

*Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost*  
*November 15, 2020*

(If you are home read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud. If you are worshipping in person, please follow along silently.)

**Prepare for worship:** Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

**Call to Worship:**

*Soon and Very Soon (v.1)*

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King;  
soon and very soon, we are going to see the King;  
soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King.

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**Centering Words:**

We come today as people of different thought, but in this time we come together in the joy of our Lord. We worship the God who is love so that we may love alike even though we may not think alike.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Faithful Steward, you bless us with gifts that are uniquely our own. We long to use the talents you bestow upon us to build your kingdom. We yearn to live with gratitude for all you have done for us and the opportunities you place before us. Clear our vision, Holy One, and help us see the good we can do with the gifts and talents we have received. Through your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:

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**The 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 who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Affirmation of Faith:** Apostles' Creed

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; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Old Testament Reading            Judges 4: 1-7

Psalm 123

Epistle Reading                    1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

Special Music

Gospel Reading                    Matthew 25: 14-30

Sermon                                *Work, So We May Enter God's Joy*

**Hymn:**

*A Charge to Keep I Have*

1. A charge to keep I have,  
a God to glorify,  
a never-dying soul to save,  
and fit it for the sky.
2. To serve the present age,  
my calling to fulfill;  
O may it all my powers engage  
to do my Master's will!
3. Arm me with jealous care,  
Arm me with jealous care,  
as in thy sight to live,  
and oh, thy servant, Lord,  
prepare a strict account to give!
4. Help me to watch and pray,  
and on thyself rely,  
assured, if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

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**Benediction:**

Serve your God with patience and passion, Be deliberate in enacting your faith. Be steadfast in celebrating the Spirit's power. And may peace be your way in the world. Amen.

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**Response:**

*God Be with You till We Meet Again*

God be with you till we meet again;  
by his counsels guide, uphold you,  
with his sheep securely fold you;  
God be with you till we meet again.

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Matthew 25: 14-30

The master is going on a long trip. When he will return, no one knows. He gives three of his servants a portion of his wealth to manage. He does not tell them what to do with the money he gives them. Each is given a different amount according to their ability: one five talents, one two talents and one a single talent. Now a talent was fifteen years wages for a common laborer, so we are not talking small amounts of wealth. The master trusts each one to do with it what they will.

Two of the servants worked with the money that the master entrusted to them and ended up doubling the amount. They took a risk and used the master's money. The third servant did what many may consider the more prudent course of action. He dug a hole and hid the master's money. He did not use the master's money but kept it safe.

Finally, the master returns. He calls the three servants for an accounting. The first, to whom he entrusted five talents, presents the master with ten talents. The second, to whom he entrusted two talents, presents the master with four talents. The third, to whom he entrusted one talent, presents the master with the one talent he was given.

The master's response to the first two is very positive and they are invited to share in the master's joy. They took a risk and worked the money that the master entrusted them with and increased the master's wealth. The third servant, who did not work with the money that the master entrusted to him, had the money taken from him and he was thrown into the darkness.

Same master, but two very different responses to the servants. The two that worked and used the resources the master had given them to grow the master's wealth were invited to enter into the joy of the master. They were invited to celebrate with the master their good work and success. They gave the master cause to celebrate.

But the third hid the money. He did not use the money in any way, not even putting it in a bank where it could accrue interest. He did nothing with it. So, he received the master's wrath. The master responded to this servant, who did not use the money for anything, by taking what he had been given away and throwing him into darkness.

Notice something in this parable. The third servant perceived the master as a harsh man who reaped where he did not sow and gathered where he did not scatter seed. That is not a real positive or uplifting perception of the master. But the parable does not say how the other two servants perceived the master. Did they perceive the master in the same way as the third or did they perceive the master differently? Did they perceive the master to be benevolent and gracious? This, we do not know.

It was not the nature of the master that led to the different responses of the master. It was the actions, or lack thereof, of the servants. The first two servants took what the master entrusted to them and used it. They worked the money they had, we don't know how, and made it grow. Perhaps they took a risk. But we don't know what may have happened if they had worked the money and lost it. The anger and wrath toward the third servant came because the third servant did nothing with what the master had entrusted him.

This parable does let us know that in the final accounting the response we receive from God will be based on whether or not we use the resources God has given us, both individually and collectively as a church, to produce fruit for God's Kingdom.

As individuals, this would be to produce the fruit of the Spirit which Paul enumerates in his letter to the church in Galatia: love, joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control (5:22-23a CEB). Then as the Spirit produces these fruits within us, it becomes the means by which the Spirit produces them in others.

During the last year and a half of his life Kay's dad was in a nursing home in Thomasville. Kay's dad lived according to the fruits of the Spirit in his own way. He was a tough businessman but he always treated others with kindness, respect and patience. When he entered the nursing home there was one nurse who was just plain mean. She was short with patients and always complained about what she had to do. She was frequently assigned to Kay's dad. Over the course of time, as Kay's dad dealt with this nurse with patience and kindness, she changed. She became a little less grumpy and mean. She began to interact kindlier with the patients. Everyone noticed the change in her. She began producing fruits of the Spirit in part because Kay's dad showed her that fruit.

Kay's dad used the resources God had given him- love, patience, kindness, goodness, joy- and changed the life of that nurse. He didn't do anything special. He simply showed her a different way of being.

We can transform people by using the resources God has given all of us, these fruits of the Spirit. By simply interacting with others with love, joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control we show them a different way of being, God's way.

In doing so, we may bring others into the church. Collectively as the church we are also to use the resources God has entrusted us with to bring people into the kingdom of God. This may mean taking risks and doing ministry differently from the ways we have done in the past.

A prime example of this is happening right now here at Trinity. As this pandemic started and we were no longer able to gather to worship in person, we began posting our services on our Facebook page. We were doing this with a laptop or cell phone and, to be honest, it looked like it was done with a laptop or cell phone. Also, this was posted after our normal 11:00 a.m. worship time.

The worship committee and trustees began discussion about upgrading our internet and sound system so that we could provide video and live streaming. This is a rather large financial investment and many wondered what return we could get. Were we doing this to enhance our ministry at Trinity or were we doing it because everybody else was doing it?

The only way that we could figure out how to get some data was to look at the Facebook likes we get for our services. With the likes, we can see who is actually watching. During the time from March 15 to August 30, the time we were not having in-person worship, we had likes from 11 people who are not presently members of Trinity. Some of these were former members or family members but some were people that had no known connection to Trinity. So even though this upgrading of our system is a financial risk, it is using a resource God has given us to bring people into the Kingdom of God.

That is really what this parable is all about. It is that we use the resources God has given us, individually and collectively as a church, to bring people into the Kingdom of God. We live our lives in such a way that people see the fruits of the Spirit within us and are drawn by the Spirit into God's Kingdom. As a church we use all the resources God has given us to bring others into the church.

Some may wonder about success or failure of using God's resources. What if we use God's resources and fail? Will we receive even worse punishment? Notice that this is not addressed in this parable. What if one of the servants had lost the money the master had entrusted to him?

My friends, that is not even a consideration. If we use the resources God has given us according to God's direction and for the growth of God's kingdom there is no failure. For it is God working through us and God does not fail!

If one person changes their attitude because of our example, we are successful. If just one person, wherever they may be, comes to know God through our on-line service, we are successful.

When we use the resources God has given us, God will take what we start with and multiply it. When we use the resources God has given us and work them for the Kingdom of God, God will invite us to come and enter into divine joy.