

GOSPEL LESSON—Matthew 25:14-30

One of the interesting themes spoken by Jesus is that we are to be clever with the resources we are given in this life. In the final three Sundays of the church year we read all of Matthew 25. This final sermon of Christ was designed to serve us in the time between His Ascension and final Advent. Today we have the second parable, that of the "talents." A man went on a journey. He gave his servants gifts, not all equal, but all equal to their ability to use the gifts. When he returned what did he find that his servants have done with the gift (with the Talent?) Christians, bought by Christ, should always be devoted to His praise, and employed in His work, (however that abounds in your vocation,) In that way we are making the most of the "talents" we have been given, until He returns.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

⑨ Lord God, heavenly Father, of Whom, through Whom and to Whom are all things, to You be glory forever and ever. We thank You for all Your blessings: for our creation and all that exists; for the priceless gifts and endowments of body and mind and for Your daily provision for all the necessities of life; for the joys of home, family, and friends and for good government and just laws; for the light of education and the growth of the healing arts; for Your protection in danger and for Your deliverance from all evil. Most heartily, O Lord, we thank You for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, by Whom You have saved us from wrath and appointed us to obtain salvation and eternal life. Grant that we may be filled with His Spirit and produce the fruits of faith, show forth the wonder of our expectation of Heaven, and have compassion on those who do not know, so that when He comes in His glory we may all be received, by Him, into His eternal kingdom.

Open the eyes of Your Church to see that Christ our Master is prepared to come from Heaven and gather the elect from the four corners of the Earth. Give Your people the diligence to proclaim Your Word with all boldness, that the multitudes will be saved to the glory of Your Holy name.

Hear us, our heavenly Father, as we pray for all sorts and conditions of people in the world; the afflicted, the weary, the wounded, the sick, the diseased, the aged and the infirm, the depressed, the anxious, the imperiled and oppressed. By Your Almighty power give them Christ Jesus as a light for their darkness and joy in their sadness. We approach You in steadfast love and ask, that if it be Your will, You would deliver them in service to You.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (**Time of silent prayer.**)

Grant us steadfastness and patience as we wait for the coming of Your Son our Savior, that He may take us home to live with You forever. In the exalted name of Jesus Christ we pray.

© Amen.

PROPER TWENTY-EIGHT

Chant Tone



Introit

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for — mercy!*

In Your faithfulness answer me, in Your | righteousnes!

Enter not into judgment with Your — servant,*

for no one living is righteous be — fore You.

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that | You have done;*

I ponder the work | of Your hands.
I stretch out my | hands to You;*
my soul thirsts for You like a — parched land.

Teach me to do Your will, for You | are my God!*

Let Your good Spirit lead me on | level ground!

For Your name's sake, O Lord, pre | serve my life!*

In Your righteousness bring my soul out of — trouble!

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy — Spirit;
as it was in the be — ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. — Amen.

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for — mercy!*

In Your faithfulness answer me, in Your | righteousnes!

(Antiphon, Psalm 143:1;
Psalm 143:2, 5-6, 10-11)

Collect of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found wanting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Gradual

These are the ones coming out of the great tribu — lation.*

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood | of the Lamb.
Blessèd are those whose strength is — in You,*
in whose heart are the highways to — Zion.

(Revelation 7:14b; Psalm 84:5)

ENTRANCE PRAYER: In the congregation of those made righteous through Christ we praise You, O Lord, with our whole heart. Your great works are full of honor and majesty. You have sent redemption to Your people because You are full of grace and mercy. Your praise endures forever. Through Your Word, which will not pass away, we learn that Judgment Day is fast approaching. Help us to recognize the signs that will precede Christ's coming. With the assurance that all our sins are forgiven in Christ, we can approach that day with peace of heart and quietness of mind. In the name of Him who will be the final Judge of all, we pray. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

WITH ONLY A FEW EXCEPTIONS BIBLE SCHOLARS PUT THE DATE OF JESUS' BIRTH AT 5 BC. The date does not coincide with the year 1 because of an error made in the 11th century. Historians do not count a year zero. The calendar goes from 1 BC to AD 1 (some historians only count a single year 1, which changes the count by two more years.) What I'm saying is that any attempt to predict the date of the end-of-the-world using any dates or combination of dates from the Bible will be frustrated by changing dates and changing calendars. Jesus told us that even He didn't know the date of the end of the world. Only God the Father knows the date and the hour. (If God were to tell us, we would get the date wrong because of how often we have historically changed the calendar. Because of all the changes we are not able to say we worship on the day God rested.) The point is to be ready at all times. Live a life of wonder in the presence of God.

THEME OF THE DAY:

Faithful Servant

INTROIT—(Antiphon: Psalm 143:1;) Psalm 143:2, 5-6, 10-11

For some reason we are taught to be afraid of the end of the world. While writing Psalm 143, David was hiding in a cave being chased by Saul. David realized that he had to surrender his life to God for only God would be able to rescue David from his fear. With David we ask God to deal with us in His mercy and preserve our life, that we are forgiven and able to stand firm in our faith until the end of all time.

COLLECT

This prayer was written and included in the 1982 version of our hymnal. Now we use it in our "A" and "C" series on this day. It is an end-time prayer that focuses our minds on being a faithful servant of Christ, that our faith is enough to receive Heaven.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON—Zephaniah 1:7-16

The committee who established the three year cycle of readings placed the first historical use of Zephaniah (3:14-18) on the Third Sunday of Advent (at the Baptism of Jesus, the prophecy was fulfilled, "The Lord your God is in your midst...") I think that the committee who created our new cycle must have included some of those people, and they wanted to hear more from Zephaniah, so today we have the addition of a second reading from Zephaniah who lived between Isaiah and Jeremiah. He was the great great grandson of King Hezekiah. The theme of the book of Zephaniah is that complete destruction is coming upon the land because of sin. In his case it was a prophecy of the first destruction of Jerusalem which was followed by the rebuilding under Ezra. In our case it works to remind us of the destruction of the world and the second Advent.

GRADUAL—Revelation 7:14; Psalm 84:5

Those who have come out of the tribulation of this world are those who have been given faith. These people praise God for all the salvation they have been given. Revelation 7 tells us the number of the saved. As such it is of great encouragement. Psalm 84, by the Sons of Korah was written for worship. Our faith is the highway that has been laid out in our heart to take us to Heaven.

EPISTLE LESSON—1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

When we reach the end of the church year, we think about the end of the world. Paul told the church of Thessalonica that they didn't need him to tell them about that day, because they knew that it was stated (by Jesus,) as coming like a thief in the night. (Some of us believe this means that they had Matthew's Gospel.) Paul backed up the message with an exhortation to be prepared for the end.