

Remembrance Sunday 8th November 2020 – Trinity 22

8 th November 3 rd Before Advent Trinity 22 Remembrance Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 10.50 Holy Communion Halling	I Thessalonians 4 vv 13-18 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 1-13 p994
---	---	---

LORD, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Be prepared is the motto of the Scout Association, given to them by the founder, Lord Robert Baden-Powell. The two words begin with the same initials as his name. I should know, because I was a cub and a scout and have read *Scouting for Boys*, but I looked up *Be Prepared* on the internet and found some interesting information I didn't know about how the motto has been interpreted, not least by the founder, in various situations.

The basic explanation given by Baden-Powell is this: The scouts' motto is founded on my initials, it is: BE PREPARED, which means, you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your DUTY; *Be Prepared in Mind* by having disciplined yourself to be obedient to every order, and also by having thought out beforehand any accident or situation that might occur, so that you know the right thing to do at the right moment, and are willing to do it. *Be Prepared in Body* by making yourself strong and active and able to do the right thing at the right moment, and do it.

This is pretty inspiring. The bit about obeying orders is a reflection of the early history of the movement when scouts were envisaged as lads prepared to assist troops in the conduct of war and who might themselves have a military career in front of them. Nobody nowadays would expect young boys to serve in armed conflict and the Scout movement has rapidly expanded its range of activities from the earliest days, while maintaining the basic values propagated by Baden-Powell, to bring out the best in boys and, more recently girls as well, to fulfil their potential to be well-balanced, good citizens and to develop into adults well able to take their place in society and to have a good time while doing so as part of a worldwide fellowship. I like this further explanation by Baden-Powell. A Scout's Duty is to be Useful and to Help Others. And he is to do his duty before anything else, even though he gives up his own pleasure, or comfort, or safety to do it. When in difficulty to know which of two things to do, he must ask himself, "Which is my duty?" that is, "Which is best for other people?"—and do that one. He must Be Prepared at any time to save life, or to help injured persons. And he must do a good turn to somebody every day.

Some of Baden-Powell's other thoughts about being prepared are probably rather less relevant today – like being able to make and mend your own clothes, chop down trees, and catch, kill and cook animals for food. I was rather taken by *A scout must be able to smell well*. I knew that Baden-Powell was rightly keen on hygiene. This turns out, however, to mean being able to sniff out the enemy.

Being prepared is important in most walks of life. Preparation is obviously very important if you are going to war. You don't want to walk into an exam room unprepared. If you are giving a concert, there is a great deal to get ready: the performers rehearsing, the hall booked, tickets sold, programme planned, etc.. We've probably all found ourselves having to act unprepared. Sometimes that's because we're called upon unexpectedly to do something. Often, it is because we haven't bothered to do the preparation and then we really have nobody to blame but ourselves if it all goes wrong.

Those young women who got shut out of the marriage feast had been unprepared. The text says they were foolish. They didn't take enough oil. Their lamps went out. They weren't ready to go into the wedding feast with the bridegroom, which was the whole reason for their being there. They were too late. They were unable to fulfil their function. They found themselves shut out, the consequence of being unprepared.

The bridegroom in the story is Jesus and the underlying question is, *Are we prepared to meet Jesus?* The answer depends on how we are living our lives in the here and now. Are we doing our best to do our duty, to help other people, thoughtful, ready at all times to do what is right? Or are we selfish, careless, lazy, indifferent to other people, thoughtless, too self-centred and indolent to bother about behaving in the right way?

I'll leave that one with you. Am I ready to greet Jesus? Am I looking forward to joining Him at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb – which is a poetic way of describing Heaven?

In our present circumstances, we are conscious of the fragility of life. We are thinking today especially about people who have lost their lives in the course of doing their duty, specifically in war, but we might also think of those who have suffered martyrdom rather than abandon their principles, those who have themselves risked infection in order to care for the sick and frail, those who are working themselves to death in the service of others. We are also thinking of those whose lives are lost not in some great cause, but just in the normal course of life, those dying of disease or accident or simply of old age. That is the way most of us will die. We shall all die except for that one special generation S Paul refers to in our epistle reading. There are also of course those who die in bad causes: perhaps in fighting an unjust war or in the commission of serious crimes or acting foolishly and recklessly to endanger their own safety and that of other people. We shall all die.

The Bridegroom will come to the Marriage Feast. Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. Shall we be prepared to meet Him? And what has happened to all those good people who have over the centuries and in our own times died without seeing the coming of the Kingdom of God? Are they lost? Is there no hope for them? There is always hope. God is love. To know Him is to have eternal life. God is love. Those who put their faith in Him will not be disappointed. God is love, As S Paul teaches us, those who have died in the Lord are in God's keeping. We trust God to look after them. We shall see them again at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Are we ourselves prepared to meet Him and ready to dwell with Him eternally in Heaven?