

Pentecost 26

9 November 2008

Ray Young

Amos 5:18-24

1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

Matthew 25:1-13

The wise and foolish virgins

This text always brings to mind an episode from Jessie's Girl Guide leadership days, when a very proud new entrant when asked what the Guide motto was, stepped forward, saluted smartly and in a loud voice said "Be Repaired."

Jesus in this parable was telling the disciples and other followers that however long the wait seemed they needed to keep prepared at all times. Some writers see the oil in the lamps a being symbolic of anointing, and the wedding feast as representing the Eucharist.

Our young girl guide probably had a point, as all of us fall short of the standard required by God, that we do need to be repaired. Jesus was sent to earth for that very purpose, preaching repentance and be baptised. Jesus' last words to his followers in Matthew 28 were, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

When passing through customs in Australia on one occasion I was wearing my greenstone cross and my occupation on the form said Anglican priest, so the immigration officer asked me what was my favourite verse from the Bible. I had to think hard but I have always favoured this one and said so. I am especially fond of the promise at the end, "**And Lo I am with you always even to the end of the age.**" How comforting those words are when we are under stress, when the secular world is falling apart around our ears, to know that Jesus is with us always even to the end of the age.

It always gives me a thrill when as part of the great commission I get to baptise someone. As we were leaving Foxton parish to work on the West Coast of the South Island, a friend's son, 12 years old, came up and asked me if I would baptise him before we went south. He is 17 now and preparing to leave school and find his place in the world. I pray that the teaching he had at St Paul's Foxton Beach goes with him and he is assured that he is repaired and prepared and that Jesus is with him.

On Wednesday the plumber connected up the water tanks at our new house and when he had half filled one it started to leak. I was very upset but got the supplier to agree to repair the damage asap. He said the next fine day, so keep praying for lots of fine days for us. However when I opened up my computer on Thursday morning and went to my bible study text, the verse was from Isaiah 44. It said, "I will pour water on him who is thirsty". The commentary on the verse said, "You shall receive the grace you so much require, and you shall have it to the utmost reach of your needs. Water

refreshes the thirsty: you shall be refreshed; your desires shall be gratified. Water quickens sleeping vegetable life: your life shall be quickened by fresh grace. Water swells the buds and makes the fruits ripen; you shall have fructifying grace: you shall be made fruitful in the ways of God. Whatever good quality there is in divine grace, you shall enjoy it to the full. All the riches of divine grace you shall receive in plenty; you shall be as it were drenched with it: and as sometimes the meadows become flooded by the bursting rivers, and the fields are turned into pools, so shall you be-the thirsty land shall be springs of water.”

What a comfort to know Jesus is there with me always, and even in these days of high tech living, he can bring me just the message I need, just when I need it.

So I am repaired, will you be repaired?

Join me now and pray those all familiar words from Numbers 6:24-26
The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
AMEN

An additional verse, inspired on the West Coast, for our last hymn *Sent forth by God's blessing*, and sung to the tune of the Ashgrove.

We walk through the valley, our trust in his blessing
The bread we have eaten will fill all our needs.
The cup is now empty, but soon will be filling,
The blood shed for us, will forgive our misdeeds.
The spirit is with us, our hearts all uplifting,
We're never alone with him by our side.
His comfort he gives us, his strength will support us.
So tell all the people you know far and wide.