

All you have to do is show up; show up on your good days, show up on your bad days, show up primped and shiny or grimy and sloppy, knowing what to say or not having a clue. All you have to do is show up.

In our parable today, which is often called the Parable of the Foolish Bridesmaids, five out of ten of the bridesmaids have not brought enough oil to allow their lamps to burn until the bridegroom arrives. They try to get more from the ones who brought enough oil but are turned down. So, they leave the house and go out to get more oil. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons they are called foolish. Where are they going to get oil in the middle of the night? Nevertheless, they do find some, but return too late to greet the bridegroom and enter the celebration.

Knowing this about the story, it would be so easy to divide and categorize the ten bridesmaids into two groups – the wise and foolish, the prepared and unprepared, the good and the bad, the winners and the losers, the welcomed and the rejected. Looking at it this way I am reminded of the Matthew story that I preached on about another wedding feast, where the invitees refused to show up and the rabble from the town ended up being the welcomed guests. Good/bad, in or out; it is so easy to think in these kinds of dichotomous terms for this story as well. However, that would be to ignore what the text says. In our Gospel today, all ten bridesmaids were a part of the kingdom. All ten were invited to the wedding banquet and they all went to meet the bridegroom. They

all became drowsy, and they all fell asleep. All ten had lamps and intended and were meant to carry the light. The difference between the two groups is that half of them didn't show up with their light. Half of the group missed the point of the whole venture by concentrating on something other than the arrival of the bridegroom. Half of them, despite all their good intentions, lost their light. And instead of carrying that light into the celebration they didn't show up.

Planning a wedding is an awesome task, for many weddings it takes up the better portion of a year. There are so many details, and everyone involved is concentrating on making this a perfect day for all the invitees, but most importantly the bride and groom. The truth is, however, that if there is anything to ponder or fret about at a wedding, or during its planning, it is not that the flowers won't arrive on time, or the wedding photographer forgets his or her camera, or that Uncle Floyd forgets to pick up his tuxedo, it is whether the wedding should be taking place at all. Are the bride and groom ready for the marathon of life that awaits them after they make their weighty promises to God? I can't remember anyone in all the weddings that I have been involved in worry that maybe this ceremony won't be pleasing to God; or that the bride and groom have not seriously thought and planned for their lives beyond that day. For most of the people involved, the wedding planning seems to bypass and ignore the central point of the wedding; that it is the opening portal into a new life in which two people will need to be there for each other every day. With this wedding, they are giving up solitary wants and needs and becoming bonded in a way that bares them completely to another with all their strength and more importantly with all their weaknesses. After the excitement, celebration, and joy of the wedding day, the couple will have to 'show up' to each other

and to the world in a new way; for they are no longer in a wedding, they are in a marriage.

The foolish bridesmaids today had no light, because of their oversight in not bringing enough oil. But the main source of their foolishness is that of focusing on something other than the arrival of the bridegroom, their lack of oil, causing them not to show up.

Our family service last Sunday focused on the light inside of each of us. We sang 'This Little Light of Mine' and recessed into dinner to 'We are Marching in the Light of God'. Light as a metaphor for God is so clearly understood by all of us; especially children who may fear the dark. Young and old, we are all called to be carriers of the light. "You are the light of the world", Jesus says in the fifth chapter of Matthew. "Let your light shine before others". To withhold our light, to not show up with all that we are, we are adding darkness to the world that the world certainly does not need.

Every day the world looks darker and darker, so it is up to us not to add to that by retreating into ourselves by withholding and hiding our light. We always have a choice to either add to the light of the world or add to its darkness. And, while we can't solve the big problems that loom ever present in the dark corners of war, homelessness, abuse, and hatred, we can show up bringing our light into our own lives and the those around us.

We can form meaningful relationships by being open and receptive to the needs of others. We can rid ourselves of grudges and resentments and stop nurturing old offenses by being willing to forgive. We can make the primary relationships in our lives be the priority rather than placing ourselves at the center. We can turn to peaceful

resolution of conflict by working for justice, recognizing the dignity of every human being. We can learn to listen to those who may see the world completely differently from us; opening us to new truths, ideas, or possibilities and beginning to break down the walls that divide us.

I can not do this if I don't show up. I cannot do this if I lose sight of the point of my value system which is to be in the world as a positive force. I am, as we all are required to show up.

This piece of poetry lent itself to my point. And while it is not written by a well-known poet, it is called 'One Day'

People will ask you  
How did you do it  
How did you let it all out  
How did you speak and create  
And you'll turn to them  
And smile and tell them  
Of how, all you did, to get to here, was just  
Show up  
Every day  
Just as you were for that day  
You let the message be the message  
You committed to it  
Found clarity  
Found purpose  
Found meaning  
And all you had to do  
Was nothing at all  
Be nothing special at all  
Just show up  
As you.

*Katrina Ruth*

Most of us do not ponder the second coming of Jesus as much as those in the first century, for many of us have come to believe as St. John tells us, that the Kingdom is already in our midst, and breaks forth where people are transformed by the love of God made known to us in the risen Christ. Jesus is here. The light of Christ is in everyone and shines as brightly today as it did in the time of Matthew. Our jobs and roles in the world as Christians are to take the words of the dismissal at the end of the service seriously and show up in all our worldly venues with those words in our heart: "Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit". And we say to that, "Thanks be to God".