

SUNDAY 15th November 2020

Call to Worship:

Great and glorious God, we gather to worship you.

We lift our eyes to you, in reverent awe before your majesty,
giving thanks for your compassion.

and celebrating your faithfulness.

Holy is the Lord our God, and greatly to be praised!

We lift our eyes, seeking to worship and praise our God. Amen.

Acknowledgement of Country:

I wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Bangerang people of the Yorta Yorta nation and their Elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Welcome

**Hymn: TiS 152 Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love**

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

God of all time and space,

You were with your people of old.

You are with us now.

You have promised to be with us until the end of time.

We give you thanks, that in your presence we are not alone.

Your love has held us from infancy to maturity.

Your grace has infiltrated our lives, never letting us go

Your hope leads us on, encouraging us to find you in ever new and ever surprising ways.

We confess that sometimes we lose faith and trust.

We look at our lives and our world and don't like what we see.

We are impatient, ungrateful and angry. There doesn't seem to be a clear plan.

Our ideas come unstuck and we question if there is any purpose to anything.

In this time of worship, remind us of your promise never to leave us or forsake us.

Help us to trust your promise that you will be with us.

Teach us again about the power of your love.

We ask this in Jesus name, Amen

Words of Assurance:

This is the good news: God intends for us to find life, to embrace hope, to receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Servant.

The end of our journey is not rejection and emptiness, but the fullness of grace and hope in our God. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven. Amen.

An Early Word

**Hymn TiS 599 Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee**

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents

Reflection :

The Gospel for today is known as the Parable of the Talents. That word “talent” has a double meaning. Its original meaning in the Greek of the New Testament refers to a huge sum of money. In the ancient world, a talent was worth what an ordinary labourer earned over the course of fifteen years. In giving each of his servants one or more talents, the master in this story is entrusting them with a fortune.

The second meaning of the word “talent” comes from our English language. A talent means an ability or skill. We say that someone has a talent for music or cooking or sport. So the gospel could be interpreted as saying that just as the master entrusts his servants with talents, so God entrusts each of us with abilities.

But the Parable of the Talents isn't really about money or ability. It's about something even more important. The Parable of the Talents is about trust.

The story opens with a significant act of trust. The master is about to leave town on a journey. He entrusts his wealth to three servants. Each is given a different sum of money – in each case a huge amount. It's clear that the master trusts each of his servants. He even hands over the money without any instructions.

After a long time, the master returns and calls in his three servants. Two of them have doubled their money. The third has made nothing at all; he returns to his master exactly what he received. It turns out that this servant had simply buried the money in the ground, a common security measure in ancient times. He reveals the reason for his action: he was afraid of his master.

His trust in his master was zero, so his willingness to take any risk was zero and thus any possibility of a result was also zero.

The story as we have it leaves us with an unanswered question. How would the master have responded to the first two servants if they had not brought in a profit? What if they had put the money at risk and come back empty-handed?

I suspect the master would have accepted them. After all, in the parable what he commends is not their profits, but their faithfulness. He does not commend the servant who produced five talents more than the one who produced two. Each receives the same commendation: “Well done, good and trustworthy servant”. Each receives the same invitation: “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 in responding to the third servant, the master makes it clear that he would have accepted anything - even rock-bottom savings account interest - that was motivated by faith rather than fear.

I suggest that this parable is not so much about money or ability as it is about trust. The master trusts his servants and acts on this trust. The servants - or rather two of them - return the favour by acting out of trust rather than fear, and they come back to their master to receive commendation and joy. The third servant is immobilised by fear, and

for his trouble receives the rejection he fears. He's a small-minded man who seems to convey that his master is just as small-minded.

The other two servants, however, recognise generosity when they see it. Finding themselves at the receiving end of such outrageous trust, they feel empowered, and are willing to take risks of their own. The love their master has shown them overcomes their fear of failure. They realize that any master who treats his money managers in this open-handed way is more interested in them than in turning a profit.

This brief story about a master and his three servants turns upside down the standards of the world. It announces that the worst thing that can happen to us is not failure. We can learn from our failures, and often it is failure that provides the most enduring lessons.

The worst thing that can happen to us is that we are immobilised by fear. How sad to be so afraid of using our God-given gifts that we lose the joy of living and serving those around us. How wonderful, in contrast, to have the freedom to put the treasure of the gifts and graces God has endowed us with into use, in an act of faith and trust.

The Good News of Jesus gives new meaning to success and security. Success is found not in accumulating more than we can ever use, but in our willingness to take risks in response to God's invitation. Security is found in the utterly reliable God who trusts us before we trust ourselves, who risks, and asks that we risk also.

The parable of the talents is not really about money or abilities. It's a story about trust, a story about risk. Life's the same way. What's important is not money or abilities in themselves, but our decision to use them in ways that show our willingness to take risks and to trust. The central question about life is not "What did we accomplish?" but whether we learned to love.

As a conclusion to our reflection we read the second New Testament reading for today, which comes from Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica. In it he encourages the faith community to maintain trust, faith and love, even through difficult and insecure times. He concludes the passage with a plea that they/we encourage one another and build each other up.

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5 :1-11

Announcements

Offering and Dedication

Offering Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for all the gifts you have entrusted to us.

Help us to remember that all we have comes from you
and is to be used to serve you.

Make us faithful and trustworthy servants,
always ready for your return.

Amen.

Prayers for Others:

Let us pray.

Lord God - we give you thanks for all your gifts to us – for daily food, for health, for each breath we take, for freedom to choose, and for the gifts of your word, your power, and your love. Our hearts are truly overwhelmed, O God, when we consider all that you are and how you have entrusted so much to us. May we be worthy of that trust - may we be a people who are unafraid to live as fully and as richly as you want us to live.

Lord, hear our prayer....

Help us O God, as followers of Jesus, to multiply all that you have given us, to risk spreading your word and perhaps see it misunderstood, to gamble by loving those whom others think worthy only of hate, to take chances by doing good to those who have not done good to us. Help us be faith filled and to desire to increase your glory and your goodness in this world. Make us ones who share in both word and deed that which you have given to us.

Lord hear our prayer....

We pray, O God, for the church here today - that it may encourage all its members to discover, develop, and use all their gifts, those of nature and those of grace...

Lord hear our prayer...

We pray for those who are poor in body or in spirit... for those who are oppressed and heavy laden.... for those who are sick or in despair...

Minister O God by your Spirit, and by us, to all those for whom we have prayed - and help us walk faithfully in the path of our Lord Jesus Christ - he who taught us to pray together as one family, saying:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn: TiS 442 All praise to our redeeming Lord,
Who joins us by his grace**

Word of Mission and Blessing:

Let us go forth to be God's faithful servants.

We will not hide our gifts but share them with everyone we meet.

Let us go forth to be the followers of Jesus.

We will not hold back our compassion, but will offer it to all.

Let us go forth to be the Spirit's hope and peace.

We will be the grace, the joy, the wonder others need in their lives.

TiS 781 Father, bless us as we go