

NOVEMBER 8, 2020; PENTECOST 24; SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON

(50% seating capacity)

Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson (Osthus Singers)

HYMN #145 "Now Thank We All Our God" 9 am:

CONFESSION OF SIN: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ's sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S SERMON: What would you do with free tools?...Matthew 25

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Zephaniah 1:7-17 Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near. The LORD has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. 8 On the day of the LORD's sacrifice I will punish the princes and the king's sons and all those clad in foreign clothes. 9 On that day I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit. 10 "On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will go up from the Fish Gate, wailing from the New Quarter, and a loud crash from the hills. 11 Wail, you who live in the market district; all your merchants will be wiped out, all who trade with silver will be ruined. 12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad.' 13 Their wealth will be plundered, their houses demolished. They will build houses but not live in them; they will plant vineyards but not drink the wine. 14 "The great day of the LORD is near- near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD.*

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 5:1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

PASTOR: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: Chosen by Carol

SERMON TITLE: “GENEROSITY PRODUCES ABUNDANCE”
Matthew 25:14-30; Pastor Tom Olson; November 15, 2020

Dear Friends, Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

CONTEXT: The last three weeks of the church year are always focused on preparing for judgment day...it is a time of serious self-examination ON A TOPIC I AM AFRAID WE NEGLECT THESE DAYS. This year we are looking at the three gospel lessons from Matthew 25. SALVATION, SERVICE AND SYMPATHY are our outline for Matthew 25: The Parable of the Lamps and Oil: SALVATION; The Parable of the Talents: SERVICE; and The Parable of the Sheep and Goats: SYMPATHY. If we have real SALVATION by faith we are ready. If we use our God-given resources in SERVICE to the Lord, we are ready. If we have true SYMPATHY for those experiencing the hardship, CARING FOR SOULS, we are ready. Today we look at SERVICE:

PARAPHRASE: You know the parable well. A man went on a journey and entrusted his estate to three servants. He returned and had them report on what they had done with his money. Two of the three used it well and doubled it and the master was well pleased. One of the three buried it and brought back the same sum he was given, and the master was displeased and took what he had away and gave it to the one who had done the best.

I. DISTRIBUTION: ENTRUSTING HUGE SUMS OF MONEY

Matthew 25:14-30 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 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. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

TALENT: I never had looked up how much a talent is, and I was surprised. One TALENT is 75 pounds, or 20 years of wages. A talent of gold today would be over one million dollars. Silver was a more highly treasured metal in Christ's time than it is today, so I would put it up near the value of gold considering that. His three trusted servants received 5, 2 and 1 million dollars respectively. He did it according to their ability. Notice that the ones who received the two largest sums of money did something with it. **Verse 16, “they PUT HIS**

MONEY TO WORK.” They didn’t waste any time. Nowadays I suppose we might think of investing the money in stocks and bonds, but I would suspect in those days it was more hands on like buying farm land and tilling it, or getting a crew of workers to do a task, or starting some kind a business and making that business prosper through wisdom and hard work. Even today, if you really want to make your investment grow, you need to get a successful business going.

ILLUSTRATION: It would be like a farmer who entrusted his machinery to his hired men to get the wheat crop harvested. Two of them used the machinery to bring in the wheat and one of them just kept his combine in the pole barn, nice and clean. The farmer returned and who was he happy with...the ones with the dirt on them or the clean machine that was never used in the harvest?

QUESTION: Notice in the text that the master “entrusted his property to them.” The implication is that he wanted them to make good use of that property. The practical question for us is this? What is it that God has entrusted to me? ...money, abilities, time, family members, a home, a sound mind or our physical bodies? Are we making good use of these gifts? DISTRIBUTION.

II. ACCOUNTING: RESULTS AND REWARDS

Matthew 25:19-27 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 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.' 21 '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!' 22 'The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23 '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!' 24 '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. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 '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? 27 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.

RISK: The first two servants took that money and got it working. The Bible says they did it “immediately.” Undoubtedly, they had to make some effort and take some risks. They may have temporarily lost some of it in an unsuccessful business idea. But all in all, they were able to double that money in the time period the master was gone. All our parables seem to intimate that the master is gone for quite some time. The rule of thumb is that 7% interest will take ten years to double an investment. That is hard to get that much interest so that one might want to try to use it to start and business venture to make it grow faster. The one talent man viewed his master in harsh terms and felt it best to just bury the money until the master returned. In the meantime, it is implied that he frittered away his time as well. I would like to repeat a few anonymous quotes to you on this topic:

- “Our life is God’s gift to us. What we do with it is our gift to God.”
- “It is better to try things and fail, than not try and succeed.”
- “It is better to aim at something and miss the bull’s eye than to aim at nothing and hit it every time.”

The book of Proverbs has some insight into this as well, considering that the master called this servant “lazy” as well:

Proverbs 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor.

Proverbs 10:4 A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Or as I have told my children time and again: ***“The harder you work, the luckier you get.”***

STEWARDSHIP: The point here is not to try to get rich. The point here is to make good use of the resources God gives us. Some can sing well, and they should sing. Some have mechanical ability and should use that well. Others can teach or write or organize or minister to the sick or administrate or lead...they should use those gifts. I know people who have beautiful speaking voices and they can read or be on the radio. Others are scholars to do meaningful research. **Beloved, use your gifts.**

ROD: Moses protested when God called him to free the Hebrews in Egypt. He said he didn't have anything of value to use. (Do you ever feel like that?) God said to Moses, “What is that in your hand?” What did Moses say, “A shepherd's rod...” God said, “Throw it down.” I became a serpent. God said, “Pick it up by the tail.” Now that took faith! And it became a rod. All he had was a Shepherd's rod, and when he used it as God directed it became **the ROD OF GOD** and the instrument to free up a nation from the most powerful dictator on earth. All he had to do was use what he had. And that is all we must do as well. ACCOUNTING

III. REALLOCATION: INSIGHTFUL WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION

Matthew 25:28-30 "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

OPPOSITE: This is just the opposite of what we are being told to do today. Today we are told to take money from the rich and give it to the poor. And in certain contexts, Jesus tells us to do that. He told a rich young man to “sell everything you own and give it to the poor.” But that rich man could not do it. Jesus never told us to take from the rich and give it to the poor. He said two things: take your own money and help the poor and then here he says take it from the poor man and give it to the richest man. Why? Because that person had the ability to put that money to work and make it grow, to the benefit of many people along the way.

POVERTY: One of the greatest ways to keep people in poverty is to give them money and make them lose their incentive to make something out of their lives. I recently overheard a man talk on the phone in public and complain that he had to work every day and his close relative was on unemployment doing nothing but get free money when there was plenty of jobs to be found. I also remember a business in Ohio laying off many people at once. I asked an unemployed woman what job she planned on getting. She said, “None.” She said, “I don't plan on working until unemployment runs out.” But in the meantime, she missed out on many opportunities that would likely not be there at the end of the unemployment term, when hundreds of others like her, would start looking for jobs. Some people, like this lazy servant, squander opportunities to use their talents if we entrust them with easy money.

GIVING: A friend of ours who is wealthy and generous was asked to give a giant contribution to a ministry. He said, “Don't ask me for too much money at one time because I am a good investor and will make it grow so much that over the years I will give you much more money than if I gave it to you now in one lump sum.” That is why we take from the lazy servant and give it to the diligent one...he will likely provide the lazy one a good labor job for a lifetime with the money that the lazy servant would have squandered in a year. Some people can handle money well and others need to have an hourly job and live hand to mouth. ***Luke 12:48: Jesus said, “To whom much is given, much is required.”***

FAITHFUL: So how do we become people that God can trust to handle important wealth and responsibilities? Jesus gives us the answer in Matthew 25:23 ***You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.*** Be faithful in whatever God has given to you right now. Be faithful to those around you. Be faithful in the most menial of tasks. Be faithful with your spiritual gifts. Be faithful in the Word of God and prayer. And in God's good time, in this life or in his coming kingdom, He will put you over much. Sometimes the wait is long...Moses had to tend sheep in the wilderness of Saudi Arabia for 40 years before He was ready for His leadership of Israel. Joseph was faithful in prison for 14 years before he was put in charge of the strongest world power of his day, Egypt.

COMMENDATION: The greatest reward for a life of faithfulness will be to enter heaven's gates, washed in the blood of Christ, and hear His words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master." That will be worth far more than five talents of gold or silver. "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus!"
Amen

Will you pray with me? Father in Heaven. Thank you that Jesus has died on the cross to forgive all my sins. Thank you that he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit with wonderful gifts and abilities to give us. Help us to use our gifts wisely and well for your glory. Amen

Now may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

HYMN #445 "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" 9 AM:

PRAYER & 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 that 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*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

CLOSING CHORUS: chosen by Carol; 9 am Vagle Brothers "Doxology" #19

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson