

Worship Together

Sunday 19th November

Prayer

'Lord, we come to your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance'. May the light of your presence guide our worship today.

- 1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.**
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
Be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
Be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.**
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.**
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

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Prayers

Lord Jesus, Light of the World; you came to turn our world upside down, or rather the right way up. Word of God made flesh, you came to show us how to truly live, to love and to serve; how to live out the values of your kingdom here on earth. As we gather to praise you for all that you are and all that you bring, we pray; 'mirrored here, may our lives tell your story' today and every day. Lord, we acknowledge that we do not always share the riches of your kingdom with others. Forgive us and transforms us, by the power of your Spirit, into the people you have truly made us to be. **Amen**

Reading: Matthew 25: 14 - 30

'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 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." 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." 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." 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." 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; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." 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? 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. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 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. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Reflection

In parables things work out a little differently than we would expect. Here in Matthew, the Master rewards the trustworthy and hardworking nature of the first two slaves by placing them in charge of many things, and then invites to join with him. But with the last slave, the master is disappointed,

because afraid of his master's harshness, he has hidden the talent not even investing the money. So, the master takes away even the one talent and orders the slave to be thrown into the outer darkness.

Out of all the parables that Jesus shared with his disciples, this one has probably been more abused and misused than any other. For instance, this passage has been cited, in prosperity gospel churches, as a defence for why God wants us to become wealthy; in other places this parable has been used to claim that the poor are poor because of their own faults and problems. Neither are true! Parables are about God's kingdom and once any parable is taken away from this principle then misreading is inevitable.

In other parables(also about God's kingdom) we learn God is just, and though that justice might seem harsh to us, God is also loving, reconciling, and forgiving. 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 a judgment against those who think they deserve what they earned, and a judgment against those who do not know how precious the gift that they have been given is. The slaves did nothing to earn their five, two, and one talents, they were given as gifts! What becomes crucial is what they did with them.

God, as the master, has given each of us unique abilities and talents that we have been tasked to use in the world for the kingdom. With them we are called to do the work that he has given us to do — work as simple and hard as learning to tell the truth and learning to love our enemies. No effort is made to describe how the slaves doubled their talents, but they did so because they worked with what they had been given.

What we learn in following Jesus is that we have all been given gifts, wonderful and unique talents. If we hide them inwardly, if we dig a hole in the ground, then we fail to make good on the investment that God has made in us. Jesus tells us, through the parable, that the talents that God has provided us are to be used and implemented to their full ability.

Think what talents you see in your life and whether you employ those gifts for the kingdom. **Amen.**

Prayers

We thank God for the gifts we have been given and pray that through them God's light will shine.

- We pray for those who fear for the future. Lord, help us shine your light.
- We pray for those who are ill, and those facing loneliness, and isolation. Lord, help us shine your light.
- We pray for those tormented by war, and those who seek ways of peace. Lord, help us shine your light.

Lord, we remember 'the light of your love is always shining' as we offer you these prayers in Jesus' name. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

- 1. Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.**

- 2. Hear the call of the kingdom to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him, loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.**
**King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.**

- 3. Hear the call of the kingdom to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross, bringing
peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.**
King of heaven, we will answer the call ...

Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, & Stuart Townend

A prayer of blessing

As we are sent out to live as children of light, with the gifts of God; may we walk in faith, be sustained by hope, and share the all-embracing love of God with everyone we meet. **Amen.**