**I Love to Tell the Story**

**Day 186 The Ten Maidens Matthew 25: 1-13**

Guided reflection:

These are the last hours of Jesus with his disciples so there is a sense of urgency that they comprehend all that he needs them to understand. In many of these parables there is the idea that we not waste time, that we think ahead, and that we be prepared at any time. In this parable, bridesmaids are waiting for the wedding party to begin. In that custom, the bride and her BFF’s (best friends forever) all waited for the surprise arrival of the groom. But some were not ready. To not be prepared showed a lack of respect to the bride! The moral of the story – be ready, at any time, for God to arrive on the scene…whether this is a “second coming” scripture or not, the point is to live in readiness for the groom – Christ, God with us – to make a surprise appearance in our lives. Christ is coming!

Guided prayer:

*“God of surprises, we want to be ready for any moment you wish to show up in our lives in a special way. We want to be ready for Christ to come and we want to be ready for the day we leave this life and enter the next. Help us live a life that expects you to come. Amen.”*

**Day 187 The Last Judgment Matthew 25: 31-46**

Guided reflection:

Again, Jesus is expressing a concern that his Disciples not know what is important and what is unimportant. Here Jesus talks about judgment day – and notice, *it* is not about our beliefs or our theology or even our personal relationship with Christ that is our standard, but what we have done for others. When have you fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the poor, cared for the sick, and visited those in prison? That is the list that determines if we are in or out! When we do these things for the people who seem to be unimportant (least), then you have actually been giving and loving Christ! How are you doing with this list?

Guided prayer:

*“O God, I am so busy just trying to get everything done I need to do to keep me and my family going, I forget to see those around me in need. Open my eyes to the needs around me and give me insight on what I can do to make a difference even if just a drink of water. Today, I will look for someone you have sent my way… and treat them as though I am serving you. Amen”*

**Day 188 The Conspiracy Against Jesus Matt. 26:1-5; Mark 14: 1-2, Luke 22: 1-2**

Guided reflection:

With today’s readings, we enter what is called the “Passion narratives.” The Gospel writers are no longer telling the parables and teachings of Jesus, but now relate what happens and what Jesus does and says as he heads toward the cross and empty tomb. Now the temple folks – the priests and scribes - begin to plot and plan to kill Jesus. He is no longer an irritant, but someone who needs to be annihilated. They discuss when and how to do it, and they decide to not do it during Passover, but wait until it is over. Remember, it was after the Passover meal in the upper room that Jesus went to the garden to pray and was arrested. They did not waste anytime!

Guided Prayer:

*“Loving God, my heart is heavy as I remember the stories of Jesus’ death. All I can say is “thank you” for loving me enough to make a way for me to live forgiven. Amen”*

**Day 189 The anointing at Bethany Matt 26: 6-13, Mark 14: 3-9**

Guided reflection:

When the temple folks are plotting to kill him, Jesus goes on with life – as a matter of fact, goes to a dinner party of a man whom Jesus must have healed, since a real leper could not eat with regular folks. While he is there, a woman crashes the party and starts to pour this expensive oil on his feet. What a waste of good money! She could have used just water – not this expensive stuff! But Jesus looks into her heart and gives her dignity and even says she is preparing his body for his burial. I keep trying to imagine myself along Jesus during this holy week. What would I have thought of this woman? Would have I given her dignity?

Guided prayer:

*“I hope I am like the women in the story, O God, the one who is so filled with love and appreciation that I give extravagantly… but more often than not, I am like those who judge her gift. Today I shall live extravagantly for you! What shall I do? Amen”* (listen to your heart!)

**Day 190 Betrayal of Judas Matt 26:14-16; Mark 14: 10-11; Luke 22:3-6**

Guided reflection:

I have so many questions around Judas – don’t you? I wonder if he was really being mean and wanting to get rid of Jesus since it was obvious that Jesus was not helping Judas’s political aspirations. Or did he think by handing Jesus over to his enemies, he was really trying to create a scene where Jesus could show who he really was – the Messiah? I wonder?

Guided prayer:

*“For one of the 12 who walked with Jesus on this earth to have betrayed him, must have been a deep wound in Jesus’ heart. All I know to pray is that I keep my heart free from anything that would dishonor my Lord and Savior. Help me. Amen”*