

# The Morningstar

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

**EPIPHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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NO. 657 • OCTOBER 2023

Submissions 15th of the month

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## On the Verge of Arriving

*Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land... Then the Lord said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it." And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. (Deuteronomy 24:1-5, NIV)*

**A**lmost all of us have a story about a journey that has stuck in our memories. It may be an epic family trip that took you to new and exciting places, or it may be a nerve-wracking journey across the ocean as you immigrated to a new land. The common experience of humanity is one of journeying as part of life – for survival, for food, and for joy.

Throughout the fall we will be hearing in our Old Testament readings about the journey of Israel as they travel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. The journey is long and filled with tests and hardship, but throughout all of it God is present and accompanies them. On October 27th we will hear about the final days before they cross the Jordan river, the final days in which Moses is shown the land but is told that he will not be able to cross into it. He will die before the journey is completed and Joshua will be the next leader who has been ordained to give instructions.

Moses has led for forty years, but he does not see the final result of the journey. Epiphany, like all congregations, is on a journey. Parts of this journey are contained over the period of a few years (the terms of your pastors), and other parts of the journey can only be described by looking at the entire history of the church. And there are other parts of the journey which are in progress but not yet completed. Much change is appearing in our future, and many of us find ourselves like Moses, standing on the mountain top, seeing what might lay ahead, but knowing it is time to pass along the torch to the next leaders and understanding that we will not experience the end of the journey, because the journey is never finished.

It is a time of discomfort and anxiety, but also a time of anticipation. We are called to trust that God is present and leading, being excited and asked to marvel at what God is showing us, and having hope that there is something beautiful ahead for God's people.

We pray that God continues to guide our journey, just as God has journeyed with the generations who have come before us, and as God will with the generations who will follow.

**Pastor Jordan Smith**



## OCTOBER CALENDAR

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 1

18TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (GREEN)  
12:00 noon Service of the Word  
Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 6

10:00-11:00 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

### THANKSGIVING SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (GREEN)  
12:00 noon Service of the Word  
Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

### THURSDAY OCTOBER 12

7:15 p.m. Council Meeting  
(In-person & Zoom)

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 15

20TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (GREEN)  
12:00 noon Holy Communion Service  
Pastor Lisinski (In-person & Zoom)

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 20

10:00-11:00 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 22

21ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (GREEN)  
10:00 a.m. Service of the Word  
Lay Led (In-person & Zoom)

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 27

10:00-11:00 a.m. Bible Class (Zoom)

### REFORMATION SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29

REFORMATION SUNDAY (RED)  
12:00 noon Holy Communion Service  
Pastor Jordan Smith (In-person & Zoom)

#### Zoom Link to EPIPHANY LUTHERAN

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9890800583?pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09)  
pwd=R05md05jWjZBTnNwc202SWJpSG5kZz09  
Meeting ID: 989 080 0583 Passcode: 095565  
Or by phone following the prompts:  
+1 647 374 4685 Canada  
Meeting ID: 989 080 0583 Passcode: 095565

## German Worship Connections

We are happy to share opportunities for our German speaking members to worship and hear occasional sermons in your native tongue.

Pastor Katharina from St. George's in downtown Toronto will hold an occasional prayer and social gathering in Scarborough at the Schwabenclub. The next dates are scheduled for November 2 and December 14. Please speak to Ute Wentzel for more information.

Pastor Annika from Martin Luther Church has a weekly devotion that airs on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. on CHLO Radio AM530 and which is also posted on their website.

Please follow these links if you wish to hear her devotion.

**AM530 Website:** <https://am530.ca>

**Martin Luther Church Website:** <https://martinluther.ca/worship-services/radio-devotions-podcasts/>

## Thank You!

I would like to say how grateful I am for the friends and community we have at Epiphany. Through a number of tests and procedures over the last 6 months, I eventually had by-pass surgery performed at St. Michaels Hospital on July 25th, and I'm now in the early stages of cardio rehab and things are going great. Thank you, my friends.

**Greg Furan**

## Offering Envelopes

Yes, Fall is really and truly here, and planning for the coming year is in full swing.

Recently, I canvassed everyone regarding the need for new Offering Envelopes for 2024. Many thanks to you all, for your timely replies. By agreeing to continue using your current envelopes, it creates a savings of approximately \$400 in re-ordering expenses. For the few who do require new boxes, these can be readily provided from a small 'over' supply.

As I've expressed in the past, the dates on the envelopes are not what count (pun intended), it's the assigned number, which is used to log your contributions for the tax receipts.

Kindly address any related questions to me. I'm happy to help.

**With my appreciation,  
Sigrid Engler, Envelope Secretary**

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins: It's Never Too Late

(based on: Amos 5:8-24, Psalm 70, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 25:1-13)



**M**y first reading of these four texts found them rather sober, serious-sounding, and somewhat anxiety-producing: Amos talking about moving from one disaster to another (from a lion to a bear); the Psalm writer who is “poor and needy,” pleading for a quick rescue; and Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians that distinguishes between those who are “in Christ” and those who “have no hope,” which has echoes in the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25.

I must admit that the parable of the “10 virgins” has always made me uncomfortable. I am troubled by those “either/or” aspects of the parable which appear to leave no middle ground. These include the virgins: all women, no men; of the 10 virgins, half of them have oil and half of them are out of oil; half of them are called “wise” and half of them are called “foolish.” At the wedding celebration, you are either “in,” or you are “out.” You are either prepared, or you are not; the door is open, or the door is shut; you are known, or you are not known. To me, then, there is at least a 50% chance that the door of heaven will be shut if you don’t get it right. So, this has always seemed like a “bad news” parable to me, leaving me to wonder if there is good news to find and share in such a message.



To begin, we know this is a parable, a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson; yet since it is only recorded in Matthew, there is no other version for comparison or context. So, I turned

to several biblical scholars for their description and analysis. One writer’s analysis of the parable is that many Christians declare they are believers, or that they have oil, when in fact, like the disciple, Judas, they do



not (see John 6: 64). Judas, rather than the Pharisees who often tried to challenge and trick Jesus, would have been among those who heard this parable; it is an occasion when the parable is directed at the “faithful,” the disciples.



Some commentaries suggest then that this parable is about the church, which means there are, according to these writers, two types

of Christians: true or phoney, with oil or without.

Still concerned with finding “good news” in this Gospel led me to reading about the suggested symbolism in the parable: the oil as the Spirit of God, and the lamps as the vessels, or us; or the wedding feast as heaven for those admitted by the bridegroom, Christ.



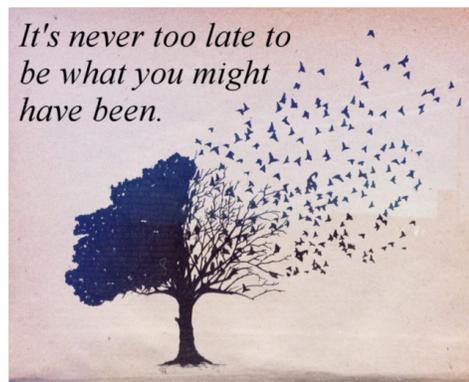
Beyond that, commentators generally agree the message is about being prepared or having enough oil, or belief, for the wedding procession (dare I say, life’s journey?). Likewise, always being prepared is important because as it says, we do not know the day or the time when Jesus will return. Curiously, and perhaps just as worrisome, one commentator suggested the day will be a day when we think the world is “going great,” and he speculated that Noah and his family entered the ark on a day that was bright and sunny without a cloud in the sky.

Another aspect of the parable concerns the rigour of always being prepared and being constantly watchful, a long game of unknowns that can be tiring: all 10 virgins fall asleep. Even the disciples in the Garden of

Gethsemane are asleep when Jesus really needs them. How does one stay on guard, stay alert? The parable seems to say either you are, or you are not prepared and ready.



Still fretting about good news in the parable, I happened to glance at a little plaque on my desk with a quote from George Eliot. George Eliot is the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, whose novels from the 1800s conduct a psychological analysis of everyday life, works such as *Silas Mariner* and *Middlemarch*. In her early years, Eliot was living a rigorously religious life devoted to good works; she later eschewed orthodox religion but maintained her belief in acting on moral obligation and good conscience. Her quote says this: *It is never too late to be what you might have been.* That,



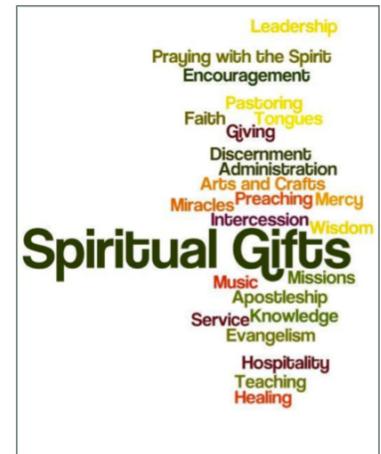
I thought, is my way forward. It's never too late! This is a perspective I believe can mitigate the absolutes of "either/or" in the parable.

Let's reconsider the Old Testament verses from Amos. We are told that dutiful, outward-only demonstrations of faith in God are pretentious and unacceptable, merely "noise." Instead, God wants to see "a mighty flood of justice—a torrent of doing good" (Amos 5:24) from the Israelites, and from us. "Justice and righteousness" are described as "ever flowing:" "...let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (v. 24). To me, the image of an "ever flowing" source of "justice and righteousness," does not coincide with the "either/or" conditions of the parable.

The difficulty in Amos appears to be the absence of justice and righteousness, which is damaging the people's relationship with God. As writers like Martin Buber and Jorg Jeremias put it, "justice and righteousness" are God's gift to us, *but* one to which we must support; we need to respond to and build on this gift or otherwise become obstructive like the people described in Amos.

Martin Luther tells us where to find God's gift of righteousness; he describes it as the "fruit and consequence of the spirit in us." So, God's justice and righteousness are already somewhere within us, and as Luther explains, with that gift we can "seek the good of another [because] it works love."

If we agree that the oil in the parable is symbolic of God's gifts from the Spirit, then we know there are different oils gifted to us, such as "justice and righteousness," or those we find in Timothy: "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Importantly, I believe the greatest "fruit and consequence" of the Spirit is the "ever flowing" oil of "faith and hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). Faith and hope



are enduring and dynamic qualities, yet we may sense that they ebb and flow in our lives, depending on how we "respond, support and build on" our store of oil. As the parable tells us, all ten virgins had oil, but like them, our oil supply can run low, meaning God's Spirit may not be evident in our lives.

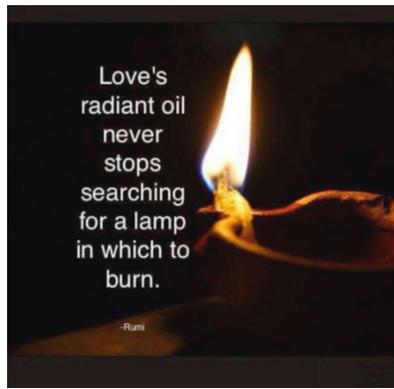
Then my husband offered a perspective that helps draw a line back to George Eliot's quote: It's never too late to be what you might have been. The 10 lamps started out with oil, but after waiting for the bridegroom, after "living," 5 of the lamps "are going out" (Matth. 25:7). My husband suggested that like the 10 virgins, we *intend* to have enough oil, to be good people, good Christians. So, we start out with



oil, intending to keep our lamps lit. Yet our intention is subject to our **h u m a n n e s s**: we work, we garden, we shop,

we take the kids to school, we have a glass of wine, we attend worship, we donate to the food bank, we cut the grass. Yet, after all, we may become "sleepy" and neglect to keep an extra supply of oil to top up our lamps, and not be "what you might have been," a lamp full of oil.

To my thinking, if “ever flowing” faith and hope is the main oil in our lamp, it seems to follow then that it is never too late to add oil to our lamps, because we are adding to what is already



there, even when it is down to a mere drop or two. Like the virgins who started out with oil-filled lamps, and who fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom, they are “those who have fallen asleep in [Jesus]” (1 Thess. 4:14): not faithless humans, just humans. This suggests to me that we can add more oil to our lamps, our lives, even if it is one drop at a time with the support of the Spirit. Consider



the things that add oil to our lamps, like prayer, Bible study, worship, neighbourliness, kindness, service, love, and forgiveness. I believe these things can add light to our everyday lives and will

help keep the supply of every oil from the Spirit topped up. Luther simplified it this way, with a twist on the symbol of the lamp: “...let each one see to it that he has these two together: the oil, which is true faith and trust in Christ; and the lamps, the vessel, which is the outward service toward your neighbour. The whole Christian life consists in these two things: Believe God. Help your neighbour. The whole Gospel teaches this.”

So, even with just a drop or two of oil remaining within us, I’m confident that it’s never too late to



add more oil, and to add the oil we need in the way Jesus tells us, which is simply to “love one another.” AMEN.

*Denise Dennis*

### COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPS

CHAIRPERSONS	(C) COUNCIL MEMBER
Council Chair	Geoff Crewe (C)
Council Vice-Chair	Denise Dennis (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Greg Furan (C)
Councillor-at-Large	Gord Munro (C)
Education Committee	Open
Finance Committee	Geoff Crewe (C)
Property Committee	Open
Seniors Group	Ute Wentzel
Stewardship Committee	Denise Dennis (C)
Worship & Music	Marg Crewe
Visioning Chair	Gordon Vollmer (C)

### COMMITTEE REPS/LIAISON

Advertising Coordinator	Nalini Badley
AMMS Liaison	Ron Heino
Council Secretary	Margaret Fler (C)
ELW	Sigrid Engler
Envelope Secretary	Sigrid Engler
Mutual Ministry	Geoff Crewe (C)
Spiritual Society Liaison	Ron Heino
Treasurer	Nalini Badley

### TREASURER’S REPORT

AUGUST 2023	RECEIVED	SPENT	SURPLUS (DEFICIT)
OFFERINGS	\$3,792.75		
AMMS PARSONAGE RENT	2,575.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE UTILITIES	0.00		
AMMS PARSONAGE PROPERTY TAX	0.00		
GST/PST RECEIVABLE	60.78		
<b>CURRENT MONTH TOTALS</b>	<b>\$6,428.53</b>	<b>\$8,760.95</b>	<b>(\$2,332.42)</b>
<b>YEAR TO DATE TOTALS</b>	<b>\$83,712.95</b>	<b>\$85,855.31</b>	<b>(\$2,142.36)</b>
AUG AMMS UTILITIES & PROPERTY TAX NOT YET RECEIVED			1,512.02
NET YTD LOSS FOR 2023			(630.34)
CIBC BANK BALANCE AT AUGUST 31, 2023			20,234.46
CIBC INVESTOR’S EDGE ACCOUNT BALANCE AT AUGUST 31, 2023			128,547.19
CIBC GIC 1 YEAR INVESTMENT TO MARCH 2024			30,000.00

*Yours in Christ, Nalini Badley, Treasurer*

## friendship...

When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

HENRI NOUWEN

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*Best of all is it to preserve  
everything in a pure, still heart,  
and let there be for every pulse  
a thanksgiving, and for  
every breath a song.*

KONRAD VON GESNER

**Gratitude  
makes sense  
of our past,  
brings peace  
for today,  
and creates  
a vision for  
tomorrow.**

MELODY BEATTIE



**Amazing world**

Wonderful World · 2d · 🌐

The old man placed an order for one hamburger, French fries, and a drink. He unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut in half, placing one half in front of his wife.

He then carefully counted out the French fries, dividing them into two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife. He took a sip of the drink, his wife took a sip and then set the cup down between them.

As he began to eat his few bites of hamburger, the people around them were looking over and whispering. Obviously they were thinking, "That poor old couple-all they can afford is one meal for the two of them."

As the man began to eat his fries a young man came to the table and politely offered to buy another meal for the old couple.

The old man said, they were just fine-they were used to sharing everything. People closer to the table noticed the little old lady hadn't eaten a bite. She sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink...

Again, the young man came over and begged them to let him buy another meal for them. This time the old woman said "No, thank you, we are used to sharing everything."

Finally, as the old man finished and was wiping his face neatly with the napkin, the young man again came over to the little old lady who had yet to eat a single bite of food and asked "What is it you are waiting for?"

She answered, "The Teeth."