Matthew Chapter 25 verses 14 to 30

It is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves

and entrusted his property to them;

 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one,

 to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them,

 and he made five more talents.

In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.

But the one who had received the one talent went off

 and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

A long time later the master of the slaves came and settled accounts with them.

Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more.”

His master said to him, *“Well done, good and trustworthy servant;*

 *you have been trustworthy in a few things,*

 *I will put you in charge of many things;*

 *enter into the joy of your master.”*

Then the one with the two talents also came forward, saying,

 “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more.”

His master said to him, *“Well done, good and trustworthy servant;*

 *you have been trustworthy in a few things,*

 *I will put you in charge of many things;*

 *enter into the joy of your master.”*

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying,

 “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow,

and gathering where you did not scatter; so I was afraid,

and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here! Have what is yours.”

But the master replied to him, *“You wicked and lazy slave!*

 *So you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?*

 *Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers,*

 *and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.*

 *So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.*

 *For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance;*

 *but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*

*As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness,*

 *where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)

**Food for Thought**

* In these last few weeks of the Church Year we are in the Kingdom Season in which we are encouraged to reflect on what it means to be part of the process of establishing the new style world that Jesus came to establish; a foretaste of Heaven.
* In Chapter 25 of Matthew we hear several of Jesus’ parables that shed some light on the important things we as His children must bear in mind as we prepare to take our part in that process. The first parable is the story of the Wise and Foolish Virgins who are tasked with lighting the way for the Bridegroom’s arrival; not all have thought ahead and prepared the stocks of oil necessary so they are excluded from the moment as a result. The parable following today’s is about the Day of Judgement and division of people into Sheep and Goats; the sheep are those who have responded to the needs of others, fulfilling the call of love even though they didn’t particularly realise it at the time. And the goats were those who were so self~ centred in their lives that they remained blind to the needs of others.
* So today we have the quirky story of a master going on a journey and entrusting his property to his servants. The division is not equal and could prompt the childish reaction: “It’s not fair!”, but on His return He applauds those who have done their best, faithfully, with what they were entrusted with. The one who was sent away in disgrace and excluded had been given the least, but had a skewed vision of the Master’s calling and simply buried the amount he had been entrusted with.
* It is easy to get caught up in the number of talents each person is given, but that is to detract from the lesson of the parable. Both the one given the five talents and the one given the two talents receive the same praise and reward.
* An important phrase at the beginning gives us a clue to the rational behind the different proportions of property allotted to each person: They were given an amount “each according to his own ability”.
* The talents each person is given are tailored to their own personal strengths and make~up. I remember as a young Christian envying others who seemed to have so many strengths and thinking “Well if I was them I’d be able to do great things”. But as we mature as Christians we realise that our Master is the One who has known us since the beginning, who knows our strengths and weaknesses and who gives us a unique set of gifts and a unique vocation. There is no point in comparing ourselves with others. Our responsibility is to recognize with thanks all that we have been given, to listen for His voice and move in obedience as we are called to engage in the building of the Kingdom. Each person’s vocation is different and their own responsibility. (Altho we as Christ’s body can have another role in encouraging one another to discover and invest in their God given talents)
* So what is the point Jesus is trying to convey in this parable? I believe it encourages each of us to be confident about what we have been given, to be faithful in nurturing all we’ve been given and sharing the benefits. The Master loves us and longs for us to succeed and to offer His praise.

**WORSHIP for the 2nd SUNDAY before ADVENT**

Your love Lord reaches to the heavens! And your faithfulness to the clouds

**We praise you Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

**HYMN:** Fill your hearts with joy & gladness **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgsjGx7n3hg**

**TIME of CONFESSION**

The Gospel calls us to turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

As we offer ourselves to Him in penitence and faith,

We renew our confidence and trust in His mercy.

**Lord our God, in our sin we have avoided your call.**

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.**

**Have mercy on us;**

**Deliver us from judgement;**

**Bind up our wounds and revive us;**

**In Jesus Christ our Lord**. **Amen**

May our loving Father forgive us by the death of His Son

And strengthen us to live in the power of the Spirit all our days. Amen.

**PSALM 91**

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
 will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;
     his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noon.

A thousand may fall by you, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  the Most High your dwelling-place,
 no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
 On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder,  the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Those who love me, I will deliver;  I will protect those who know my name. When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble,  I will rescue them and honour them. With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

**Collect for This Sunday**

 Heavenly Lord, You long to see the world’s salvation:

 Stir us from apathy, restrain us from excess and revive in us new hope

 That all creation will one day be healed

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *(Additional Collect, CW)*

**GOSPEL READING:** *from* Matthew Chapter 25 verses 14~30

**Food for Thought** *(See Overleaf)*

**PRAYERS**

Jesus offers us strength and resources as we do our best to walk His way.

For times we have belittled or ignored the gifts we have been given

Or have been reticent in developing or sharing our riches with others,

**Lord, forgive us.**

For times we have lacked enthusiasm or dedication to Your call,

Or allowed our self~interest to blind us to the needs of others,

**Lord, forgive us.**

 For the times we have envied the gifts and potential of those around us

Or not encouraged those who are still seeking their way,

**We ask your mercy, Lord.**

For times we have failed in our life within community,

When we have turned our back on others or been deaf to their concerns,

**We ask your mercy, Lord.**

For our lack of forgiveness, openness and sensitivity,

L**ord, forgive us.**

For the times that we were too eager to be better than others,

When we are too rushed to care, When we are too tired to bother,

When we are too quick to act from motives other than Love,

**Lord, forgive us.**  *(after “Bread of Tomorrow”)*

. Lord, help us to rise to the challenge of Your call to invest in Your Kingdom,

To be Light and to spread Light to combat the darkness in our world,

 that we may draw others under the umbrella of Your love.

We pray for the Church, here and across the world in these troubled times

*(add your own prayer ……………)*

We pray for our own communities, nation and our world, especially where hatred or

injustice has caused hurt, division or injustice *(add your own specific prayer …)*

 Teach us to be faithful to You and Your Love as we live and serve you each day.

We pray for those in special need: the sick, the dying, those in the grip of darkness,

All those affected by or working to fight the current pandemic..

 May we always be ready to pray, to listen, to forgive, to reach out, and to heal. Amen.

**HYMN:**  Go forth and tell! **https://youtu.be/QkDD4GiqUEM**