

Sunday 8 November 2026 to
Sunday 15 November 2026

LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF AUSTRALIA

Sunday 8 November 2026

Live ready

by Jim Strelan

The virgins who were ready went in with him … (Matthew 25:10b).

Read Matthew 25:1–13

Over the years, someone or another has proclaimed certainty about the day Christ will return. And faithful followers have sold their possessions (no need for them) and gathered on a hilltop, singing hymns and praying as they waited. They wanted to be ready.

Is that what being ready means? The bridesmaids in this parable wanted to be ready, and some prepared themselves, while others didn't. They knew the bridegroom was coming, but they didn't know exactly when. When he did come – at a most unexpected time, midnight – they were surprised. Some had their lamps lit and brought extra oil. Some didn't. Some ready, some not.

In the following verses of Matthew 25, we first have the parable of the man who entrusts his property to his servants. When he returns, he wants to know what they did with what they were given. And then we have the account of the final judgement when some are directed to the right and some to the left. And the criteria? How did you respond to the one in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the one short of clothes, the sick, the prisoner? Those who responded with love and care weren't aware that, by doing so, they were serving Jesus. They just did it. It was their lifestyle and pattern of behaving.

A line attributed to Martin Luther (although the attribution is unproven) goes something like this: 'Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.' In other words, he would go about his day-to-day activities because he knew that he and the world were in God's hands.

So maybe being ready means 'living ready'. Not like those gathered on the hilltop with particular actions on a particular day, but living ready, trusting in God's ongoing goodness. Wisely using the gifts given to us. Meeting the needs of those around us as best we can because that's just what God's people do. Living ready.

Lord, help me live each day so that, no matter when you return, I am ready, trusting in your goodness, aware of your presence, focused outward rather than inward. And so, I pray with great calmness: come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Jim is a retired pastor living with his wife Ruth in Deception Bay, Queensland. He spends his retirement making space to add more Lions' premiership posters to the six (3+3) he already has on his garage wall.

Monday 9 November 2026

Unfailing love

by Jim Strelan

My unfailing love for you will not be shaken (Isaiah 54:10b).

Read Isaiah 54:10–17

How much can you love someone? We sometimes hear parents say to their children, 'I love you to the moon and back.' I've always thought that an astronaut who has travelled to the moon could say that to their child with more meaning than anyone else. In other words, 'The love I have for you is immeasurable.'

When God says he loves his people, it is irrefutable. It is not dependent on anything. We know the history of the people of Israel in biblical times: turning away, coming back, turning away, coming back. But God loves with an unfailing love.

Earlier, in Isaiah 49, we have these words: 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?' Hard as it is to imagine, that is possible. Children have been abandoned by their mothers. But God says, 'Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands' (Isaiah 49:15,16). Etched in. Irremovable. Permanent. Unfailing.

Not only does God promise to love his people unfailingly, but he also shows this by showering his people with gifts, signs of his love. A rebuilt city with stones of turquoise, foundations with sapphires, battlements of rubies and gates of sparkling jewels (verses 11 and 12).

This almost reminds me of the Prodigal Son story in Luke 15, where the returning son, who comes back with his tail between his legs, ashamed of how completely he had rejected all his father had to offer, is received by that father with the best robe and a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. That's the way God loves.

Sometimes events in your life might leave you feeling as though the mountains have shaken and the hills have subsided. Sometimes you might feel alone, and the weight of what burdens you is yours alone to carry. Sometimes you might feel that you give and give and get very little back. Hear God's promise to his people – that same God makes that promise to you. His love for you is unfailing. Whatever has happened, whatever your situation. Always. You can count on it.

What can I say, my God, when I contemplate your kind of loving? Nothing but thank you. I am overwhelmed and forever grateful. Thank you. Amen.

Tuesday 10 November 2026

In or out?

by Jim Strelan

Indeed, there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last (Luke 13:30).

Read Luke 13:22–30

Have you followed Jesus all your life, been born into a Christian family, always attended church and regularly read your devotions, or have you only recently begun following him?

Have you noticed – if you are in the former category – that those who have only come to faith recently seem to have greater enthusiasm and passion for the gospel than you do? If you've always been a Christian, it's easy to fall into patterns. Patterns aren't necessarily bad, but they can become routine, something you take for granted.

In this passage, Jesus alludes to things without spelling them out clearly. He speaks of a narrow door and a locked door that, despite much knocking, is unopened. And then there's the strange statement about the first being last and the last first. Compared to a wide door, the narrow one is harder to get through. Getting through it is almost unexpected; it can't be taken for granted. And the locked door, with some inside and some outside, reminds us of the parable of the bridesmaids from a couple of days ago. Some weren't ready, and the door to the wedding feast was closed.

In Jesus' time, some were born into the faith, grew up in the faith and observed all its rituals and expectations. Others were outside that faith (Gentiles) and had only just begun to follow Jesus. And those with a long tradition of faith had their noses put out of joint by these 'johnny-come-latelys'.

To those of the old Abrahamic faith, Jesus' message is: You think you can just waltz in through the wide door? Just claim your label as the people of God? There will be many from the east and the west and the north and the south, many not of your tradition, who will come in, while many who presumed they had a right to get in will be excluded.

Jesus doesn't tell us the exact criteria for entry or denial. But we can say that it begins with acknowledging Jesus as the one sent by God and recognising that our inclusion is an act of grace, not a right.

Long-time or recent Christian, Jesus calls you, claims you, invites you. Live in gratitude and trust in his goodness.

Lord Jesus, this is a hard thing to grasp. Will the door be opened or closed to me? I trust that you are gracious and that to exclude is not your first priority. By your Spirit, I ask you to help me live with continual gratitude, grasping the privilege you offer rather than claiming any right. Amen.

Wednesday 11 November 2026

Shining like stars

by Jim Strelan

So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life (Philippians 2:15,16a).

Read Philippians 2:12–18

With social media, the ease of taking and posting photos, and the popularity of Instagram and karaoke, it seems as though everyone wants to be a star these days.

If you follow football at all, commentators are quick to label someone a star, even if they've played only a handful of games. But when it comes to our Christian walk, it's often hard to tell who the Christians are and who aren't. I'm not sure many Christians want to stand out. We prefer to just blend in. What about you?

The writer to the Philippian congregation encourages these followers of Jesus to stand out from the 'crooked and depraved generation' in which they live. God is at work in them (verse 13), and when God is at work, something of him rubs off on those who acknowledge him as God.

God is at work through Jesus and his Spirit, and where Jesus is, there is light because he is the light of the world. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus says, 'You are the light of the world', and goes on to illustrate how ridiculous it would be to hide a light under a bowl. You are light, so let your light shine.

How do we live as followers of Jesus in a world that largely ignores him? What do we do if we look at the signs of a world gone crazy and sense that Christ's return might be soon? Do we gather in holy huddles, do we assemble on hilltops waiting for him? Do we become, as someone once said, so heaven-minded that we're no earthly good? That's not the message to the Philippians. Not complaining, not arguing, shining like stars because you have the light of Christ in you.

If you want to be a star, just be what and who you are. Apparently stars shine because of nuclear fusion happening deep inside their cores (thanks, Dr Google). What happens in your core when you are aligned with Jesus causes you to shine. Let it.

Light of the world, shine your light in me so that I can be like a star in the universe, reflecting the word of life which transforms and makes a difference. Amen.

Thursday 12 November 2026

Stay confident

by Jim Strelan

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded (Hebrews 10:35).

Read Hebrews 10:32–39

You know, of course, that any moment could be your last, no matter your age. Does that scare you? There's a saying: 'Live each day as though it were your last.' That helps us value and treasure each moment and makes us more determined to live worthwhile lives. I prefer: 'Live each day as though it were your first.' The joy of discovery, the newness all around you, the learning you can do, the relationships that can deepen.

The same applies when we think about the end of all things and Christ's promised return. You can live apprehensively, or you can live with the confidence that God is with you in everything, cares about you and never abandons you.

Look at the attitude the writer of Hebrews encourages in their readers. See how they lived even when terrible times came upon them. Exposed to insult and persecuted, they stood side by side with those who were ill-treated, felt sympathy for the imprisoned and were joyful even when things were taken away from them. So they are encouraged to remain confident in their loving God. They are encouraged not to shrink back because they can be sure of their salvation (a word which, in a general sense, means 'wellbeing').

As you get older, you can look at the death notices in the paper, and if your name isn't there, then be sure you are still alive! This day is a gift. Each day is a gift. God is here; he is with you, so trust in him. He is a good God. This reminds me of a chorus of a song: 'All my life, you've been faithful. All my life, you've been so, so good.'

This week's readings about Christ's second coming aren't meant to cause fear. They remind us that God does things in his time. So let him, and enjoy life in the meantime.

Thank you, God, for all your promises. They give me such confidence that all my days are gifts given by you. Help me to find joy in each day, trusting in your goodness. Amen.

Friday 13 November 2026

Live what you know

by Jim Strelan

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard, obey it and repent (Revelation 3:3a).

Read Revelation 3:1–6

If you grew up in a Christian family with a strong connection to a Christian church, you may have been taught, over and over again, about God's acts in the past and what he can do in the present. If you are newer to the faith, perhaps you also heard the message and felt convicted.

Many, many years ago, when I was confirmed, the process that qualified (!) me for confirmation was my ability to repeat things I had learnt off by heart. In my ministry, I encouraged young people to express their faith in their own words. Not just head knowledge, but something heartfelt. There's a difference.

In this passage, the church at Sardis is encouraged to remember what it has received and to live that out. Sardis was a famous and wealthy city. It would have been easy for the people of that city to be influenced by what was around them. They gave the appearance of being alive in faith – that was their reputation, but the call is for them to be real. If it meant repentance, then repent. Some weren't influenced by what was around them but were faithful. God acknowledged them.

The focus is on living what you know. Would you say your faith is more than words, more than head knowledge, more than the Bible verses you can recite, but rather something that impacts all of your life? Is it evident in how you trust when you are anxious, how you hear the word of forgiveness and allow it to cover you, and how you love your neighbour and so show your love for God? To receive something is to be given a gift. You have that gift. Let it define you. Live it. God's Spirit is with you, working to bring what you know to life. Your name is in the book of life and will never be blotted out.

Thank you, loving God, for revealing yourself to me. As I grow in knowledge and understanding, help me to live that out. Help me to be true to what I am. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday 14 November 2026

My dwelling place

by Jim Strelan

Lord, you have been my dwelling place throughout all generations (Psalm 90:1).

Read Psalm 90:1–8,12

When our daughter was very young, and we came 'home' from Papua New Guinea on leave, she got confused. One night, we found her whimpering in her bed, and when we asked her what was bothering her, she said she felt bewildered. We talked about going 'home' to Australia, and we talked about how we would soon be going 'home' to Papua New Guinea. So, where is home? We told her that wherever the three of us are, that's home. Home is where she belongs, is safe, secure, and at ease.

The psalmist says that God has been his people's home for all generations, their dwelling place. It's where they rest. It's where they feel safe. It's where they belong. It is home.

What a wonderful thing to say about our God. When we get to the latter part of our lives, we realise how fragile life is. For those of us at this stage, we become aware that we are spending more and more of our time at funerals. One by one, people we knew, grew up with and made friends with, even members of our own families, die. But there is comfort. God is eternal, and his presence with us never diminishes.

He has been our home through all the days of our lives; he is our home now, and he will be the one we go home to when the time comes for us to die. It's okay. We don't need to be anxious. We don't need to curl up into ourselves to feel secure. God sees us, knows us, loves us and wants to be our dwelling place today, tomorrow and always.

Dwell in God as he dwells in you. In Revelation 21:3, a voice describing the end of time says, 'Now the dwelling of God is with [people] and he will live with them.' His home will be our home and our home his. How good is that?

Loving God, I rest in you. In you, I find the place where I belong. Thank you. Amen.

The devotions for the coming week are taken from Lutheran Tract Mission's 2026 Advent devotional, 'Faithful Promises'. Written by Anne Hansen, the devotions explore God's faithfulness and the promises he makes throughout the Old and New Testaments, including the fulfilment of his promise to send his Son as Saviour. Each devotion focuses on a different aspect of God's promises and his steadfast love for us. The 'Faithful Promises' Advent devotional is available from https://ltm.org.au/flipbk/advent-2026/ and can be downloaded, printed or used as a digital flipbook.

Sunday 15 November 2026

God's covenant

by Anne Hansen

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth (Genesis 9:13).

Read Genesis 9:1–3,7–17

I remember as a child making covenants with my friends about our secrets. It was a solemn promise sealed with a 'pinky promise'. Many of my friends had other ways of keeping a promise – 'Cross my heart, hope to die' sort of promises. As children, they were binding, and your friendship was in jeopardy if you broke one. Watching the 'American Pickers' show on TV, I see that when a monetary deal is reached, it is sealed with a handshake. A handshake is viewed as a promise. It means a deal has been made and should not be revoked.

Way back at the beginning of creation, God made promises to his people. He promised to be with Adam and Eve even though they sinned. His promises came in many forms, and we read of them through the stories of his faithfulness and love for his people in the Old Testament. The story of Noah brings with it not just a promise but an eternal sign, even for us today. God referred to it as an 'everlasting covenant'. This was God's promise that he would never again destroy the whole world through a flood – his handshake with humankind. God promises to be with us today and will never leave us.

This physical promise is seen every time we have storms or rain: a rainbow in the sky. The rainbow is an amazing phenomenon. It is caused by the reflection and refraction of light through moisture in the atmosphere – God truly is amazing. As we walk through this season of Advent, let us remember all the promises of love and faithfulness from a God of love. A prophesied Messiah was promised throughout the Old Testament, and finally, in the New Testament, God's promise is fulfilled in sending his Son to earth as a baby. Enjoy this season as we wait for the promised Saviour at Christmas and rejoice in God's faithfulness and the promise that he will come back again one day.

A rainbow is God's handshake of his faithfulness and promise!

My Heavenly Father, you have promised to be with me. I can rest in this promise and remember all the things you have done throughout my life. You truly are faithful. Amen.

Anne Hansen served as Lutheran Tract Mission Development Officer for 20 years. She lives in Noosa, Queensland, with her husband, Mark, who is a pastor. She enjoys leading Know Your Bible (KYB) and Mainly Music, as well as walking, reading, gardening and playing pickleball.

Sermon
All Saints Day
Light Lutheran Church – Freeling & Rosedale
November 1st, 2026

1 Jn. 3:1-3; Rev. 7:9-17 – "Who wants to be a child again?"

Introduction

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
Who wants to be a child again?
Being a child has its advantages. You don't have to worry about paying the bills, filling the car with fuel, or wondering whether the next harvest will be a good one. Someone else takes care of those things.
But childhood also means growing up. You don't understand everything, you depend on others, and you face things you can't control.
As we grow older, we might wish we could be young again. We might long for the days when our parents were still with us, when family gathered around the table, and when life seemed simpler.
Today, on All Saints Day, we remember those who have gone before us in faith. We remember loved ones, friends and fellow Christians who once sat beside us in church. We miss their familiar faces, their voices and their presence in our lives.
We know death comes to everyone, but our society rarely wants to talk about it. We tuck death and grief away, mentioning them only in quiet conversations.
All Saints Day gives us permission to speak openly about death, grief and the hope we share in Jesus Christ. We remember those who have died, but we also celebrate God's promise that death will not have the final word.
That brings us back to our question: **Who wants to be a child again?**
John writes in our first reading:
"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"
John doesn't say we might become God's children if we try hard enough. He doesn't say we must prove ourselves worthy.
He says, "That is what we are!"
God makes us his children through Jesus Christ. He doesn't adopt us because we've earned our place in his family. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God forgives our sins and welcomes us home. In baptism, he joins us to Christ and gives us the promise of eternal life.
We belong to God now, not because we've earned his love, but because he freely gives it.
John also reminds us that, although we are God's children now, we haven't yet seen everything God has planned for us.
We still struggle with sin. We experience illness, loneliness and grief. Our bodies grow older, and eventually we die. Sometimes we wonder what lies ahead.
John points us towards Jesus. When Christ appears, we will see him as he really is, and we will be like him.
One day, we will see our Saviour face to face. We won't have to wrestle with doubts or wonder what heaven will be like. God will complete what he has begun in us.

That is the hope we celebrate today. The saints who have died trusting Jesus have not put their faith in vain. Their future, like ours, rests in the hands of the risen Christ.
Revelation gives us a wonderful picture of that future.
John sees a crowd nobody can count, gathered before God's throne and the Lamb. They come from every nation, tribe, people and language. They wear white robes and hold palm branches in their hands.
Who are these people?
They are God's people, brought through suffering into his eternal presence.
John tells us what has made their robes white: “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
That sounds strange, doesn't it? Blood normally stains clothes rather than cleans them.
But John wants us to understand something wonderful. Our sin stains our lives, and we cannot wash it away through good deeds or by pretending we've done nothing wrong.
Only Jesus can cleanse us.
The Lamb is Jesus, who gave his life on the cross for us. His blood speaks of his sacrifice for our sin. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus forgives us and clothes us in his righteousness.
The saints in heaven don't stand before God because they lived perfect lives. They stand before him because Jesus has made them clean.
That includes the people we remember today. Their hope rested not in their goodness, but in God's grace. The same grace welcomes us.
Look at what God promises his people. He shelters them. They will never hunger or thirst again. The Lamb will shepherd them to springs of living water, and God himself will wipe every tear from their eyes.
What a picture of God's love!
The Jesus who died for us is the same Jesus who lives for us. He doesn't simply rescue us from death; he brings us home to live with him forever.
We cannot explain every detail of what our departed loved ones now experience. We don't need to fill the gaps with guesses. God's Word gives us a better promise: those who belong to Christ will share his victory and see him as he truly is.
Death separates us from those we love, and that hurts. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. Tears don't mean we lack faith.
We grieve because we love, but we grieve with hope because Jesus lives.
So, what does All Saints Day mean for us?
First, we can stop trying to earn God's love. We already belong to his family through Jesus. Our love and service to others grow from the love he has freely given us.
Second, we can face ageing and mortality honestly. We may lose our independence, our friends and the familiar things that have shaped our lives. Yet none of these things can separate us from God's love in Christ.
Third, we can live with hope in a world that often doesn't recognise God or understand what it means to belong to him.
Our neighbours might not understand why we gather for worship or trust Jesus when life gets hard. Our congregations might feel small, and our future might seem uncertain. Yet our future doesn't depend on our strength, our numbers or our circumstances. It rests with our risen Saviour.

Through his Word and Sacraments, God continues to forgive us, strengthen our faith and sustain us. He sends us into daily life to love and serve others, not to earn his favour, but because he has already welcomed us into his family.

Today, we remember the saints who have finished their earthly journey. We give thanks for their lives, mourn their absence and rejoice in the promise they shared with us.

We are not yet all gathered together before the throne. We still live in a world of sorrow, uncertainty and death. Yet we share one Saviour, one gracious Father and one sure hope.

So, who wants to be a child again?

Perhaps we don't want to return to childhood as we once knew it. But through Jesus, we can rejoice that we are children of our heavenly Father.

We are God's children now. We are growing towards the day when Christ reveals the fullness of his promise. Those who die trusting him will see their Saviour face to face, and one day we will join them.

Then the Lamb will lead us home. God will wipe every tear from our eyes, and death will be no more.

Until that day, we trust the Father who loves us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who sustains our faith.

We are God's children now. We belong to Jesus today. In him, our future is secure.

Amen.