

Sunday, November 8, 2020

Psalm 121 Matthew 25:1-13

Lest We Forget

Ready? Get set- Go. This three command phrase has been shouted, commanded and shared billions of times under various circumstances. At the beginning of races—whether running track, driving racecars, swimming or even when preparing to go on stage to perform. All must be ready and in place and waiting to move. Ironically, this phrase is also stated by many cashiers just in a slightly different way. Ready to check out? All set- meaning if there is anything else wanting to be purchased. Ready to check out? Ok, Let's do what we can so you can carry on with your day, and go.

But what does this phrase mean in light of what we are experiencing on this Remembrance Sunday in 2020. Are we ready, set, go to remember? Well, no we are not because readiness would mean being able to see a Legion member- veteran or associate member who would pin poppies prior to November 11. This is being completed in limited locations and without members not pinning at all. Poppies in some ways are difficult to obtain—because of this—be sure to pick some up when/where you can! And of course we are not able to honour our veterans and their families in the traditional way of gathering in community at memorials or cenotaphs and hearing a brief message of thanks, experiencing the Traditional Act of Remembrance, and laying wreaths. This is not going to happen with large numbers of people this year. We are not set to do what we would 'normally' do but we know that we need to remember, 'lest we forget". We just need to be patient, learn about the efforts of veterans because we need to honour those who fought for freedom. Yet we must be sure that we are safe, not spreading the covid19 virus or even experiencing being with fellow citizens as a community.

Being ready is not something one should take for granted. When we reflect on the men and women who were recruited to serve Canada during the wars, were these people ready for what they would encounter? No. Were they trained in gun use, using equipment they had not used before, or even living so far away from home? No. Were these people prepared to experience humanity at its worst as people were shot and killed or as explosives destroyed old buildings and innocent people were caught in crossfire? No And were the people back home ready to accept the fact that their loved ones were dead and buried in foreign lands which just a short time before were not real places but someplace they would never see? No.

Readiness involves training mixed with experience and a willingness to be prepared at all times for the unexpected. Soldiers of World War 1 had not been prepared for the mud and rain of trench warfare but they had been ready to use the equipment issued to them. The veterans of World War II had not known of the bitter cold in the winters nor the need to experience different terrain of the land. They had not been trained in the language of the people whom they were to help and yet when it was time to work with Allies the plan was shared and all were ready. Through the years, people have not been ready to hear about or read of the atrocities of Hitler's Concentration Work camps which lead to the deaths of millions of Jewish people. Readiness is something that is based on learning and development through time and preparation. Some people progress through these stages quickly but many others need time to fully understand what readiness means.

Jesus was teaching near the temple when he shared the parable of the ten bridesmaids. Weddings of his time lasted days and even as the celebrations were continuing people would be welcomed in to share in the party. These were great community gatherings and to be able to attend meant that the guests would be able to drink and eat. Ten bridesmaids are waiting outside of the place where the reception is occurring. They are waiting for the bridegroom to come and know that if they can, they will be welcomed in. However the problem arises is that they do not know when the groom will move from one location to this location but their purpose is to help him to see his way to the hall and to wish him well in his marriage. So in order for them to share in the tradition of the wedding, they are to have oil lamps ready, trimmed and lit so that he can enter the hall. When the bridegroom arrives these women would then be invited in. But they do not know how long he will be between the venues of the celebration. One of the problems for 5 of these bridesmaids is that they did not pack enough oil with them for the evening. We don't know why they did not know they might have needed more oil. Maybe for some of these bridesmaids, it was the first time to do this important task? Or maybe they had just grabbed the lamp and left home quickly. But for whatever reason not all of them were prepared for the event of the evening and five of them ran out of oil. They asked the others to spare some of their oil and share, but they refused. And it is then that the five women realize that they must leave the reception hall and go and buy more oil. Where they were to buy this oil at this time of evening is unclear but they leave. And while they went to buy the oil, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet and the door was shut. Those who had left returned to find the door locked. They had not been ready nor did they know the master of the banquet to let them in. They were not prepared for their task and faced the consequences.

If you listened to the news, read any headlines or watched any news shows this week, we know our world is in trouble. We are continuing to face this covid19 pandemic. The Province announced the 2020 budget at \$45 billion, Windsor's unemployment rate rose slightly to 10.8%, and food bank use across Windsor-Essex has risen these last 8 months. With the uncertainty of US politics at this time there has also been repercussions on international trade. Were we and are we ready for this? NO. But there is hope for the time to come. Just like there was hope for the people of France as they awaited for the day when the Allies would stop Germans from taking over their country. There is hope because in all things we are not alone.

We might wonder in some moments as to where God is as people are becoming sick with the virus that has claimed so many lives around the world. Yet there are some people who do not believe it is real. It is real because we know that the provincial health care budget alone has been increased again to be ready for the influx of sick people who test positive for covid19. And with more people out of work the strain on food banks has caused the appeal for more food and all the food banks need to be stocked and ready.

But what about you? Are you ready for what is to come? Maybe what we need to do is reflect back for a moment and remember what men and women did in years past to be ready to serve and reach out to help others. They got involved, risked their lives and they were committed to preserving what was most important in life including family, lifestyle and faith. They stood ready to fight on land, in the air and by sea until victory was won and if they died they knew that their families would be cared for because of their self-sacrifice.

As we pause today and this week we will hear world war stories of the past century. We might also experience the next generation's desire to play war video games which although seem real may not be historically or factually correct. IT is when the real stories of the past interconnect with what is perceived as accurate that true remembrance occurs. In these last years with anniversaries of specific battles, or D-Day and V-E day, many soldiers who had be very young returned to the place where history was made. They returned not to acquire another medal, or reminisce about specific landmarks or friends lost, but to face the past and make peace with it in their hearts and minds. We honour them this day and remember that what they did enables us to live in freedom.

Let us remember the acts of bravery, of sacrifice and of coming home to build Canada as a nation of peace. Lest we forget. Let us give thanks and praise to God for through Christ's teaching, we will be ready for what lies ahead for our hope is in the name of God.

Let us pray

Holy God we honour those who served, fought and died in times of conflict because they were ready to answer the call. Enable us to also to be ready as you call us to serve one another in faith, in love and with hope. Equip us to share our stories of faith for through your presence with us we are not alone no matter what comes our way. Hear our prayers O God. Amen.