

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [**Responsive**]

Transforming God, you take the night and give us day. You take our strife and provide peace. You take our sadness and transform it into joy. You take our fear and create courage within us. You take death and give us new life. O God, you give and you give and you give. We gather to praise you and offer our love and loyalty as your willing servants in the name of Christ who enriches our lives with grace and in the power of the Spirit who prays within us when we cannot find the right words to honour you, God most kind and generous. We join our voices in confession ...

Trusting God, you place your mission in our hands and give us gifts to accomplish amazing things in Jesus' name. We confess sometimes we've taken credit for what your love has done. Sometimes we've called our own desires your will. Sometimes we've stepped back and let others carry responsibilities. Forgive us when we fail to honour your trust in us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God's amazing love allows each of us to receive his grace and be at peace with God, with yourselves and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Special Music Wonderful Words of Life Roy & Lynn Price

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture¹

Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture

¹ Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Perspectives

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

In our encounters with scripture, we often struggle with perspective as we seek to understand the context of the teachings from Jesus. Parables are not simple stories told to illustrate a point. We cannot simply listen and understand, rather they require engagement and encounter. Developing a sense of perspective requires the ability to look beyond your own point of view, so that you can consider how others may think or feel about something. Parables ask us to look through the words into the deeper meaning. An encounter with a parable today may lead to an insight. Read the same parable next month and something else may crystallize. The parables require our attentiveness in each encounter. Listen ... what do you hear?

Gospel Matthew 25:14–30 [B#28/W#29]

Last week Jesus shared the parable of the bridesmaids encouraging the listener to remember who they serve as they watch, wait, and prepare for his return. The wise women made careful preparations with the filled lamps as a metaphor of tending to their faith and remaining in connection with God. The parable this morning sits between the parable of the wise women and when Jesus foretold of his crucifixion and of his return with the angels. Jesus told this parable during the last few days of his life. He had left the relative safety of rural Galilee and he was headed for Jerusalem, the capital city. There is a lack of familiarity with the nuance of the cultural setting that shapes this parable. The word talent has several distinct meanings. A talent was a unit of money that was worth about twenty years – yes... 20 years of wages for a day laborer - a considerable amount of money. You may also think of talents as gifts, skills, and resources. When diverse perspectives are held it is possible to develop a more complex understanding.

When I encountered the parable this week I was reminded of experiences with the education system when my children were young. It was when they struggled with learning that I discovered that the school system could only meet the needs of about 75% of the students. The other 25% were not able to learn within the structure and methods of the

academic system. Unfortunately, those who struggle are often seen as having low intelligence or being lazy. At times children who struggled would become disruptive. Bright children would start to lose their self confidence as learning difficulties surfaced. I volunteered with a literacy program to work with children who were struggling. We would play games to facilitate learning. It was wonderful when they gained insight and acquired the new skills.

In the 1970's Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner began developing his theory of multiple intelligences. He put forward the idea that all of us possess different types of intelligence, including linguistic, spatial, and musical. Some are gifted with linguistic intelligence, such as writers and poets. Others have logical/mathematical intelligence and they are accountants and scientists. Others are gifted with musical intelligence. Some are gifted spatially and become artists and architects. Some are gifted kinaesthetically with graceful and coordinated bodies, such as athletes and dancers. Others are gifted interpersonally, they are able to get along well with most people, such as sales persons, counselors, and teachers. Some are gifted in their ability to look within, such as philosophers and other wise people. Of particular importance, Gardner claims that everyone he has ever tested has scored high on at least one of these forms of intelligence. All of us are gifted in our own way. Imagine if our society were to embrace this knowledge. There would be far fewer children who grow into adults feeling inept and incapable.

The parable tells of a wealthy master who, before he went on a long journey, left three slaves in charge of a significant amount of money. Two of the slaves took a risk and invested the money with good returns. When their master arrived home and saw their results, he promised them more responsibility in the future. The third slave took very different action. He buried the money. He literally put it into the ground and took no chances. The master treated him harshly.

Different perspectives on this parable can lead to distinct interpretations of Christ's message. This often occurs with the parables. The passage reveals that the third slave experienced the master as a harsh man who took what did not belong to him and that people were afraid of him. The master saw the slave as wicked, lazy, and worthless.

Neither sees the other with compassion or understanding. Neither sees the other with any redeeming qualities.

One understanding of this parable is that it is better to take risks, than to play it safe and not use the talents. Was this a warning that the outcome of playing it safe— not loving passionately, not investing yourself, not risking anything—is like being banished to the outer darkness?

Perhaps we can understand it as a reminder that we are not created to live in fear. Did the third slave live in fear of his harsh master? Did he bury the money to keep it safe? How do we bury our talents, refusing to be vulnerable with our gifts? Consider whether you might bury your goodness, your time, your love, or your talent. For some, it may seem that your gifts are too small to matter ... or not good enough to share. Yet, every talent is worthy.

Barbara Brown Taylor² wrote, "The meaning of this parable has been established in most people's minds for so long that there's hardly anything left to say about the third servant that hasn't already been said. Here is a brief summary... this is "a story of a man whom overcaution and cowardice led into a breach of trust."³; "The punishment for neglected opportunity is deprivation of opportunity."⁴; the third servant's refusal to risk led to repressed guilt, resulting in "the loss of the opportunity for meaningful existence."⁵; and, "out of fear of failure, he refused even to try to succeed."⁶ Taylor goes on, "How you hear a parable has a lot to do with where you are hearing it from. ... In the 1970's Pastor Ernesto Cardenal met with his congregation to discuss the scripture reading. He encouraged them to meet with him to discuss the gospels rather than preach the sermon to them. There were times that up to a thousand people would gather, -young and old, male and female, literate and illiterate. They had certain things in common. They were all surviving below the poverty line and they were exposed to the impact of the Sandanista uprising against the dictatorship of the Somoza government.

² The Parable of the Fearful Investor A Sermon preached in Duke University Chapel Nov 13, 2011 by the Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor

³ C. H. Dodd (1935)

⁴ T. W. Manson (1949)

⁵ Dan Via (1967)

⁶ John Donahue (1988)

When the parable of the talents was addressed by Pastor Cardenal, a Colombian poet named William stated, "That's a lousy parable." Pastor Cardenal agreed saying, "It's really a very ugly example that Jesus gives of exploitation, of speculation with money, of pure capitalism. Jesus was seeing the exploitation there was in the society of his time, and that's going on now—much worse with the banks and finances of today."

And, finally, there is another way to understand this parable. Consider the words of the third slave, who bravely 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.' Although he claims to be afraid, the slave spoke boldly to the master. He called him out on inappropriate behaviours and unreasonable expectations when the slave handed the money back.

Could we understand this third man differently? In terms of the 21st century, would he be a whistle blower refusing to participate in unethical actions? Ched Myers and Eric DeBode wrote, " That he buried the money in the ground seems strange at first glance. But considering that many in Jesus' audience were farmers, there may be some wry peasant humor here. Those who work the land know that all true wealth comes from God, the source of rain, sunshine, seed, and soil. But this silver talent, when "sown," produced no fruit!"

And ... that leaves the question... what of the slave being kicked out of the master's estate into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Myers and DeBode go on to say, "In other words, we meet Christ in places of pain and marginality; the "outer darkness." The whistle-blower's punishment kicks him out of the rich man's system, but brings him closer to the true Lord, who dwells with the poor and oppressed." Taylor urges, "Read the parable like someone living on a lake in Nicaragua—or one of the "little ones" who followed Jesus around ... and it can be hard to see the master [in the parable] as anything but one more tycoon sitting on a pile of money so high that he cannot see the bottom of it..."

We are left to struggle with the many ways this parable can be understood. Can you imagine Jesus arriving here and asking for his profit? I struggle to see this as a teaching

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to encourage punishment of those who object to unfair practices and oppression of the poor and slaves.

Our exploration of the scriptures lead us to reflect on many aspects of the stories. The teachings call out across the centuries as we seek to gain perspective on that original time and place ... and as we integrate the teachings into our lives today. We can bravely utilize our talents for the good of God's creation. We can question the systems that we live within. We can question whether expectations are life-giving and good for God's creation. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Softly and tenderly #640

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote We do not live by what is possessed but by what is promised. Walter
 Brueggemann, scholar, theologian

In the Church that bears Christ's name, we receive the legacy of faithfulness offered to us across many generations. Our gifts continue to build up the inheritance we share in for generations we will never meet, so that they will meet Jesus and reach out to others in his name.

Doxology We give Thee but Thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is
 Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

Blessing of Gifts

Faithful God, we offer humble thanks today for your generosity to us through the Church that bears Christ's name. Receive our gifts as tokens of our love and loyalty. Use them to sustain the mission of the Church in ways we cannot yet imagine, in a future that you are creating through Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Special Music Whispering Hope Roy & Lynn Price

Prayers of the People

God of life, we are grateful for your presence with us every day, in each challenge and opportunity. In our weakness, you are strength. In the chaos of life, you light the path ahead for each of us. In our questions, you offer wisdom. Stay with us in these days when so much seems uncertain. Guide us to serve you faithfully.

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God of loving kindness, we are grateful for each moment of joy in our lives ... for love given and received, for friendships that nurture meaning and happiness, and for family who show us glimpses of unconditional love. In all our relationships and interactions, keep us mindful to see you in each another.

God of the nations, we are concerned for this world filled with conflict, and, for your creation at risk by human actions. Open our leaders' minds and hearts with wisdom to develop more equitable ways of ordering our common life.

God of healing we pray for all who are suffering. We pray for your Spirit to draw close to all who live with fear. Comfort those with overwhelming pain and challenges. May your light shine into the sadness and sorrow. May your love guide us to comfort and support each other.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Jim T; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Lori and family; and, Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; Roy & family; and, Tatjana & family. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people: Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed 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 who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn

Jesus loves me

#373

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

May the blessing of God, Creator, Christ and Spirit, fill you and overflow through you to share God's renewing love within the world.

Postlude

Amen

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Resources include: PCC Worship Planner, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/> Feasting on the Word, NRSV Bible, sermons.com