Sermon for Bluff, 12 November 2017

Matthew 25.1-13: **Watch, then, because you do not know the day or the hour.** (v13)

This parable is usually known as the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and involves a wedding with elements that seem strange to us. In Jesus’ day weddings took place at the bride’s parents’ house; afterwards bride & groom would take their time (even deliberately) getting to the groom’s house. Those waiting needed a torch after dark and keep spare oil.

Wisdom in the story seems very worldly: risk-assessment, anticipating problems (not trusting in God to provide), keeping resources to oneself (not sharing, nor self-sacrifice), doors shut in faces (not a welcome for all) – is this really God’s Kingdom?

Early Christians were waiting for the return of Christ (*parousia*); the parable was a warning against complacency as the wait lengthened. Today many find it hard to identify with the *parousia* but more easily experience the absence of God or lengthy waits for God to act.

So where is God’s Kingdom in this parable? TEXT, but they *all* fell asleep; the five Foolish Virgins had ‘not enough oil’. Do we underestimate time and patience needed in God’s work? Are we looking for a quick fix, or prepared for a long haul?

Health and Safety legislation means being ready; acting too late can have dire consequences.

And what of the Wise Virgins? Sorting yourself out is not selfish but sensible - each makes *their own* commitment to God - no inherited faith. And now is the time to do so – TEXT. They were Wise also because they were ready when the call came. We too can be ready.

In the end it is being suitably prepared for whatever God does or brings, that is Wisdom - TEXT.