24th Sunday after Pentecost: November 8, 2026
By: Deacon Ben Remmert

Amos 5:18-24 Psalm 70 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Matthew 25:1-13

Coffee or tea? This is my most asked question in my ministry as I gather people together for pastoral care visits or meetings. For some, coffee is the go-to. It's what gets us moving in the morning and helps us through that afternoon slump. And sometimes, let's be honest, it's what gets us through the day! As someone who drinks coffee every day, I've become familiar with all the coffee slogans:

"Good to the Last Drop!" (Maxwell) "The Best Part of Waking Up..." (Folgers)
"America Runs on Dunkin." (Dunkin) "Always Fresh." (Tim Horton)
"To inspire and nurture the human spirit." (Starbucks)

But there's one slogan that has always stuck with me. It's from Caribou Coffee: "Life is short. Stay awake for it." There is some truth to this statement. Life is short. We only get so many days, so many opportunities, and so many moments with the people around us. We should make the most of them. But there's another kind of staying awake that no amount of caffeine can fix. I'm talking about spiritual sleepiness.

It's what happens when we get so caught up in our daily routines that we just go through the motions. We get up, go to work/school, take care of our responsibilities, and do it all over again tomorrow. And somewhere along the way, we stop noticing the people around us. We become so focused on our own lives that we miss the struggles and needs of others. We're physically awake, but spiritually, we might be asleep.

And that's what makes today's Gospel reading so interesting. Jesus tells a parable about ten bridesmaids waiting for a groom to arrive at a wedding celebration. In Jesus' day, weddings were big events, sometimes lasting an entire week. The bridesmaids had an important job: wait for the groom, welcome him, and join the procession to the celebration. The only problem was that nobody knew exactly when he would arrive.

So, they wait. And wait. And wait some more. Eventually, all ten of them fell asleep. Then, in the middle of the night, someone shouts, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" Everyone wakes up and gets their lamps ready. But five of the bridesmaids had brought extra oil, while the other five hadn't. Their lamps were running out, and they weren't prepared for the delay. The unprepared bridesmaids rush off to find more oil, but while they're gone, the groom arrives. The celebration begins, and the door is shut. By the time they return, they've missed it. Here's something important about this story: all ten bridesmaids fell asleep. Not just the unprepared ones. All ten! So, I don't think Jesus is simply telling us that we need to

stay awake all night. The difference was that some were prepared for what might happen, and others weren't. And that raises an important question: What does it mean for us to be prepared?

It reminds me of something I was thinking about this past week. Last Sunday, we remembered the saints of our faith, and I couldn't help but think about my dad who taught me, "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today." He learned that from his own father, growing up on a farm where there was always another chore or responsibility waiting to be done. That lesson has certainly stuck with me. In fact, it usually comes to mind around this time of year when it's time to take down all the Halloween decorations from inside and outside of my house after weeks of celebrations and preparations and start preparing for Advent and Christmas season. But if I'm honest, sometimes I've taken that lesson a little too seriously. I've worked too much, I missed opportunities to rest, and I become so focused on the next thing that I've forgotten to enjoy what's happening right now. And I have a feeling some of you might understand that.

We're pretty good at keeping busy, aren't we? There's always another project, another meeting, another email, another thing on the to-do list. Sometimes we get so busy preparing for tomorrow that we forget to live today. And I think that's an important distinction when we hear Jesus telling us to stay awake. He's not simply telling us to work harder or fill every minute with something productive. He's calling us to pay attention. To notice where God is at work.

Martin Luther offers some helpful insight in his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come":

> "God's kingdom comes indeed without our praying for it, but we ask in this prayer that it may come also to us."[1]

God's kingdom doesn't depend on us making it happen. God is already at work. God's kingdom comes to us through the people we meet, the circumstances we face, and the opportunities we have to love and serve our neighbors. Our job is to stay awake enough to recognize it and as our reading from Amos reminds us, to act with justice and righteousness.

We hear that same message in Jeremiah 22:3, which calls God's people to defend those who are oppressed and care for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Faith isn't just something we talk about. It's something we put into practice. It's standing up for those who are marginalized, welcoming those who have been rejected, and caring for those who have no one else to care for them. And sometimes, it's simply

[1] Martin Luther's Small Catechism, Explanation of Second Petition of Lord's Prayer.

being kind to one another. Because staying awake doesn't mean trying to fix every problem. Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is slow down and pay attention. Who needs a listening ear? Who could use a friendly phone call? Who needs a little encouragement, understanding, or grace? And don't forget to offer that same grace to yourself. We all need it.

So, dear friends, here's what I hope we take away from today: being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not doing more, It's about noticing more. Noticing where God is at work. Noticing the people around us. Noticing the opportunities we have to bring more love, compassion, justice, and grace into this world. We don't know what tomorrow will bring, but we know God is at work among us today. So, let's not get so caught up in preparing for tomorrow that we miss what God is doing right now. Let's stay awake to God's presence. Let's stay awake to God's kingdom. And let's stay awake to the opportunities we have each day to make God's love known in the world. Because life is short. Stay awake for it. Amen.