case, the bridegroom was delayed. All ten virgins fell asleep. Then, at midnight, the announcement came: "Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him."

Suddenly, everyone was awake and scrambling to join the celebration. But only five were prepared. The others had brought their lamps but not enough oil. While they hurried away to find more, the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready entered the wedding feast, and the door was shut.

Jesus concludes, **"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).** Now, notice something. All ten virgins awaited the same bridegroom. All had lamps. All fell asleep. From the outside, they probably looked alike. But five were prepared, and five were not.

Jesus wants us to recognize that the same distinction can exist among those waiting for Him. We can attend worship, know the hymns, participate in church activities, and look like faithful Christians. But Jesus isn't simply concerned with appearances. He's concerned with the faith within us.

Amos gives us a similar warning. God's people observed their festivals, brought offerings, and sang their songs. But their hearts had wandered from Him. God

called them to repentance, saying, **"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).**

God wasn't rejecting worship itself. He was rejecting worship disconnected from genuine faith and faithful living. That warning remains relevant. It's possible to be religious without being spiritually prepared, to know about Jesus without truly trusting Him. Jesus isn't telling us that we earn our place at His heavenly wedding feast by working harder or accumulating good works. If that were the case, none of us would be ready.

Our readiness comes from Jesus Himself. He lived the perfect life we couldn't live. He carried our sins to the cross and rose from the dead, defeating death itself. In Holy Baptism, He claimed us as His own. Through His Word, He calls us to repentance and assures us of forgiveness. At His altar, He feeds us with His body and blood, strengthening our faith as we await His return.

We don't make ourselves worthy of heaven. Christ makes us worthy through His grace, received by faith. And because we belong to Him, we have reason to live faithfully in this world.

That brings us back to Veterans Day. When we honor our veterans, we're recognizing something Scripture teaches about serving our neighbors. God works through people in their various vocations. Parents care for children. Teachers educate students. Doctors care for the sick. And those serving in our armed forces help protect our nation and preserve our freedoms.

Many veterans made sacrifices we'll never fully understand. They spent time away from their families. Some experienced war. Others still carry burdens from their service. Today, we thank God for them and pray for His continued blessings upon them and their families. And our responsibilities as citizens don't end with gratitude.

Just this past week, Americans voted in our midterm elections. Some familiar faces will continue serving, while many newly elected leaders prepare to assume their responsibilities. Regardless of how we voted, or whether the results pleased or disappointed us, we have a responsibility as Christians. We pray for those who govern us.

Paul instructs us to pray **"for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Timothy 2:2).** He doesn't say to pray only for leaders with whom we

agree. We pray for all of them, asking God to grant them wisdom, integrity, humility, and concern for those they serve.

Governments change. Leaders come and go. But Jesus Christ remains the same. And while we're grateful for our earthly citizenship, our ultimate citizenship is in heaven. That should make us better citizens, faithfully loving and serving our neighbors.

Now, let's return to readiness. Our veterans understand that preparation isn't something you accomplish once and forget. A soldier doesn't complete basic training and assume there's nothing more to learn. There's a lesson for us in that.

Jesus tells us to watch and be ready. What does that mean in our everyday Christian lives? It means being intentional about our relationship with Him. Opening our Bibles throughout the week. Setting aside time for daily devotions and prayer. Gathering regularly for worship, hearing God's Word proclaimed, and receiving His Holy Supper. It means examining our lives in light of Scripture, recognizing our sins, seeking forgiveness, and striving to live according to His will.

These aren't religious requirements to check off a list. They're important parts of our spiritual lives. None earns us salvation. We're saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But that doesn't mean our spiritual lives should be neglected.

Marriage, friendship, and family relationships all need attention, communication, and time together. Our relationship with Christ deserves no less. When we read Scripture, we hear God speak. When we pray, we bring our concerns and gratitude before our heavenly Father. And in worship, Christ comes to us through His Word and Sacraments, forgiving our sins and strengthening our faith.

These aren't works by which we earn God's love. They're ways we receive His gifts and remain rooted in His promises. That's why Jesus calls us to remain watchful.

Paul reminds us in today's Epistle that we don't grieve as those who have no hope, because Jesus died and rose again. When He returns, those who have died in Christ will rise, and all who belong to Him will be gathered together with the Lord forever.

One day, the call will come. The Bridegroom will return. And for those who belong to Him through faith, that day won't be something to fear. It will be the day when every promise is fulfilled and we enter the eternal celebration Christ has prepared for us.

So today, we thank God for those who have served our nation. We pray for those serving today and those governing our country. And we ask God to keep us faithful and watchful as we await our Savior's return. Our greatest security isn't found in the strength of our military, the wisdom of our government, or the stability of our nation.

It's found in Jesus Christ, who died for us, rose for us, and has promised to come again for us. And when that day arrives, by His grace, we will be ready. **Amen**.