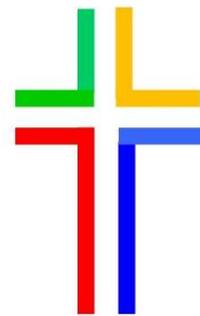


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 15 November 2020



Today's worship sheet has been prepared by Sophie Doyle, Pastoral & Community worker for the Circuit, who is also leading worship at the Chapel today. If you would like to call her for a chat she would love to hear from you on 01566 781572; she can't come out just now and meet everyone as she would like.

## PRAYER

Loving God, we praise and thank you that you are our good shepherd. We thank you that we are so loved by you as your children, the one who searches after us and calls us by name. We praise you with all of our hearts and will tell of the marvellous things you have done. We are overwhelmed with the beauty of your creation.

Your glory is revealed in all creation and in spectacular colours of autumn. We thank you for the good gifts you share with us. We thank you Lord for one another. But most of all Lord we thank you for your presence and your son Jesus Christ in whose loving and precious name we pray. **Amen.**

## READING FOR TODAY Matthew 23:14-30 (NIV)

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

<sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,<sup>[a]</sup> each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.

<sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “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!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “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!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “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? <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## REFLECTION

I once read a report about a church in America, the way they illustrated this parable was by giving the 100 church members £70 each with the instruction to enrich God's kingdom by giving to the needy. The pastor shared the report more widely because the leadership was overwhelmed by the response. As members had shared the challenge with people they knew, others joined in and the reaches of this little Church (by American standards) rippled out across a much wider area than expected. No example is ever perfect, but this idea gives me a lot to think about.

The parable of the talents has possibly been the most mis-understood/ mis-quoted parable over the years. For example, it has been used in prosperity gospel churches, as a reason for why God wants us to become wealthy; God blesses us with money so that we can make more money! This scripture has been used to claim that the poor are poor because of their own faults and problems, God gave them all the opportunities in the world to become rich, but they failed to pull themselves up by their boot straps and make something of themselves.

Jesus is not using this parable to recommend to his followers that we should work hard, make all the money we can, to give all we can. Instead, the story is about those who think they deserve what they earned, and those who do not know how precious is the gift that they have been given. The slaves did nothing to earn their five, two, and one talents. They were given as gifts! What becomes crucial is how they regarded the gifts and what they did with them. Like last week this parable needs to be read with Matthew 23 in our minds as well. How Jesus is talking to Pharisees and scribes that have taken the Good News about reconciliation with God, about being the lights of the world and buried it under rules and hypocrisy. Keep also in your mind how Jesus is the Good Shepherd, how he leaves the 99 and goes after the one so none would be lost, when the third servant recounts his decision making out he has viewed the master as a hard man. Where actually God is just and loving. How we view God and our interpretation of how he views us will affect the way we respond to the call on our lives.

Although talents in Jesus' time related to about 15 years of a labourer's wages, this is where we get our understanding of the word talent today. God has blessed you with talents - not the same as anyone around you in size or amount. Not one of us gets to pick the place we are born, or our sex, level of ability or intelligence or ethnicity. But we are able to use the gifts God has given us for the kingdom of God today. How do you plan on using your gifts in the coming days? I'd guess it is different to how it would have looked a year ago, but God still has a plan and purpose that includes each one of us.

#### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Loving God we thank you that you are the same yesterday, today and forever. This is your world and your creation and you love it more than we ever could. We ask your peace, your wisdom and unity that comes from you.

Loving God, we come to you full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks. Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to his disciples, make us into steady pillars for those around us.

Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared.

Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk.

Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. **Amen.**

#### **HYMN H&P 739, StF 416**

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and power controlling  
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,  
So that all may see I triumph  
Only through His power

May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self-abasing,  
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
Strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus  
As I onward go

#### **BLESSING**

May the love of the Father, the tenderness of the Son, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, gladden your heart and bring peace to your soul, this day and all your days, Amen.