

## Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

In this week's reading Matthew 25: 14-30, Jesus tells a parable of a man who, before going away, gives his slaves talents (money). When he returns, he holds his slaves accountable for what they have done with the talents. Two have used them wisely, but one has done nothing – and is strongly condemned. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

### A gathering prayer

As a church, we have been given many gifts,  
many talents, many opportunities, and so we pray:  
Loving God, help us – individually, and as your people together –  
to be your witnesses in the world today.  
Help us to take risks and not stay in our comfort zones.  
Bless us with the courage of your first disciples,  
that your kingdom may come and your will be done  
in this place and throughout the world.  
We ask this in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

### A prayer of confession

Forgive us, Lord, when we have not trusted our gifts  
because we have not trusted you.  
When we have been cautious in our own strength,  
not confident in yours.  
Forgive us and help us to help one another  
to be the people you know that we can be.

**Amen.**

*Our Father .....*

**Song            O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHggQjJrxl8>

### Matthew 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

<sup>14</sup> "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup> to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup> The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup> But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> 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.'

<sup>21</sup> 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.'



<sup>22</sup> 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.'

<sup>23</sup> 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.'

<sup>24</sup> 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; <sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

<sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> 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.'

<sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (NRSV)

### **Investing wisely for the Kingdom – Matthew 25: 14-30**

If you want to make money in life you have to invest it. Putting your money in the stock market carries risks. But, if you go and bury your money in the back garden out of fear that you might lose what you have, well, all you will have is what you started with. If you plan to retire on that sum of money or help pay for a child's education, you will be out of luck.

The parable of the "talents" is a story of investments – wise and not so wise. It is also a story of different views of the world – that of scarcity and that of abundance. Abundance is an expectation that God is present and active in the world and that we need not fear the world around us. It is fear that distracts us from living with expectant hearts or keeping us from loving our neighbour. It is fear that keeps us from investing our lives in the work of God which can lead us to hoard and bury our resources in the ground rather than investing them in the work of God.

Jesus describes three servants. One receives five talents (a talent is the equivalent of up to twenty year's wages for a typical worker); the second gets two and the third just one talent. Even the last worker is entrusted with a significant sum of money. The word 'talent' in the biblical context it is a form of money but in the life of the church, gifts and skills might be as appropriate here as money.

When the king returns, he calls for an accounting of the resources given to each. The servants with five and two talents each doubled the investment. The third servant, however, chose safety. Instead of taking the money to the bank, where he could at least earn some interest this servant buried the money in the ground. That way, when the king returned this servant would not get penalized for losing the funds entrusted to him. He lived in fear – fear of the king, whom he believed was an angry, capricious ruler.

With regard to the two servants who were entrusted with larger sums, Jesus puts it this way: “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” (vs. 29). Here, we must be careful in how we read the parable because it could be read as saying that the poor get what they deserve. When we read a verse like this we must always be careful that we don’t misread this as riches are a sign of divine blessing for holiness. We all know that wealth is not a necessary sign of holiness. After all, Jesus made it clear that riches could be an impediment to entering the kingdom (Matthew 19:23-26). So, the message here is one of accountability. Those who are charged with the responsibility of leadership will be held accountable for their work.

This parable, like the others around it should cause us a bit of disquiet. The fearful servant gets cast into the darkness and experiences a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Perhaps it is best to see this as a reminder that those who are entrusted with the job of oversight of the king’s resources are held accountable for their use, even as we are held accountable for the gifts given to us. We are not to ‘hide our light under a bowl,’ (Matthew 6:15). We are to use the gifts God has given us with each of us playing our part in the life of the congregation. It is then that we find fulfilment and not experience a ‘gnashing of teeth.’

As we await the coming of God’s realm in its fullness, we are not called upon to sit back and twiddle our thumbs. We are called to be at work, sharing in the work of God in the world. An abundance of resources have been provided to us. We needn’t live in fear. We just need to invest the resources in the work of God in the world.

### **Prayers of intercession**

We pray, loving God,  
for all those who take risks in our world today;  
for those who preach the gospel where it is dangerous to do so;  
for those who speak out for justice though it could cost them their lives;  
for those who denounce corruption though it costs them their livelihoods;  
for those who stand up to temptation and turn down offers of riches;  
for those called to be in the armed forces, the rescue services,  
the police force, and in any place of work  
where they risk their lives to save others.  
Lord, bless their faithfulness, reward their courage,  
and receive our prayers.  
In Jesus’ name.  
**Amen.**

*Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .*

**Song Graham Kendrick The Servant King**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBd3ThCResI>

**HOLY COMMUNION Thanksgiving: Matthew 25: 14-30**

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,  
for you have destined us for salvation



through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You have spoken to us through your child, Jesus,  
teaching us to look to you and trust in your kindness,  
and to be faithful stewards of your gifts.  
He was scorned and mocked  
and died for us, but was raised by you.  
You have promised a day of judgment and deliverance,  
when Christ will come  
as unexpectedly as a thief in the night,  
to reveal the children of light  
and gather all who have been trustworthy  
with what you have given  
into his kingdom of joy.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,  
we offer you thanks and praise at all times  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.***



### **The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.  
I Corinthians 5:7

### **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.  
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

### **Prayer after communion**

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **A sending out prayer**

Generous God, as we are sent out bearing the wealth of riches that you have entrusted to each one of us, may our thankful hearts become brave hearts, ready to risk everything for the sake of your kingdom. **Amen.**



