

Home Service for November 15, 2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we are worshipping in our church building again, some have health reasons that makes it impossible to do so. Others are worried about those who need them with health issues. We want everyone to be comfortable and to be able to worship so the home services will continue so all may be able to worship Our Heavenly God where ever they are. You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship, just like we are doing in the church building.

Call to Worship:

Lord, be with us when our lives seem embedded in sorrow and sadness. Lord, have mercy on us. Open our hearts to receive your healing grace. Prepare us to be children of the light rather than dwellers in darkness. Throughout all our days, you have been with us. Be with us again. Remind us of your presence and healing mercy. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious and generous God, you are always with us, offering guidance, healing and hope. We know that with things seem dark or are dazzlingly bright; when troubled times assail or peace reigns; there you are with us. Continue to guide and challenge our lives. Lead us in pathways of service and away from trails of fear and anxiety. Open our hearts to receive your healing transforming love that we might serve you more faithfully; for we ask these things in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord of mercy and justice, you have given us so many talents and gifts to be used in your world. You have given us these gifts because you trust us to use them well — and you will be with us in all our work. But we disappoint you when we denigrate the value of the talents or become so fearful of failure that we don't believe that we are capable of helping in this world. Lord, forgive us. Help us to trust in the gifts you have given to us and to trust in your guidance in using them. Forgive us when we are fearful, stubborn, apathetic, indifferent to the needs around us. Give us hearts for serving you all our days. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Rejoice and celebrate! God has placed God's trust and love deep within your hearts. You have been called and trusted to serve God. Alleluia! AMEN.

Read Psalm 76

God is renowned in Judah;
in Israel his name is great.
² His tent is in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.
³ There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shields and the swords, the weapons of war.^[b]
⁴ You are radiant with light,
more majestic than mountains rich with game.
⁵ The valiant lie plundered,
they sleep their last sleep;
not one of the warriors
can lift his hands.
⁶ At your rebuke, God of Jacob,
both horse and chariot lie still.
⁷ It is you alone who are to be feared.
Who can stand before you when you are angry?
⁸ From heaven you pronounced judgment,
and the land feared and was quiet—
⁹ when you, God, rose up to judge,
to save all the afflicted of the land.
¹⁰ Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise,
and the survivors of your wrath are restrained.^[c]
¹¹ Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them;
let all the neighboring lands
bring gifts to the One to be feared.
¹² He breaks the spirit of rulers;
he is feared by the kings of the earth.

Prayers of the People:

Wise and Patient God, we know what you want us to do, but we are far too often hesitant to follow through for you. You give us multiple blessings and ask that we develop these gifts and use them to help others. In times of great crisis we come through, we mobilize. But in the intermediate times, we hold back. We develop a "let someone else do it" attitude. We often think of our gifts, our talents as things that are less than worthy. In this country in which competition is the ruling code, we don't want to compete with others, because we feel we just don't have the right "stuff". How blind we are, Lord! To each one of us you have given gifts which can be used to help others. Each gift and talent is precious in your sight. Rather than compete with others to see who has the greater talent, let us use the gifts we have been given joyfully. One of the greatest gifts is the gift of prayer. And we have brought before you, Lord, the concerns which have been weighing on our hearts. Touch the lives of all these people and situations with you healing love. Give each one a sense of your powerful presence. Flood their lives with hope and peace. Help each one of us to be workers for you. Help us to trust in your abiding presence and love for us. Challenge us to use the gifts and to honor the giver, for we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Judges 4:1-7

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. ² So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. ³ Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help. ⁴ Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading^[a] Israel at that time. ⁵ She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. ⁶ She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten

thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. ⁷ I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 25:14-30

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, ^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ ²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’ ²² “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Message

In this morning’s Gospel Jesus uses another parable to teach us about the seriousness of his judgment on the Last Day. Last week the parable of the ten virgins taught us to be prepared by waiting and watching. Today’s parable reminds every believer to be prepared by being fruitful. Fruitfulness takes faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Thankfully faith is God’s free gift to us, but it is up to us to put it to use. Our Christian faith yields faithfulness, which then also yields fruitfulness. These blessings all begin with God’s free gift of faith to us. Listen to JOHN 15:16,17: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit; fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other". Fruitfulness is tempered with love. This morning’s theme is: Believers are reminded that faithfulness yields fruitfulness, which means we are to always use God’s gifts and never abuse God’s gifts.

In the parable of the talents, a man set out on a journey, entrusting his property to his servants. He has put a lot in their hands. It is important that we recognize right away that this man represents God. We recognize that it is God who owns the world. We are His servants. The word “talent” has come into our language from this parable. Rather than money, for us it has come to mean abilities and special gifts.

The question that each of us must ask is: “What did Jesus mean by the talent?” I would say that everything we have and everything we are comprised of, the talents entrusted to us by God.

This includes our abilities, each precious moment of every day, every week, every month, and every year given to us, our material and financial resources, our relationships with loved ones and friends, the gift of God’s salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ, in other words our very lives! All of this is entrusted to us by God, and we are called to be God’s stewards!

As in the parable each Christian is given different number of gifts along with different gifts, but unlike the parable No Christian is given only one gift or talent. We are all multi-talented!

We can pray, we can be present at church and invite others to come with us, we can share our faith, we can share our gifts, we can help those in need, we can visit or call those who are lonely, and we can serve. God calls all of us to realize the potential of our lives, to maximize the years of our lives! This is exciting! There is an urgent purpose that God has given to each of one of us, and this purpose demands the very best that we can believe and give.

Jesus is making the point that we should take the risk and the talents God has given us, so that in our use of them He will be glorified and those around shall see the glory. Jesus is telling us that we have been given talents, gifts, abilities and we should use them for the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is that the person who takes the risk and ventures out into the world with God’s talents will always reap a return! The challenge for us is: How can we use our resources of time and talent for God?

What is that special thing you can do that nobody else in the world can do in quite the same way?

Is it a laugh or is it a special smile? Is it an ability to encourage and be enthusiastic in support of another? Is it an ability to earnestly pray? Is it the loving tone in your voice that people like to hear? Is it the wonderful things that you produce in your kitchen for others to eat? Is it a skill in music or art or teaching or managing? The list goes on and on, for the possibilities are almost limitless! What are those things that the Owner of all things has entrusted to you? How are you responding to that trust? How are you doing as a steward of Jesus Christ?

God's judgment is to be taken seriously. One day Jesus will return. There will be those who are waiting and watching. There will be those faithful who have been fruitful. Truly the attractions of this world can lead to disastrous distractions, but we must keep our eyes open, looking for Christ's return. Remember God is on our side. Our loving Father in heaven is always willing and able to hear and to help. Listen to what COLOSSIANS 1:10 has to say to us: "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God". Take note that by growing in the knowledge of God our faithfulness will yield fruitfulness. We grow in the knowledge of God by hearing God's word, reading God's word, and studying God's word. In these last days we are reminded to stay close to God. We are reminded to remain faithful unto the end. May your faithfulness yield fruitfulness by always using God's gifts for His glory and never abusing God's gifts for our own gain.

Let us pray: Lord Christ, You have shown us that the road to stewardship is never easy or safe, as Your journey to the cross has shown us. Give us the boldness to fully invest ourselves and our abilities in the cause of Your kingdom, for the sake of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Benediction:

As you have been blessed, now go to be a blessing to others. Go, bringing the news of peace and hope, of healing and love. Go and the God of peace will always go with you. AMEN.