“But I, O God, am poor and needy.
Hasten to us.

You are our help and our deliverer.” AMEN!

(Sing!) “I close my eyes
Only for a moment and
the moment’s gone

All my dreams
Pass before my eyes,
a curiosity

Dust in the wind
All they are is dust in the wind

Same old song
Just a drop of water in an endless sea
All we do

Crumbles to the ground though
we refuse to see

Dust in the wind
All we are is dust in the wind”

The hit song, *Dust in the Wind*,
performed by Kansas is said to be inspired

by a Native American/Indian poem
that contains the line

“For all we are is dust in the wind.”

This song came to mind from our readings today,
and for the next 7 weeks of scriptures assigned.

The next three (including today) will include
difficult parables from Matthew and

then we begin Advent, the season of being
reminded that Jesus will come again.

That means, siblings in Christ,
that we get 7 weeks of eschatological theology. :-)

A fancy way of saying
we are dust in the wind.

Don’t nod off!

These three weeks preview an
important theological theme as
the church year ends on
Christ the King Sunday and
begins anew on Advent.

And surprise!

It's not about the rapture of believers.

That's the claim of some churches,
that all the Jesus believers get swept up and
taken away while others remain on earth
and suffer punishment.

Some churches rest their message,
and theology, on escapism,
but what is it that we rest ours on?

Is it simply that we are all just dust in the wind?

Answer: yes and no. (I know I hate that, too!) :-)

But it's true, we do well in understanding that our time,
in these bodies is limited, finite.

And we say the words on Ash Wednesday:
remember you are dust and
to dust you shall return.

But while knowing this, and while
we live in the midst of the
delayed bridegroom (Jesus) coming,

we are given an important invitation
to consider how we are to live out our days.

In other words, Matthew's Jesus
invites us how to live eschatologically.

That is, how do we live today,
knowing that the end of times is coming.

To put even more succinctly,
how does one live today,
knowing that the end of the world
could be tomorrow? (Pause)

Our help this morning will come from the gospel
and from the Old Testament lesson.

Let's begin with the gospel.

Jesus tells a parable about what
the kingdom of heaven will be like.

It will be like 5 wise and 5 foolish bridesmaids;
it will include a delayed bridegroom;
lamps and extra oil;
along with judgment.

First off, I think, we need to consider
what Matthew's Jesus might mean by "wise"
and "foolish."

I don't think he means
5 were smart and
5 were dumb.

Since Matthew's audience was faithful Jews
who believed that Jesus was the Messiah
we are able to rely on the truth that

they knew their Hebrew Bible, and
those who were "wise" in the Old Testament
were those who lived in the ways of God.

The ones who strove for righteousness and justice,
the ones who cared for widows and orphans,
the ones who welcomed
strangers and immigrants.

The "wise" in the Old Testament were tied
to the ways of God and lived a life that
reflected that connection.

The "foolish" were those who knew better
but chose to do otherwise.

These "foolish" weren't uneducated or unknowing.

They are the ones that Amos wrote
about in the OT reading.

They knew better but still trampled the poor,
pushed aside the needy, turned justice
into bitterness and brought righteousness
to the ground.

And the judgment from God,
through the Prophet Amos, was a report of
what God will do to those who
choose evil instead of doing good.

“Take away the noise of singing,
the melody of your harps, but let justice
flow down like waters, and righteousness
like an ever flowing stream.” (Pause)

In the past, I’ve considered this to be only
something we can strive to do, but

there’s ambiguity here could lead us
to be reminded that God also sends
forth justice to flow down upon on our heads

like waters, and sends forth righteousness upon us
like an ever flowing stream.

The waters of justice and righteousness
both flow out of us and upon us.

You see, in order for some of us

to be righteous and just, we must recognize

that sometimes we are one of
the 5 foolish bridesmaids.

I know that I glide through life
sometimes unprepared, don't you?

We are dust in the wind but not only
dust in the wind when we live ethically
and vigilantly doing good things in
preparation for Jesus' unexpected return.

To weep when others grieve and
to grieve when others weep,
but not without hope.

For this hope makes us prepared
and anew everyday. AMEN!

Today, begins our conversation to prepare
for 2027 and the hope we share at St. Stephen.

Today, I am pleased to invite Jennifer Slusarz
to the microphone to share with us the ways
St. Stephen and her community,
have given her hope.

AMEN! Let us take some time for reflection.