Into his Courts with Praise...

south calder mission community

A Service of the Word

Sunday 15 November 2026
Second Sunday before Advent.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

"God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us."

1 Thessalonians 5:9.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

Heavenly Lord, you long for 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 in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Awake, my soul, and with the sun.***

THE WORD OF GOD.

Zephaniah 1:7,12-end

Be silent before the Lord God!
  For the day of the Lord is at hand;
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,
  he has consecrated his guests.
At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
  and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
  those who say in their hearts,
'The Lord will not do good,
  nor will he do harm.'
Their wealth shall be plundered,
  and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
  they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
  they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the Lord is near,
  near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,
  the warrior cries aloud there.
That day will be a day of wrath,
  a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
  a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
  a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
  and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people
  that they shall walk like the blind;
  because they have sinned against the Lord,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
  and their flesh like dung.
Neither their silver nor their gold
  will be able to save them
  on the day of the Lord's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
  the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
  he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Psalm 90:1-12

1 Lord, you have been our refuge ♦
  from one generation to another.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
    or the earth and the world were formed, ♦
  from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
3 You turn us back to dust and say: ♦
  'Turn back, O children of earth.'
4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday, ♦

which passes like a watch in the night.
5 You sweep them away like a dream; ♦
they fade away suddenly like the grass.
6 In the morning it is green and flourishes; ♦
in the evening it is dried up and withered.
7 For we consume away in your displeasure; ♦
we are afraid at your wrathful indignation.
8 You have set our misdeeds before you ♦
and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
9 When you are angry, all our days are gone; ♦
our years come to an end like a sigh.
10 The days of our life are three score years and ten,
or if our strength endures, even four score; ♦
yet the sum of them is but labour and sorrow,
for they soon pass away and we are gone.
11 Who regards the power of your wrath ♦
and your indignation like those who fear you?
12 So teach us to number our days ♦
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!

But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Take my life, and let it be.***

GOSPEL
Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable: 'For 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 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.

'After a long time the master of those 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 talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

'And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; 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 seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

'But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, 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." '

REFLECTION – The time will come, but when?

Today's Gospel reading puts us in the heart of Matthew's feast of parables. The story of the talents is reasonably well known and perhaps one of the Bible passages most likely to be misunderstood, even mis-used. I am thinking here about those, usually trans-Atlantic, evangelists who use it to justify a gospel of economic prosperity.

As tends to be the case with parables, this one requires quite a bit of unpicking.

It's obvious from the first line that the parable is part of a longer sequence of teaching. It is located in the long discourse which takes up chapters 24 and 25 of the Gospel, known as the eschatological discourse. What does that mean?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary eschatological means that something is;

related to the part of theology (the study of religion) that deals with death or the end of the world.

Yes, we are talking about the end times. This is a major theme of Matthew's writing. He is anxious to make clear that no one can know when the second coming will happen and therefore Jesus' followers must be ready when it does happen.

It's worth considering that many early Christians expected the end times to be imminent, certainly within their own lifetimes or those of their direct descendants. There is evidence in the "post Gospel" part of the New Testament that this was already becoming an issue for them. In particular Paul's writings show us his efforts to clarify the thinking of the Christians in the churches he had grown around the Mediterranean. But I'm jumping ahead.

In this discourse Jesus is instructing his disciples how they can survive the difficult times which are coming. How they can achieve a state of preparedness for the Lord's return.

Like all the parables in this section, it exemplifies the certainty of the Lord's coming and how the disciples are to live in the meantime.

The scene is set by Jesus telling of a wealthy and powerful man who is getting ready to go away and needs to make certain that his slaves will do what is expected of them. Above all he intends that his affairs should continue to prosper rather than simply stagnating. When he returns he'd like to see a healthy growth in his profits.

Looking at the assets he left in their care we read that he;

Entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

Of course he would know his underlings and what they were capable of. Whether they were slaves or servants is debated by some theologians but I don't think that is particularly important. They could have been either.

What is important is that they were subservient to the wealthy man and that he knew and understood them. They knew and understood him too. They were being given their orders before he went and left them to get on with it.

After all he was leaving a great amount of money in their hands. A talent was a very large unit of currency and the sums we are talking about here are the equivalent of several years wages for a labourer.

So, who do the characters in this parable represent?

Let's start with the wealthy man.

Taking into account the placing of this parable – in the eschatological discourse – I think that the obvious interpretation is that he is the Lord. He is going away and his return is the second coming, the return of Jesus.

Then who are the slaves, particularly the ill-fated third one?

This is not quite as clear cut as we might think at first reading. Various interpretations have been proposed ranging from an attack on the Jewish leaders and scribes for their teaching of the law. It seems more reasonable, again considering the parable's inclusion in the eschatological discourse that the slaves represent the disciples. They have responded to Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of heaven. If they have heard and understood the message they have received a great gift.

They also have a responsibility to pass the message on. To invest it and to grow the membership of the kingdom.

The third slave would seem to represent those who have heard Jesus' teaching and despite hearing and understanding it have done nothing with it. They have devalued the gift.

Perhaps we regard the treatment of the third slave as unduly harsh, after all he still had what he started out with. That misses the point that Jesus is making about faithfulness to the kingdom. That is needed not only to survive until the kingdom does come but to be fully prepared to meet it with joy whenever that may be.

We aren't given the knowledge of when that time will be but we are given the secure knowledge that the time will come. And when it does come we, if we want to be part of it, must be ready. After all, if we have had faith in Jesus and his teaching it is what we have been waiting for all our lives.

We, as believers, are challenged to use all the gifts and abilities – talents if you will – that God has given us for the sake of the kingdom.

With those gifts come responsibilities to use them for teaching, healing, helping those who need help, strengthening the weak. In fact doing the things which Jesus did and we are left to do until he comes in glory, whenever that may be.

Brian Pateman.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***From heaven you came, helpless Babe.***

THE CREED

All **I believe in God the Father,**
whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
who lives in my heart through faith,
and fills me with his love.
I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens me with power from on high.
I believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Loving God I see the news and I am afraid. Violence is spiralling out of control. I don't know what to think or feel. The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair feels very close at hand.
Help me to remember that nothing in all creation can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to discern what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this suffering world.
Amen.

The Methodist Church.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,
for all who make up your family in our churches today,
for the faith we have in common, and for the people and traditions which make each church unique.
By your Spirit, guide and equip us,
that together we might find new ways
to reach out to our local community,
to show your love to our neighbours,
and to encourage them
to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.
Father, we offer ourselves to your service,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

and the 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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go.***

The following prayer is said

Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty.
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

Awake, my soul, and with the sun.

https://youtu.be/P6TaygvxHrc

Take my life, and let it be.

https://youtu.be/Of4l5bTdZ8M

From heaven you came, helpless Babe.

https://youtu.be/E4963QPHAIM

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go.

https://youtu.be/AUVAbXgJyqQ