



Twenty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon by Revd Allie Joseph



Sunday 15 November 2020

READINGS

Judges 4: 1-7; Psalm 123; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25: 14-30

Before we bury our talents

Last week Reverend Alison introduced us to what parables are and how it is used in the scriptures. Some people connect Jesus and the parables in the New Testament, but parables are more widely used, it is part of Jewish oratory, Hebrew comparison. Parables are used in the Old Testament and is also used in the teachings of Islam. Scholars put the number of parables told by Jesus at 30, across the four Gospels, he uses the parables in different ways to teach his followers important lessons about eternal truths. I can identify with this story telling because the older I get the more I find myself telling stories about my life, and I apologise to those who find a little difficult to listen to these because unlike Jesus' stories mine sometimes teaches truth but most times and more and more it resembles rants and the account of a long life lived too fast. I pray that you find something to take away from this sermon.

You and I have heard or read this parable a few times in our lives. And there has always been the reflection on the talents and how we must make the comparison between the wise and the foolish servant, the ones who used the talents to make more money and the one who went and buried the talent because he was afraid he would lose his money or because he was scared of disappointing his master. A disclaimer, from one who has lost in this life, somehow or other we are in this life to lose, if we have not learned that, I pray that when it happens we are not too hard hit. Sometimes we are disappointed when we lose in life, love, finances, career paths, emotional and spiritual lives. Sometimes we struggle when we find ourselves challenged in life. Sometimes we lose the love of our life, that dream job, sometimes we lose our loved ones in death. We are reminded that this is a truth we need to learn. Life happens to us.

Now before we lose focus let me give you the lessons that scholars agree Jesus wants to teach in this parable:

- ◆ God gives us gifts and talents
- ◆ God allows us these gifts and the opportunity to use them to benefit ourselves, others, and the kingdom
- ◆ There will come a time when we all must give an account of how we used our time and talents.

Now before we all start judging the one servant who buried the talent, I want us to stop and consider a few things. Here is where the sermon starts.

Firstly, I am not going to tell you that you must give your time and your money and your talents in the service of others. We know that that is what God asks us to do and I encourage you to keep doing good and living for God's purpose.

Now I want us to shift our focus to the servant who buried his talent.

While the servant takes the spade to dig the hole in which he was to bury his talent there must have been so much that went through his mind. Just as it is with us sometimes when we must make decision to trust in God or to take that leap of faith. For all the times we would like people to think that we have it all together, that we are experts at Heavenly Investments, this happens to us too. That moment when we think to ourselves:

What is all this about?

When will all this make sense?

In that moment, with the spade in his hand the servant thought he knew who his master was, and he did not really know who was, because remember the parable is used to teach a truth. Jesus used the extreme to prove a point, to drive home the lesson we all need to learn.

Amidst all that is going on in our lives we too come to those moments of our lives where we must trust the giver of our gifts. The God who always sees the best in us, The God who is slow to anger, abounding in love and truth. Sometimes we need to just take a moment, give time and fall to our knees in prayer and recognise the good God sees in us, because sometimes it is so easy to believe the bad we see in the world, the negative we hear and see around us, the doubt, the guilt and all the other stuff we feel within. We have no need to fear the day we are to give an account for what we have decided to do with the talent or the spade, let us listen to the words of the prophet Micah:

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? To do justly and to love mercy, to walk humbly before my God.

It is true that we are all alive but very few of us realise that we only start living once we find out what our purpose in this world is. I suggest we start by seeing us as God sees us and then start seeing others as God sees them. As people loved by God, yes we are all flawed in one or the other way but we have been endowed with gifts, divine talents. Let us pray together for ourselves and each other, so we discover these talents and live them out so others may benefit too. Let us recognise the gifts others have been blessed with and help them develop and grow in theirs. There are many of our brothers and sisters with spades in their hands busy giving up on themselves and their gifts, sometimes it just takes a kind word or an encouragement from a fellow brother or sister. We can always get back to that original moment when the first followers of Jesus were called Christians, because of how they loved each other.

In the words of Thomas Merton: Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone, we find it with another.