



St. John the Evangelist Church

3428 Portage Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario Phone: 905-354-1227

Sunday Evening Worship for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost

Call to Worship

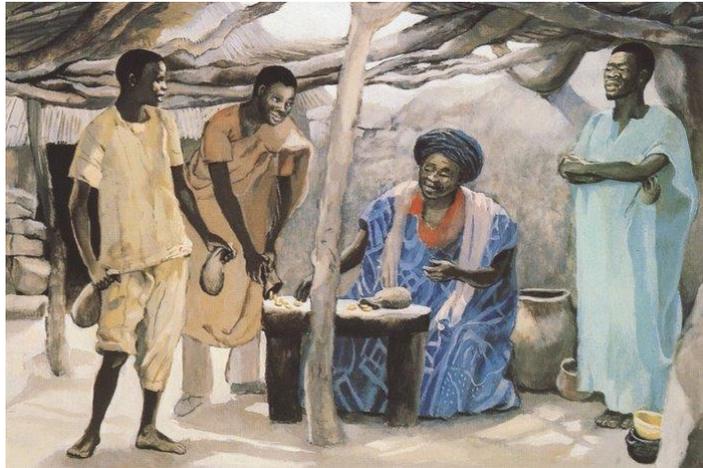
Creator God,
We rest in you.
Jesus the Son,
We rest in you.
Holy Spirit,
We rest in you.

Silence

Loving God,
for the things this day that have
brought us joy,
We give you thanks.
Healing Lord, for the things this day that have brought us sorrow,
Bring peace.

Spirit of life, in the closing of this day,
Give us rest.

O God, you create all things, drawing them to yourself.
You made time, space, and matter from nothing,
and yet through you they are given life and meaning.
May the words of these prayers, brought from nothing,
rise to you as a sufficient offering of praise and thanksgiving. **Amen**



~ written by Josh Walker, in "Sunday Evening Prayer,"
posted on **Lighting Beacons.** <http://lighting-beacons-liturg.com/>

Collect of the Day

God of the covenant, even when we fall into sin, your Spirit invites us to remember that you chose us to be your servant people.

Awaken us to the power and gifts you pour into us for the good of creation, and grant that we may be trustworthy in all things, producing abundantly as we work to build your realm. Amen.

Judges Chapter 4, Verses:1-7

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'"

Psalm 123

To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until he has mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.

Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.

First Thessalonians Chapter 5, Verses:1-11

Now 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 labor 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.

Matthew Chapter 25, Verses:14-30

Jesus said; "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.'

A Sermon for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost – November 15, 2020

Matthew 25:14-30

This gospel is a tough one; it paints a picture we would rather not see; it speaks a truth we would prefer not to hear. There is an injustice here that most of us find hard to accept; which makes this a text we ought to struggle with.

The parable is called “The Parable of the Talents,” and since a talent was a denomination of ancient money, it would appear that this is a story about money and its use. The master gave sums of money to three of his servants and the text tells us that the money was “entrusted,” which means the Master expected to get his money back at some future date. This is no gift, not even a loan, for there is no reason to believe that the servants were in need; the money was given to the servants to be held until the master’s return. And the Master is expecting that the money will be managed in some way, as it says that he gave the sums to each “according to his ability;” so not only were they not given equal sums but their capacity to manage the sums given them was also unequal. Each servant did not start with either the same sum or with the same ability.

Now we know what they did with the money and how their ability was put to work, and when the master returned to settle his accounts, we know that the first servant had invested his five talents and got five more, thus giving back 10 to his master. The second servant had done likewise and he too doubled his investment, and returned to his master four talents. So far, the master has made seven talents on the deal. The third servant, however, fearing his master and being a cautious soul, did not risk his talent and returned exactly what he had been given, one talent; and we sympathize with this third prudent servant, for clearly he did know his master. He thought that his master had more confidence in the others than in him which explained the small initial investment in his abilities, and he shared his master’s lack of confidence in himself. Fearing to lose what little he had, “He went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.”

Now, if we were to rewrite this story according to our image of what a good master should do, assuming, of course, that the master is God, we would have the master say to the now terrified servant, “There, there; I understand your fear and your ambitions. I know that you’re not very wise as far as figures are concerned and I know that you wanted to do what was right. It could be worse; you could have lost all the money in some foolish investment.

As it is, you did the best you could; I appreciate your concern for protecting my money. You can keep what you have. You could have had more but at least you haven't lost out completely." This then would have been a tale about the cautious servant and the forgiving master.

Only trouble is, that's not how Jesus told it. The poor servant is harangued for his caution and deprived of the little money he has preserved by that same caution, and the moral of the tale is that the one who has will get more, and he who hasn't will go to hell, where such men weep and gnash their teeth. Not a pretty picture to be sure. This parable so troubled Karl Marx that he reversed its implications and came up with his classical theory of socialism: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs."

There was once a pastor of fundamentalist congregation who preached a sermon on this gospel. One of his members became quite worried about the fate of people similar to this servant who, like himself, no longer had any teeth to gnash. The pastor, not willing to undermine the old chaps faith, replied, "Teeth will be provided." You and I are going to need more than a fresh set of teeth if we are to take this parable as being anything more than a vengeful fable of capitalist economics.

To start it helps to understand that despite it's popular title, "The parable of the Talents," this story is not about money so much as it is about time, and not just any time but about the time in which we find ourselves, the time between the beginning and the end, right now, this present moment. Matthew locates this parable between the story of the wise and foolish virgins and the story of the last judgment. It is the second of three final stories that Jesus tells just before he is arrested and led to the cross. The very next chapter of Matthew's gospel marks the beginning of the end, and so this parable is part of Jesus' teaching on how we might live with the end in sight. The story places a premium not on how to use and spend money but on how to use and spend the time we've been given.

In his parables about time Jesus warns that what counts is not so much how we look towards the future but how we use the present moment. This parable doesn't really have anything to do with investments – instead it's about what we do with what we have where we are. It's important to note that the master in the story didn't tell us how long he was going to be away. He left his slaves with what has been called a splendid sense of insecurity. The test was to see how, living in the insecurity, which then as now was normal, one would manage, each according to his ability. The burning question of this parable is not "What do we do when the master returns?" but rather "What is to be done in the meantime?"

We get a hint of what Jesus expects to be done until he returns in the next verses of Matthew's Gospel when Jesus talks about those who are welcomed into heaven because "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came unto me." What Jesus expects of us is pretty clear, in the meantime of our lives we are to put what ever talent we've got to use in making a difference in others' lives.

This is a tale about time, about the right and good use of time, and about the time in which we are right now. It's a story about talent, not money, it is about ability and the opportunity God gives us to use our time and talent to his glory and the help of his people here and everywhere. Jesus tells us this story near the end of his time in order to warn that we will be judged not by how much we have, or even on how much we get or give, but on how wisely and well we used what we were given in the time and circumstances of our lives. And the truth is God has great expectations for you and I; and so should we have of ourselves and one another.

This then is a parable about stewardship. We are being asked this morning to use the time we have wisely, to use our God given talents to their best in the service of God's kingdom. That means that you and I have to consider not only how we spend our time, but also how we spend our money, and how we use our God given abilities as well. The Christian conviction is that our time, talent and treasure do not belong to us; they are not ours to possess but are ours to improve. And life and this parable both teach that if we don't use what God has given us, we'll lose it. Thanks to the pandemic and the associated economic uncertainty we find ourselves in it seems that we're headed into some lean times. There is a sense of urgency, even of despair, in the air, and the storm clouds are certainly gathering if they're not already here. Conventional wisdom would say this is not a time to take a risk, not a time to dream dreams. The rabbis, however, have a story for times like this. A wise man once heard that the end of the world was near, his immediate response was to go out into his garden and plant a tree, an act of courage, audacity, and hope – the only possible response.

In the Christian tradition John Wesley may have said it best when asked by a cautious soul; "What can I do for the kingdom?" Wesley replied:

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can."

And to those who asked him about money Wesley's response was much the same:

"Earn all you can, save all you can, and give away all that you can."

The invitation of the gospel this morning is that we give serious consideration to the use of our talents, our time and our treasure. We have only got the present time to act in, to make a difference in. If we took this parable to heart, if we made Wesley's quote the mantra of our lives, we would live less fearfully, and it would be said of us that we made a positive difference in this world by how we lived, by how we spent our time. Surely, that is the good news of the Gospel that we seek for ourselves and for the world. Amen.

A Testimony of Faith

Into the silence of the void the Creator spoke,
and the world came into being.
The Word of God in the vastness brought light from darkness,
matter from nothing,
flesh from dust,
life from lifelessness.

In the quiet of a small town in Palestine
the Word of God came to us.
Even though of one being with the Creator,
Jesus our Christ, taking on human form, was born,
lived and walked among us,
speaking the words of life.
He was crucified, died, and was buried.
He rose from the dead and speaks to us today.
He is the one who saves us from ourselves.

In the stillness of our souls the Spirit of God,
who is one with the Creator and the Christ,
whispers the Word,
and calls us back to the Creator,
back to the Christ,
back to the wholeness of everlasting life
in the unity of the Creator, Christ and Spirit.



*~ from Ash Wednesday (Silence) written by Lisa Frenz for
Mt. Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon.
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The Prayers of the People

In the **Anglican Cycle of Prayer**, we pray for the Church of Ceylon (Extra-Provincial to the Archbishop of Canterbury), The Rt Revd Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabey - Bishop of Colombo The Rt Revd Keerthisiri Fernando - Bishop of Kurunegala;

For our **Bishops** Linda our Primate, Mark our National Indigenous Archbishop, Anne our Metropolitan, and Susan our Bishop;

In the **Diocese of Niagara**, we pray for the parish of St. Mark's, Orangeville, The Venerable Peter Scott, Rector, The Reverend Canon Lynne Thackwray, Honorary Assistant, The Reverend Richard Beaudoin, Deacon, and the people of that parish;

For all the clergy and people who share in the ministry of St. John's.

Today we pray for the following **people and their families**: Terry & Joanne Thomson, Jean Tice, Frank Tiffney & Jennifer Bergen, David & Mary Todd, Sterling Tooke.

And in our **community** we give thanks and pray for those who volunteer and offer leadership to First Niagara on the Lake Pathfinders.

We remember those who are close to us, for **those who are ill**: Lucas, Maria, Kelly-Lynne, Jan, Aisling, Helen, Bev, Kathy, Adam, Wendy & Gary, Maryse, Gary, Cassandra & Max, Shirley, Lee, Mary, Barb, Mylee, Betty, Patti, David, the Guerin family the Sorley family, baby Parker, Betty, Pat, Michael, Larry, Patti, Vicki, Carol, Rachel for all affected by Covid-19, and for others who need our prayers, ...

A Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Father and Mother of us all,
Holy is your name.

Let justice and mercy fill all Creation and let us recognize
that every thought and thing belongs to you.

Feed us with the bread we need for today.
Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Stand with us in trial and temptation.
Free us from the grip of all that is evil.

For you alone are creating our universe,
now and forever. **Amen.**

— from the ***Seekers Church***, a Christian community
in the tradition of the Church of the Saviour.

A Night Prayer

Lord,
it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.

The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.

In your name we pray. Amen.



A Blessing & Dismissal

Go now as those raised with Christ,
wondering at God's great love
and telling the story of your salvation.
Be on your guard against all kinds of greed
and set your minds on the ways of heaven.

And may God reach out to you and nourish you;
May Christ Jesus renew you in the image of your creator;
And may the Holy Spirit lead you with cords of kindness and love.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

...In the name of Christ. Amen.



**Birthdays:*

John Bruneau – Nov. 16

