

A Sermon for Robbinsdale United Church of Christ

by. Rev. T. Michael Rock

Sunday, November 12, 2006

Scripture Readings: Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20

Matthew 25:1-13

Sermon Title: Wisdom and Foolishness

(open with prayer)

A funny thing happened on the way to the sermon, because sermon titles sometimes do odd things. Two years ago on Stewardship Sunday I preached a largely forgettable sermon on my second Sunday in this pulpit on the story of Ruth and Naomi. The title of the sermon was "Money and Sex". When I went to type in the title of this one, I was caught by the irony that our relationship has matured in a way that has brought us from "Money and Sex" to "Wisdom and Foolishness". I'll refrain from passing judgment on the juxtaposition and instead I'll just celebrate the movement that we are all a part of. I also want to celebrate on this day that the election is over, and even though votes are still being counted and some folks feel like they won and others like they lost. We cannot forget that we are all related. The church ought to always be the place that reminds us that our futures are connected. May each of us continue in the political far beyond our vote in order that whoever we send to city hall, the state house, or to Washington, they're two fold responsibility is to deal with the events of the day, and to prepare a place of peace and safety for our children and grandchildren. Every politician is elected not for their own self interest, but as stewards of people's lives and of all creation. Being a steward is an awesome task, and there have been great stewards on both sides of the political aisle. These folks get elected time and time again, not because they have the most money, but because they take seriously the mandate that they are to create a world of peace and safety for the children and grandchildren of those that vote

for them.

Stewards stay in office. Those that act out of concern for their own interest or the interest of only their friends get voted out. Take a look at history and it will prove that even corrupt politicians can win elections if the people believe that they are good stewards of the future. It is how trust is built in the halls of politics, on the streets of our town and in the pews of the church. If you believe that the church is responsible in our stewardship and how we manage the life of this congregation, then your giving is probably going to increase. If you believe in the future direction of this church than you will probably strive to give more. If you believe that we are concerned with both the issues of today and creating a spiritual home for our children and grandchildren, then you will probably give even more. This is what stewardship is about. It is about building our trust in one another. It is about doing things together that we could never do alone. It is about believing that we are called by God to not just sit on the sideline and watch the world go by, but we are called to vote and participate in this creation called Robbinsdale United Church of Christ.

One time Jesus was asked about the kingdom of God and he told this story about ten bridesmaids. Jesus talked about the bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to come and signal that wedding was "on". You see, there was a negotiation first between the two families. Once the contract was settled the bridegroom went in search of the bride. He arrived at night and woke the bridesmaids to join him in the celebration. Well each bridesmaid was to carry a light so that they could be seen. Five of the bridesmaids brought extra oil for their lamps and five did not. Five were prepared and five were not. Five joined the celebration and five did not. In a church that proclaims inclusion and sharing as core values, this story can seem very harsh. Some get in, and some do not. Some ministries thrive and some do not. Some people feel welcome and some do not.

It would be easy to see this story as descriptive about the way things are: tighten our belts, prepare for the future, watch our resources and be careful of those that try to ask for what we have. This interpretation is easy,

but like most easy answers it is also wrong.

Instead, Jesus is describing this truth. The kingdom of God is not about sharing it is about living. The kingdom of God, or what I like to call it the Kin-dom of God, is about preparing our own hearts and minds for the invitation. The question here is simply, are you ready? Have you prepared your heart, soul, strength and mind for the invitation to the party? The question is, are we sitting back and waiting, or are we preparing for the invitation that is on the way.

To be wise on this day is to know what is coming and to get ready for that invitation. You know what is coming. Our church is growing our Sunday School is growing, we have been served incredibly well by volunteer for the last several years, and our program grew bigger and brighter. We will call a person to be on staff to serve as a minister to children and youth. Our children will invite us to offer even more. Will we be prepared? We have committed to being a generous church to our local mission partners and to the wider United Church of Christ. That commitment will bring an invitation to give even more. Will we be prepared? We have claimed that our building is a part of our ministry and mission. We will be invited to offer it more and more to the community for a shelter for families, for peacemaking, for preparing meals, and for other ways to worship. Will we be ready? Even on the everyday task of bill paying. The utility companies will read our meter correctly this year and we will be asked to pay for our heat. Will we be ready?

This stewardship season comes at an unsure time in the economy and people are both stretched by household budgets and fearful of the future. This can be very scary, but only if we haven't prepared ourselves with a community that will help sustain us. I believe we can do even more than our budget suggests. I believe we can develop a fund that will pay a gas or electric bill for a family when times get hard. I believe we can grow our endowment through planned giving so we can always have enough staff to respond to our ministry. I believe our congregation will continue to grow in both numbers and expressions of diversity and joy. I believe that in

five years our youth program will be a vibrant part of our church life, if we are prepared for their invitation. I believe that there will be a family that will invest a six-figure amount in the Opportunity Next Door and that it will represent our mission at our doorstep for the next thirty years. In short, I believe in you. Imagine all the families we could assist if only we were prepared. Imagine all the joy we could have if only we were prepared. Imagine being there in kin-dom of God and all we have do is to be prepared. The invitation is on the way, the bridegroom is arriving soon. Are you ready?

AMEN.