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# *The Kingdom of Heaven Will Be Like This*



*"Portrait Collage (Inspired by David Hockney),"* by allan123772

Sunday, November 9, 2026
Matthew 25:1 - 13

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

Jesus tells many parables and I think of this one as being one of the most famous: it's sometimes referred to as the "parable of the wise and foolish virgins". In the translation of the Bible I had, the title was "the wise and foolish bridesmaids". The word that's being translated here is *parthenoi,* which means "young woman", and it has the connotation of being virginal, but it doesn't need to be. It is the word that is used to describe Mary as she enters into the story of the nativity.

Whatever we call this parable, it's easy to look at it and want to do some insertions and substitutions. As Jeffery asked, "who's Jesus in this story"? Who are the wise young women? Who are the foolish young women? Who's the crier? And in that mystery of mysteries, who is the bride, who never shows up in this parable? And it could be easy just to say, well, so and so's Jesus, and I'm this one, but I want to be that one. Because that's

how the parable ends, right? Jesus admonishing us to be awake and to be prepared. And that's all fine and good.

But as I was reading this passage, I was struck by something I remembered from the Gestalt therapeutic tradition. It says that when we dream, everything in the dream is us. This character and that character, this thing and this place, this building and this season. Our dreams are a projection of us in our fullness. And I think of parables as being certainly something like dreams. They are Christ's dreams that try to show us not directly, but indirectly, his message to the world.

What if we were to look at this parable and see it not as Jesus is this and I am that, but this whole parable is me? What does it do to our understanding of what he announces the kingdom will be?

We are perhaps the foolish young women, unprepared, distracted, sleepy. But perhaps we are also the wise young women. Perhaps sequentially, perhaps exactly at the same time. Perhaps there are pieces of us that have been prepared even as other attributes of us have fallen asleep. Perhaps we are already lighting our lamps, participating in the enlightenment of our lives and the life of the world. And perhaps, in certain areas of our lives, we don't even have oil in our lamps. Perhaps we are also the crier who understands the coming in our own lives of the power of Christ, recognizes its proximity to our lives, even if it remains for some time right out of reach. Perhaps we are the missing bride. Perhaps there are things within ourselves that we're told we should have, that we're expected to have, expected to be, and yet they're nowhere to be seen. Perhaps - and maybe this is the most radical suggestion of the parable - perhaps we are also the Christ; the bridegroom who comes even if delayed.

This is what the kingdom will be. Not some kind of air-conditioned resort that looks like a Four Seasons at the end of time, but something here and now, which is a mix of being awake and being asleep; of light and darkness, of enlightenment and laziness, of knowing the Christ is on his way and of being that Christ at his rival.

I think in this possible understanding of this parable, the kingdom is already here and we're already in it. And it's us in all of our multivalent lives.

I opened the bulletin with an excerpt of a poem by Taliesin. Taliesin is an ancient poet in the Welsh tradition, and his poems are collected in a book called the *Book of Taliesin*. Hear these words from one of the poems:

> I was in many forms before my release.
> I was a slim enchanted sword.
> I believe in its play.
> I was a drop in the air,
> the sparkling of stars,

a word inscribed,
a book in priest's hands,
a lantern shining for a year and a half.
I was path.
I was eagle.
I was a coracle at sea.
I was bubbles in beer.

Taliesin is interested in what makes a great poet and he always says it doesn't matter if you are good with words or well-read or if you have seen the different experiences of life. He claims for himself that he is not just this poet, this human standing before you, but across time and space he has been all things and that is why he can write about it.

Perhaps we can recognize the kingdom because we have been all parts of it already. Because if we didn't know it, how would we know it when we saw it? How would we know what it means to be a sleepy young woman or a prepared young woman or a crier or a missing bride or the bridegroom who is arriving late if in some way we didn't already recognize ourselves in this parable?

So, I think of those words in the Lord's prayer: “thy kingdom come, thy will be done”. And it is not then a story about some other time and some other place and some other people. But it's you and me right now in this world, right now.  Welcome home.

Amen.