

Coop's Scoops #126, Sunday sermon Nov 15, 2020

Grab your Bible and a cuppa and let's worship together at home!

Blessings, Judie+

Sentence: I am the Vine_you are the branches, says the Lord. Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear much fruit. (John 15: 5)



Readings:

Judges 4: 1-7, 12-16

Psalm 79

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

The Collect:

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to be the light of the world. Free us from all that darkens and ensnares us, and bring us to eternal light and joy; through the power of Him who is alive and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 25: 14-30

¹⁴ "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents,^[a] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ 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.' ²¹ 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.' ²² 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.' ²³ 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.' ²⁴ 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; ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sermon: This morning's lessons form a history lesson for us. It seems very fitting as we have all spent time this past week remembering the sacrifices and accomplishments of our veterans, and our military personnel. We need to remember the saying "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it". Nor will those who forget the future ever prepare for it. The Church year is soon coming to an end. Our lessons are to prepare us for the sober longing of Advent. If all's well with our souls and our world why would we long for anything? Why

does Advent begin with so many warnings? Those are the questions we will try to address this morning.

God's way with Israel was very clear. He would call forth a prophet or leader, rescue the people, achieve a victory, and they would worship Him. When things went well, they would forget, and lean toward foreign gods, disobeying the commandment of God Himself. Then they would suffer God's righteous displeasure for a time, leading to repentance. A judge or prophet or leader would come forth, to rescue the people and reestablish their worship as a community chosen by God to be His own.

The prophets, priest, leaders and judges and kings called by God were for the most part an unlikely lot. Remember Moses who **couldn't speak** well. Jonah who **pouted** when God saved a city.

And today we meet Judge Deborah...a **woman** both a prophet and a judge, serving both God and her people. Her calling is not recorded, but her actions are. She doesn't act alone, but calls a reluctant military leader, Barak, to help.



In Judges 4:14, this is her courageous and clear command to Barak “Up, Go NOW..For this is the day that the Lord has given Sisera into your hand”. The final victory is assured by another courageous woman and wife named Jael. Read the whole story in Judges! Three unlikely “rescuers” indeed. It seems God often entrusts those with the least to offer in the eyes of the world with the greatest tasks, and those tasks require the courage of response and faith. If the people did not respond, no victory could be had.

After the work of the prophet Malachi, there were no more voices, no more leaders of godly merit, and no more prophets for three hundred years. The next voice heard is that of John the Baptist calling “Prepare ye the way of the Lord”,

and Jesus steps into human history forever. What had happened in those three hundred years? The parable of the talents tells us.

This little parable, crunched between the parables of the wise and foolish virgins and the separation of sheep and goats, is not about the use of our natural abilities or the way we spend, save or squander our money. It's often presented that way but such an application would have been preposterous to those who listened to Jesus that day. Here's what they would have understood.

The Master would not be seen as Jesus, but as Yahweh. The great God of the people of Israel. Jesus was reminding the people that Yahweh had called and empowered His servants for many generations...some with great talent, some with less and some with very little at all. For many generations, these prophets had responded wisely and the people of Israel made progress in serving their great God and being a blessing to the nations around them. But that had stopped. The response had become buried in the ground. Treasure, but unused. For three hundred years. And He warned them that one day the great God Yahweh would have an accounting with them. Unless Israel would repent and make good and swift use of her privilege and responsibility as God's people, the privilege would at last be withdrawn and given to those who would respond, and would be responsible, and would bear fruit.

And we don't get to stop there...with the people of Israel. We need to go back farther in history to the very beginning, when God charged all of humanity with the care of this world and of each other. What do we have to show for this commission? Works of art and beauty, certainly. Works of humanitarianism and justice, certainly. But also plenty of talents buried in the ground, when we avert our eyes from the poor, fail to care for our planet, and fall prey to the cultures of greed and individualism over and above the cultures of servanthood and community. The warning is for us too. But there is no "other" to whom to transfer

the responsibility and privilege. If we continue to fail, creation and humanity are doomed.

We long, therefore, for a renewal of the Spirit of God to turn us, re-create us, and make us good stewards of God's world. We long for a new hero to lead us back into holiness. Advent will show us once more that the only Saviour is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians, as he reminds us, that we are to walk as children of the light. We have the knowledge, we have the Scriptures, we have the Holy Spirit. We need to walk and live in that Light. When the final accounting comes at the end of the age, we will be prepared and ready to give an accounting of our stewardship; not surprised, not fearful, not barren, but prepared. Our world mumbles "Peace and Security" as we tumble into our dozy beds. It was a slogan used in the early Roman Empire celebrating the accomplishments of Caesar Augustus. Paul has another slogan for us: Wake Up...Get ready.

Off with the jammies and on with the armour! Prepare to serve the King of Kings. And that means all of us! Amen.

Prayer:

- God our Father, turn our minds, wills and hearts to understand your Word so that we may respond in love, action and mercy to your commandments. We thank you for all whose response to Your grace has affected our own lives and enabled us to then affect others in ways that build your Kingdom here on earth. May our service please You, Lord our God!
Amen.
- Loving Father, You are the provider of all heavenly understanding and the One capable guide to paths that lead to joy and fulfillment. Give me discernment to check and correct my own understanding and to put

away all unhelpful thoughts that lead me astray. Make my heart more sensitive to Your guiding hand so that I can sense, understand, and appreciate Your working in my life. Help me fully yield to Your guidance that my paths may lead me always to your Heart. (Connectus)

Blessing:

Be steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always! Judie+