First! Thank you to Pastor Shawn for his awesome sermon last Sunday. This morning, we will conclude our sermon series, “Here Comes the Bride.” As the body of Christ, we are so very blessed. Many of you know that within this body of believers we have people from twenty-seven different denominational traditions, among them Baptist, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Methodist, Church of God, Church of Christ, Assemblies of God, Armenians, Calvinists—a tapestry of faith, all of us living in view of God’s mercies, determined to keep the main thing the main thing. As colors in the warp and wale of this tapestry, we understand that all of life is worship. And our worship together extends beyond the songs we sing or the praise in prayer we offer in our Sunday services. Our worship together represents a lifestyle of worship that affects every aspect of our lives: how we parent, how we treat our spouses, how we work.

All of life, for our blessed congregation, is worship. Our humble and sacrificial worship declares, as Peter does in Matthew, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” We magnify Christ in death and in life by counting Him to be more gain than anything that this world has to offer. Our worship is to be holy and set apart. Now, I have to admit that this seron has taken a couple of turns since I first began working on it several weeks ago. I have been asked during those weeks about the End Times—in light of all that is happening in the world—storms, floods, the war in Israel, the war in Eastern Europe, rumors of wars elsewhere, the current political climate, Jacob’s star now visible (a prophecy in the book of Numbers)—people have asked me, “Pastor Chris, is Jesus coming back?” The answer is a resounding “Yes!” But when? I DON’T KNOW!!! But I do know this: If you *stay* ready, you don’t have to *get* ready. That’s the lesson in the parable of the ten virgins & the bridegroom in Matthew 25:1-13:

At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

7 “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

9 “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

10 “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

12 “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

13 “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Living worship is a life awake, aware, alert, appreciative, and attentive (\*Matthew 24:42). Consider the experienced motorcycle rider who crashed badly and ended up hospitalized. When asked what happened, he replied that he was distracted. His bike had followed his attention; his attention was not on the road. John Wesley was asked what he would do if he knew his Lord would return at that time the next day. Wesley answered, “I would go to bed and go to sleep, wake up in the morning and go on with my work, for I would want Him to find me doing what He has appointed me to do.”

Family, listen. Attentiveness to God’s Word and His will in the present will prevent anxiety about the future and reduce destructive distractions.

Living worship is alert living, not out of fear but out of sacrifice, obedience, and love for our King. That worship is what it means to be the bride of Christ—to be people of and about the Kingdom of God. It means that we conform to Paul’s guidance that our bodies be presented to Him in Holy and acceptable service. It means that our minds will be renewed by the Word so that they know and do the will of God. Life as worship means our becoming instruments of righteousness. Our devotion to God should be all-encompassing, and all the while, we are being transformed. Our worship—our living as worship of God—is to be pleasing to Him *and* transformative to self—which means I have to die to self, forsake sin. For this, we need guidance from the Word: If the Bible calls a behavior or an attitude *sin*, it *is sin*. Instead of living on in ignorance, we are to live in a way that makes clear our lives belong to Him. This lifestyle aligns with the direction of the Holy Spirit and yields delight in His will. This is true for us as individuals and as the Body of Christ (\*\*Philippians 1:27). We are, then, united for the same purpose, the Holy Spirit binding us together in ways we cannot experience otherwise.

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\*Mathew 24:42

“Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

\*\*Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel

Together, we learn in our lifestyle of worship that we are not consumers but servants. In that light, we value one another, understanding that the varied gifts of each and every believer matter. Moreover, we value these gifts as Christ’s blessings (\*1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 23). This is our instruction. Living worship is about all of our lives being surrendered to and led by the Holy Spirit. For some of us, the “low gas” light is on. Maybe, some of us have been affected by a season of doubt, an emotional desert, or a period of despair. Maybe, some of us have waivered in our living worship because our feet have not been standing on the Cornerstone. If such indications of “low gas” affect you, my friend, you need biblical rest and biblical worship. Christ wants to show Himself to you, be the strength in your life. To see this longing of God to have you come to Him, you need a new level of intimacy. Worship! Worship by reading the Word. Worship by finding service that you can perform: Open your eyes to others’ examples of worship and open your eyes of others to the beauty of Jesus. Your intimacy with our loving God will deepen. The lifestyle of worship will grow as a holy fear of God grows in you because of His great love. Dedicate yourself to active participation in our tapestry of faith! For the Christian, all of life is worship. We are the bride of Christ!

Passages in support of this sermon:

Matthew 16:13-18

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades[b] will not overcome it.

Romans 12:1-16

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.