



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

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## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 12 November 2023 – Pentecost 24

Our Service today has been prepared by  
Kimberley Nielsen, one of our Lay Preachers

### **Welcome**

Kia ora, and welcome to our service this morning! My name is Kimberley, and I am one of the lay preachers here at Kaurihohore. As you may know, this summer we and our sister congregation St John's are trying out a few new ways to meet and worship together but in ways that don't stretch our worship teams too thin as part of our 'Sunday Samplers Series'. Today is one of the days that we are sampling a new way to do things. While I have prepared a service this morning, I will not be preaching a sermon. Instead, I have a video of a sermon preached earlier this year by Nadia Bolz-Weber that just happened to be on the same passage as our gospel reading this morning. It's on the parable of the 10 foolish bridesmaids, sometimes called the ten foolish virgins. Nadia offers a perspective that I had not heard before and brings so much encouragement to us all – you're going to love it!

But first things first, we begin this morning with our call to worship:

### **Call to Worship**

Give ear, O people, to God's teachings.

**For in parable and story God's wisdom is revealed.**

Let us listen for things we have heard and known, for the stories that are so important that we keep telling them over and over again.

**Let us remember God's glorious works in our own words.**

People of God, be a witness and a light. Share what you know and trust in the goodness of God. Together, let us raise our hope and remember every opening and possibility.

**Let us worship God in wonder and truth.**

### **Opening Prayer**

You do not want us to be ignorant of your dreams and hopes for us, God of holiness, so you speak to us in parables, so we might pay careful attention to your words; you tell us stories about our grandparents in the faith, so we might become mentors to our grandchildren, and theirs. Filling us with the holy oil of generosity and grace, you make us ready to welcome Jesus Christ into our lives, and to open our hearts to those who are in need.

On this day, we choose to serve you, God in Community, Holy in One, even as we pray as Jesus teaches us:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Hymn – Christ be our Light**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qibAAo0JiEQ>

### **Prayer of Confession**

The ads online, on TV, and everywhere we look shout: “Buy me! You deserve me! You’re only worthy with me!”

**Some days we shout back: Enough!**

And other days we let a theology and attitude of scarcity overtake us.

**On those days we allow what we have to define us, control us, and restrict us.**

God provides enough. God created each of us as enough. God creates a world of abundance.

**But our certainty of scarcity, our idolatry of the shiny, and our fears of others prevent us from gratitude, graciousness, and sharing.**

We live in an abundant world.

**Our creator makes it so.**

Move our hearts, lessen our fears in this hour.

**There is enough for all of us.**

Praise be to the God of Abundant Love!

**Praise to the God of Enough!**

### **Prayer of Illumination**

Lord, may your Holy Word be for us the seed of new possibilities that blossom in ways we cannot yet imagine. Amen.

### **Readings**

We’re going slightly off script with our readings this morning. The Matthew passage is our lectionary Gospel reading for the day, and I have chosen to pair it with the Genesis reading as this features heavily alongside it the sermon.

- Genesis 3:1-13
- Matthew 25:1-13

## **Hymn – Lord Be My Vision (HFTC 545)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zhqS1A3JB4>

## **Sermon – Listening to Snakes and Bridesmaids – Nadia Bolz-Weber**

As I mentioned earlier, I will not be preaching a sermon this morning. Instead, I have chosen to share with you a sermon by one of my favourite preachers, Nadi Bolz-Weber. This sermon was preached by her at a service on 23 February 2023 at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado, where she is theologian in residence. As I said earlier, her take on the parable of the foolish bridesmaids is one I have not heard before. I hope it encourages you as much as it does me.

You can watch Nadia preach her sermon here, or read it below.

[https://www.youtube.com/live/bB32bLW3tqE?si=zb\\_fjivHsUysKYh0&t=1775](https://www.youtube.com/live/bB32bLW3tqE?si=zb_fjivHsUysKYh0&t=1775)

I'm not sure about you, but to me, the parable of the "foolish bridesmaids" sounds almost exactly like an anxiety dream I'd wake up from in a panic.

It feels like Jesus is saying the Kingdom of God is like a bad dream where I'm supposed to go pick someone important up from the airport like . . . Dolly Parton, but I forget to fill my gas tank and then I'm idling outside baggage claim for so long I doze off and then when Dolly Parton finally texts she's almost there, my car starts beeping that it's nearly out of gas *but* then I realize the dude in front of me has a gas can strapped in the back of his monster truck and I ask if he can help me out but he just points to the overpriced gas station outside the airport and in a panic I use the fumes in my tank to get there but then when I'm filling up my Subaru I see Dolly Parton drive off in the passenger side of the dude's F150 and she doesn't even return my wave - like she doesn't even know me.

So stay alert. The kingdom of God is like that.

So, um what exactly are we to take from this parable?

That we should not rely on others? That we should not give to those who ask of us?

I mean, that would be weird wouldn't it, if Jesus just suddenly took back everything he said about generosity and self-giving and instead gave us a parable about how we should be stingy and self-reliant?

I mean, if you are thinking that this parable doesn't sound like most of the other stuff Jesus said, you're not alone. I mean here's 3 other verses from Matthew's Gospel

***Matthew 5:42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you***

***Matthew 19:21 If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor***

***Matthew 23:13 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces.***

I mean, given all of that, what could possibly be the moral of the story in this parable of the foolish bridesmaids?

And *that* my friends— that assumption we have that our job is to find the moral instruction in these texts is what I like to call, The Parable Trap.

Welcome to it.

See, there are many things you *can* do with a parable: You can meditate on Jesus' parables, struggle with them, enter into them, speak of them but the very best way to suck the life out of a parable is by attempting to figure out the so-called moral of the story.

Because parables aren't about morals. Parables are about truth - hidden, unyielding, disruptive truth.

And not to put too fine a point on it, but Jesus said that “you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”. Interestingly enough he didn’t say “you will know the morals and the morals will set you free”

So I insist on trying to find *truth* in this parable that’s slightly more nuanced than some Boy Scout sentiment about always being prepared. I insist on digging to find the good news that Jesus has hidden for us in this parable of the 10 bridesmaids. And the reason I insist on finding the good news is because I need some good news right now. I’m desperate for it. I need a truth that can set me free, because I’ve tried half-truths and fake news and they just leave me wanting to up my meds.

So, my friends, some texts we must wrestle with. They will not hand over the goods so easily. And sometimes, the way to find the good news in a text is to use the rest of scripture as like, a secret decoder ring. So, I promise you that when read alongside the Garden of Eden, The feeding of the 5,000 and a lovely verse from the book of Revelation, the parable of the foolish bridesmaids absolutely shines with good news.

Here we go:

Years ago when I was still in my parish, a parishioner of mine posted something on Facebook that said she just saw a big snake on her hike. I replied “as your pastor I feel that I should say, if the snake starts talking....don't listen”

If you remember, things started really unravelling for us the first time we listened to a snake, the world’s first Instagram influencer.

When Adam and Eve were in the garden we are told they were naked and unashamed... until they listened to a snake – until they listened to a voice other than God’s tell them who they were and what they really needed. And then they believed that voice more than they believed God’s voice– and they went for it, they clicked on the link, so to speak - - and as a result, they were filled with shame for the very first time and tried to hide from God, and then God calls out and says

where are you...and they say we are naked and afraid, and God says “Wait. who told you you were naked?!?”

Who told you you were naked? My money is on the snake.

Which brings us back to the bridesmaids.

I don't think the foolish bridesmaids were foolish because they didn't bring extra oil. Or because they feel asleep.

I think they were foolish for listening to the other bridesmaids tell them what to do and they were certainly foolish for doing it.

I think they were foolish in the exact same way we are foolish.

They were foolish because they listened when voices other than God's tried to tell them who they were. They listened to those whispering voices telling them that they can only approach the groom if they have already met all their own needs first. And here's what really got to me this week as I studied this text, it was reading this verse from Revelation 22 **In the city of God, they will not need the light of a lamp, for the Lord God will give them light**

I mean, think about it. If at midnight the guy who was on watch said *hey, wake up, the groom is coming!* The groom must have had a lamp or torch of some kind, right? **How else could the groom have been seen from that far away at midnight?** The foolish bridesmaids weren't foolish because they didn't bring back up oil, they were foolish because instead of trusting that the light of Christ was enough to shine the way, they wasted all that time and energy and money trying to get their own because someone shamed them into thinking they could never approach the Lord with their lack. Rather than just trusting that the light of those around them and the light of the groom was enough they assumed they had to provide their own— and then they were so consumed by the shame of not being enough, they busied themselves trying to fix it – so much so that they missed the wedding banquet.

They missed everything.

Of course the bridegroom said “I don’t know you” because they hadn’t come to him in their need and lack and want. **But Jesus knows us not by our independence from him, Jesus knows us by our need of him, for which we should never be ashamed.**

They, perhaps not unlike us, mistakenly assumed that all God is interested in is our strength, our preparedness, and goodness. When what God really asks of us is to know our need for him.

Which brings me to the feeding of the 5,000 when Jesus asks the disciples what they have with them to feed the crowd – do you remember? He said what do you have and they say *nothing – nothing but a couple loaves and a few fish*. They say it like it’s a problem. **But do we not have a God who created the universe out of nothing, that can put flesh on dry bones nothing, that can put life in a dusty womb nothing, I mean...let’s face it... NOTHING is like God’s favorite raw material to work with.** Perhaps God looks upon that which we dismiss as “nothing” “Insignificant” “worthless” and says “Ha! Now *that* I can do something with”.

So, my sweet friends, all that is to say - the Kingdom of God is not like an existential anxiety dream.

Maybe you are sitting here today having listened to a voice other than God’s. And maybe the story it told you is so familiar that you think it’s the truth. But consider that maybe you’ve been listening to the wrong voices all along. Listen and maybe you can hear God saying, *Wait. Who told you you were naked? Who told you that you have to lie to be loved? Who told you your body is not beautiful? Who told you that your only value is in your excellence? Who told you that what you have done (good or bad) is actually who you are?* Who told you that? My money is on the snake. And he’s a damned liar. Always has been.



So, when snakes and bridesmaids start talking blasphemy, don't listen. You don't have to show up with everything you need. The light of Christ is bright enough. And always has been. Amen.

Source = <https://thecorners.substack.com/p/listening-to-snakes-and-bridesmaids>

### **Hymn – Just As I Am (HFTC 440)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0XjqRZ9W\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0XjqRZ9W_8)

### **Offering Dedication**

Will your offering be effective?

**We will use our gifts to bring closer God's kingdom:**

**where the hungry will know regular meals,**

**where the thirsty will have enough water to drink,**

**where the immigrant and refugee will be welcomed,**

**where those who lack adequate clothing will receive it,**

**where those who are sick will know friendship and healing.**

With these gifts at work in the faith community, God's kingdom will come closer.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **Community Time**

- Notices
- Celebrations
- Prayer Requests

## **Prayers of the People**

God our parent, Jesus promised to always be with those who follow him, we pray for those who live alone and those who are lonely.

**We hold all to the light of your love, O God.**

God of justice, Jesus spoke truth to power. We pray for those who suffer for speaking the truth, for your prophets of every generation. We pray for prisoners and for people and organizations that work for the release of those unjustly imprisoned.

**We hold all to the light of your love, O God.**

God of compassion, Jesus spoke out for children. We pray for children everywhere, for those who silently cry out for nurture, for those who live in fear and for those who live in poverty. We pray for the children of this community of faith. May they grow in the security of knowing they are your children and part of the Body of Christ.

**We hold all to the light of your love, O God.**

We pray for this community of faith, for those who hold positions of authority and responsibility. We pray that we might be so held in your love for each one of us that our relationships are free from envy, competitiveness, and divisiveness. As the Body of Christ, may we embody your love, truth, and grace.

**We hold all to the light of your love, O God.**

Bring all your children into the spacious place of your love.

**Amen.**

## **A Prayer of Lament and Intercession for Palestine and Israel**

*Adapted from: <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/article/16090-prayer-of-lament-and-intercession-for-palestine-and-israel>*

God of love and justice, our hearts are perplexed, paralyzed and broken at the recent carnage in Palestine and Israel. We lament the loss of life and the suffering of so many innocent people. We are shocked at the inhumanity of soldiers and militants.

Our prayers for peace seem to go unanswered. We wish you would intervene. We cling to your promise of a different world, but we see so few signs of its fulfillment. We do not understand. Still, we continue to believe that you desire life and peace for all people.

Holy Spirit, strengthen our resolve to advocate for peace, justice, equality, and compassion for all. Don't let us turn away. Comfort all who are overwhelmed with loss—loss of life, loss of homes, loss of safety and security.

God of the vulnerable and the oppressed, neutralize the power of those who thirst for domination and control. Renew the energy and creativity of those committed to nonviolent resistance and change.

God of all nations, guide our own government to respond in ways that support the legitimate rights of all, especially those who are most vulnerable, those who continue to suffer after decades of occupation, dispossession, and denial of basic human rights and those who fear for their safety.

May your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Yours is the kingdom, the power, the glory, now and forever.

Amen

### **Hymn – O Love that will not let me go (HFTC 486)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJOUtCModPI>

### **Blessing/Benediction**

As you begin the new week, remember:

When snakes and bridesmaids start talking blasphemy, don't listen.

You don't have to show up with everything you need.

The light of Christ is bright enough.

And always has been. Amen.

**Sung Amen x3**