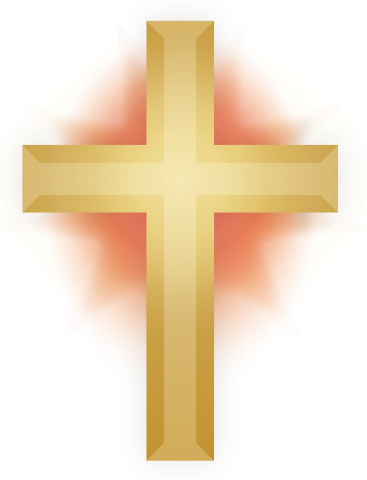
**NOVEMBER 15TH 2020**







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**THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS**

***‘All things come from you and of your own do we give you’ 1 Chronicles***

**Welcome to our Sunday Service today. After the moving service of Remembrance round the war memorial last Sunday we turn now to think about how God wants us to serve Him today in this place in our current battle against the pandemic.**

**HYMN:** Our first hymn looks back over our History and thanks God for His love, His guidance and His faithfulness ; in it we pray for our world and pray that we might live for Christ alone.

- **Lord for the Years, your love has kept and guided……**

**A time now to say sorry to God:**

Jesus says, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’

*A short time of silence*

**All:** **Heavenly Father, have mercy upon us, forgive us where we have gone wrong and sinned, and help us to walk from now on in your way. Amen.**

May our Father God, the God of love and power, bring you back to Himself, forgive you through the death of His Son Jesus, free you from your sins, and restore you to newness of life by His Spirit

**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

**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.**

**“THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS”**

**“Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master’s happiness!”**

*Matthew 25: v 21.*

**READING Matthew 25: v 14-30.**

‘Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

‘After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.”

‘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!”

‘The man with the two talents also came. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with two talents: see, I have gained two more.”

‘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!”

‘Then the man who had received the one talent 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. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.”

‘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? 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.

‘“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 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. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**SERMON**

**Matthew 25 The parable of the Talents**

Let us pray: “All things come from you and of your own do we give you” . Speak to each of us now in the stillness through your Word about how to live in the light of that truth.

Amen

The Times ran an article last weekend entitled

**25 things you can learn during the new lockdown:**

Make your own wine. Learn to play an instrument. Read War and Peace. Learn Swedish. Plot your own crime novel. Practise your public speaking.

Lots of possibilities here for the situation we find ourselves in- a chance to develop your talents, diversify, build on existing talents and perhaps discover some you didn’t know you had.

A talent in Jesus day was a unit of money, a great deal of money, worth in modern comparison about £200k, but it is clear from the beginning that this parable of Jesus is not talking about money; he is obviously not recommending capitalism or investing in the stock markets, so what is He asking for?

We get our word talent from this story, and the central meaning of this parable is that all our talents and resources come from God, the landowner, and it is to Him that we will have to give account of whether we have used them well or wasted them. We often quote the Bible verse in church “All things come from you and of your own do we give you” . It’s fundamental to the Christian life that we constantly remind ourselves that our time, our money our gifts are not given to us to serve ourselves but are given that we might serve our Master.

It is important to say that Jesus’ teaching very often has several strands. Very often there is an immediate challenge to the people of His own day in His particular context and so there is here. Jesus has been denouncing the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23. The wicked servant who hid his master's money represents the scribes and Pharisees. They had been given the law of Moses and they had been given wonderful promises about how God would bless not only the Jews but through the Jews, the whole world. Jesus is saying that the Jewish leaders had buried these promises in the ground and had ended up turning the command to be the light of the world into an encouragement to keep the light for themselves. They were worthless servants.

Who are the faithful servants then? They are those who hear the call of Jesus and follow him and obey his commands. That was true then and is true now.

So the second strand of this parable takes us to a broader application of this parable which applies to Christians of every time:

The landowner in the story is entrusting his property to his servants to look after – different amounts depending on their ability. His servants are to manage his property for him and he is expecting them to produce a return. Those who do, are rewarded but the one who fails is cast out. So for us-everything we have is given by God to us in trust to use for Him. We will have to give an account to our Lord one day at the end of time when He returns.

Please note however that the Christian life is not like a school examination. School exams are very much in the news at the moment as Wales has announced that Public exams GCSEs and A levels won’t take place next year. Interestingly some pupils don’t like that idea; they are not sure that teacher assessments will do them justice. But when anyone starts thinking seriously about a final judgement, a final examination at the end of time to see what we have achieved, how we have made use of the talents, the gifts the opportunities we have been given, then everyone is terrified: we all know if we are honest we will fail. This passage is a very good example of the importance of reading Bible passages in context and sometimes realising that we haven’t at this point in the bible narrative reached the end of the story.

Peter and I have been watching over the last few weeks David Hare's political thriller Roadkill. It has finished now; at first it seemed at the end that justice had not been done but there is a twist at the end, the story tantalisingly is not finished.... So with our passage here. The 3rd slave has failed and is thrown into darkness but this is a parable, about what would be the fate of all us if it wasn't for the compassion, the saving love of the Master. Remember Jesus has stressed time and time again that He has come for the sick, for sinners to seek mankind and to save the lost.

Christianity is Good News, the very word Gospel means Good news. None of us deserve to be congratulated and applauded about the way we have lived and used our gifts. None of us can say that we always behave selflessly putting God and others first. But Jesus our Lord and Saviour has done the hard work of salvation for us by dying on a cross.

If we believe that and have committed our lives to live for Him, we do not need to fear judgment but we will now in this life want to put all our resources our time and our talents to good use for Him and his kingdom.

So what talents are you trying to develop in Lockdown. If you do want to try winemaking or learning the double bass please don’t start or finish there. Think about the talents, the gifts you already have and develop those. Try making time with God more of a priority, why not call into the church and pray, how about trying to read Matthew’s Gospel through and think about the second commandment - love your neighbour ; is there a neighbour or a relative living alone who would love a phone call or letter.

Let’s make sure we use our God given time and talents for Him.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, Judge and Saviour we know that all things, all our talents our time, our resources our resources come from you. Show us we pray how to give them all back to you in loving service. Amen

Hymn: Take my Life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee

**PRAYERS:**

**“Thy Kingdom Come”**

The Church of England has dedicated this month of Lockdown to prayer, our intercessions today will reflect this and focus our minds on our need for our connection with God, which is the very air that we breathe.

Our response today. Thy Kingdom Come…Thy will be done.

We pray for children and young people around the world at this uncertain time. We pray for those who have not or are not able to attend school, for children in poverty whose lives have been further devastated by the pandemic. We pray for those who are experiencing abuse in the home and young people’s mental health as they face an uncertain future. Help us to give love, patience and guidance and safety to all who are suffering, their parents/carers and wider families. We pray for, childcare facilities Schools and colleges and teachers who strive to give of their best.

*Thy Kingdom come...* ***thy will be done***

We pray for the elderly, lonely, isolated, and vulnerable. Be with them with your promise of never leaving them, showing that this is true through the love of your people.

*Thy Kingdom come…****thy will be done***

We pray for all our businesses, workplaces, and economic wellbeing. We pray for an end to food poverty experienced by families, those parents going without to feed their children. May we be outraged by those who are hungry, mobilising us to act. We pray for those made redundant by the pandemic, businesses who cannot pay their employees, and widespread fear for the future.

*Thy Kingdom come…****thy will be done***

We pray for all those who are helping others through this difficult time worldwide. We pray for all Hospital and care home staff, we pray for community staff and volunteers, those that care for sick or disabled family members and have at times been left feeling very alone, and those providing our food. We particularly remember before you the staff and residents of Winton Court, recently infected by Covid 19. We pray for those we know in our own parish who work tirelessly to help others in foodbanks, visiting the sick and lonely and keeping in touch with the isolated. We pray for our Church community and for the service people give selflessly. We give our grateful thanks for their willingness to give hope and use their God given talents and gifts.

*Thy Kingdom come…****thy will be done***

We pray for governments and leaders; we pray that they make the right decisions whilst trying to balance economic stability and public health. Help them to keep in mind the most vulnerable and marginalised and not lose sight of their duty of care. We pray for Church leaders as the world has changedin the way “Church” is done, opening opportunities to be a more visible church in many ways, and using all our creative abilities, using their talents for success on earth and the furthering of the kingdom.

*Thy Kingdom come…****thy will be done***

We pray for those that are suffering with COVID now, those in hospital, at home and intensive care around the world. We ask for your blessing and healing power for Emma Broadhurst, and also for Rita, having an operation next week, and Angela, Jock and Rita’s daughter, whose operation was on Friday 13 November. We pray for those who are sufferingthe loss of a loved one, especially if they have died alone and separated from family.

We give thanks now for the life of Neil Heywood and offer our love and care to his family and friends through our Lord Jesus. We pray for those known to us who are sick. And we give thanks for answered prayer for those who are recovering. We give thanks especially today for the safe delivery of Baby Schulz now named Erika Ivy was born on 10th November at 8.lbs 2 oz and is now in neonatal ICU in Manchester. We pray for her ongoing care.

*Thy Kingdom come…****thy will be done***

We pray for our Families, friends and loved ones. We pray for those we have not been able to meet for many months, and we thank you for those we have managed to meet up with or form our groups and bubbles. We pray for our neighbours, as many of us have got to know them better in these difficult times and for a greater sense of community. We pray for the health and wellbeing of all those we love and pray for a brighter future when we can see each other face to face.

May we use this time of lockdown and uncertainty, to reflect the face of Christ in all of us to a world that has and continues to suffer.

*“Grant us oh God day by day*

*The joy of true living.*

*That all who seek your service*

*May find your peace*

*And grow into the loving likeness*

*Of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Thy Kingdom Come…thy will be done* ***Amen***

We join now in the Family prayer Jesus taught His followers to pray:

**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**

**NOTICES**

**Although we cannot hold services again till 6th December St Michael’s church is open for private prayer from 9.30 – 4.30 every day. Prayer materials are in the church for use inside the church and to take away. And please look at the new prayer resource issued by the Church of England for these 4 weeks of Lockdown- #Prayer for the Nation/Thy Kingdom Come**

**HYMN;** Our final hymn is I the lord of Sea and sky. The lord of the universe sends us out to serve Him and His people.

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Lord Jesus draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts

And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

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