

## **Sermon, by Br Luke efo**

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

It seems to me that everywhere we look today, we see death and destruction. The news reports chronicle in graphic detail, the carnage and suffering wrought across the globe. People murdered in a church in a small town in America. People injured by a car crashing into a crowd in Europe, a terrible largely unreported war and now devastating famine in Yemen.

The trail of disasters caused by storms and volcanoes. Politicians, who are slaughtering their own people, thousands arrested because of billions of dollars changing hands through graft and corruption. People elected to parliament when they can't be, simply because they don't know, or haven't bothered to check their citizenship status.

All around we see darkness, death, isolation, and a persistent and steady breakdown of society. The rise of callous, cruel, vicious, behaviours and a shocking disregard for others. The gulf between those who have stunning wealth, and those who have absolutely nothing – not even food - is widening.

We may be forgiven for thinking that this darkness is unique to our times. Sadly, it is not. The Roman Empire of the First Century was ruthless. It tolerated no dissension, uprisings were viciously suppressed, hundreds of thousands of people were enslaved or sent to die in barbaric, blood filled, gruesome death spectacles. Darkness reigned supreme.

Into that world came a light, a message that was so counter cultural, that it was seen as dangerous, and it had to be suppressed. But they failed to suppress it, the message spread and changed the world. That message is still here today. People are still trying to extinguish it, but they too have failed. Others try to replace it with something different, but they have and will ultimately fail in this endeavour as well. Why? Because the light is not ours, it is a free gift! While people may not want the gift, or even reject the gift, they cannot stop the gift from being offered.

All that is needed is to accept the gift. For a lamp to be filled with oil, to be refuelled and then to shine. Sometimes a small, single flickering flame, almost unseen. Sometimes as a blazing beacon, lighting up the entire sky.

Darkness, you see, is always vanquished by light. Where light exists, darkness cannot. Darkness will always fail in the presence of light. But light needs a source, darkness does not. Some of the bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom, in today's scripture ran out of oil. Some did not, they were prepared, they had

brought a supply of oil with them. They were the wise ones. The bridegroom did not know those who had let their lamp go out. They were not wise.

We are the lamps. The Holy Spirit is our source, our oil. Christ is our light. We have accepted the gift that was offered to us by the Father. We remain lit, by drawing on our oil, the Spirit, and by spreading our light, the message of Christ.

People of our faith have done this through the centuries, we do it now, and the followers of Christ will continue to do it in the future. So take heart, no matter what we think, or see, or what others may wish, the darkness did not, it does not, and it will not ever succeed in draining our oil, or in extinguishing our lamps, or the light of Christ. Amen.