SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhope || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

32nd Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 25: 1-13

Welcome to what looks like one of the most unusual and the daftest sounding of our Gospel stories. Maybe Jesus told it just like this, or Matthew's memory or research led him to relate it this way. Like strange ads on television, it's easier to remember odd scenarios than routine ones.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, people thought that he would return triumphant and the world would end soon. Matthew is writing some forty-five years later and some folks were losing any sense of urgency about amending their lives and preparing for judgement. Matthew's recall of this story becomes relevant. It describes a time of waiting by some wise and some foolish individuals, coming to the obvious conclusion that casual and foolish doesn't work – you'll be caught unprepared.

Jesus told graphic stories. This one echoes his other parable about building sensibly on rock or stupidly on sand. A telling lesson about hearing the word of God and acting on it or hearing the same word but, with the best of intentions, neglecting to follow through. The Lord leaves us with only two options. We decide. No one can do this for us. During this coming Advent we'll be reminded to 'Stay awake!' Wise disciples don't sleepwalk through Jesus' teaching. He asks us to 'Seek first the Kingdom of God'.

How do we understand what's meant by 'The Kingdom of God?' It's not a place. Jesus talks of the Kingdom as a mindset – being steadily conscious of the presence of God within us and so choosing to see everything through this lens so God's love for us drives our behaviour. It shapes our prayer, our values and our relationships. The old penny catechism's cardinal virtues come to mind - prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. We're told they're called cardinal from the Latin word for a hinge. As the small book says, these are the hinges on which all other moral virtues turn.

We each have what it takes. Like the women in the parable, we carry a light but need to take steps to keep it shining. The foolish ones have to look elsewhere to maintain their light. But the answer lies within us and we never know how much time we have. Like the early Christians, we're challenged and encouraged to get and keep our house in order so we're not caught out but are prepared to greet the Lord when he comes.

We could usefully reflect on what receiving the Lord in Communion at Mass means to us. This requires regular time and thought. How does this gift of Jesus make a difference to the rest of our day? The quote from Pope Leo with this page today reminds us – in addition to this being about me and God, we "are meant to have an impact on society". Jesus calls us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Rise and shine!

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Pope Leo continues to point out the importance of our neighbourhoods

One structural issue that cannot realistically be resolved and needs to be addressed as quickly as possible has to do with the locations, neighbourhoods, homes and cities where the poor live and spend their time. All of us appreciate the beauty of those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others! Yet, at the same time, we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture. For the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet.

All the members of the People of God have a duty to make their voices heard, albeit in different ways, in order to point out and denounce such structural issues, even at the cost of appearing foolish or naïve. Unjust structures need to be recognised and eradicated by the force of good, by changing mindsets but also, with the help of science and technology, by developing effective policies for societal change. It must never be forgotten that the gospel message has to do not only with an individual's personal relationship with the Lord, but also with something greater: the Kingdom of God (cf Luke 4: 43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society. We are seeking God's Kingdom.

Dilexi Te paras 96 and 97