

# 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – Morning Service

Rev Michael Payne

## Call to Worship - Matt 25:21

And the Master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## StF 73 – Fill thou my life, O Lord my God

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| 1) Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,<br>In every part with praise,<br>That my whole being may proclaim<br>Thy being and thy ways.  | 4) Fill every part of me with praise;<br>Let all my being speak<br>Of thee and of thy love, O Lord,<br>Poor though I be and weak. |
| 2) Not for the lip of praise alone<br>Nor e'en the praising heart<br>I ask, but for a life made up<br>Of praise in every part:     | 5) So shalt thou, gracious Lord, from me<br>Receive the glory due;<br>And so shall I begin on earth<br>The song for ever new.     |
| 3) Praise in the common things of life,<br>Its goings out and in;<br>Praise in each duty and each deed,<br>However small and mean. | 6) So shall no part of day or night<br>From sacredness be free;<br>But all my life, in every step,<br>Be fellowship with thee.    |

*Horatius Bonar CCL No. 515642*

## Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Gracious God, we pause in the midst of our daily living to focus our minds once more upon you.

We recognise you as the God of all time and place; the God who has revealed yourself to be one of total love, grace and mercy, whilst being a God of judgement, power and holiness.

In the beauty of creation we see your abundance of creative ideas; in the person of our neighbour we are called to see your image, in ourselves to be aware of your Spirit communing with our spirit.

In Jesus you fulfilled your purpose of revealing your light to all nations. You have called us to share the blessing we have received with those around us; you choose us to be channels of your love despite our unworthiness of such a call.

In this moment we are still before you to admit we are a sinful people; we have not always allowed love to flow through us to others by having your will and purpose at the centre of our beings.

Forgive our sinfulness; cleanse our guilt by your grace and restore us to the people you have formed us to be, through Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## Reading: Matthew 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

'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."

### **StF 513 – Take this moment**

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| 1) Take this moment, sign, and space;<br>Take my friends around;<br>Here among us make the place<br>Where your love is found. | 4) Take the little child in me,<br>Scared of growing old;<br>Help me here to find my worth<br>Made in Christ's own mould. |
| 2) Take the time to call my name,<br>Take the time to mend<br>Who I am and what I've been,<br>All I've failed to tend.        | 5) Take my talents, take my skills,<br>Take what's yet to be;<br>Let my life be yours, and yet,<br>Let it still be me.    |
| 3) Take the tiredness of my days,<br>Take my past regret,<br>Letting your forgiveness touch<br>All I can't forget.            |   |

*John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1989 WGRG CCL No. 515642*

### **Sermon**

Some people are linguists and others are not – I am not. That does not mean I am not interested in the root of words. The root and heritage of words are of interest and can help us understand passages like this one. Our word "Talent" has its root in this parable. At the time Jesus used the word, which we translate talent, it meant an amount of money. Now we use talent to refer to various skills that you can use. What some people see as talents others might see differently- we only need to watch Britain's Got Talent to come to that conclusion.

In our lifetime we undergo various Tests and Examinations in school, work and elsewhere – I remember when I first took my driving test I was awarded a Certificate of failure; I now wish I had kept it. This last summer saw GCSE and A levels, alongside other examinations, hitting the headlines with many questions being asked as to how they were being graded. Many were hurt and disappointed by the grading and the system was reviewed. There is a great deal of nervous energy expelled in preparation for exams, alongside the crammed revision going into the "normal" last few months before such exams. This year the preparation was put in and the exams were not sat. I remember speaking to my Chemistry teacher after I received my A level results. I was happy with my grading and said so; his response was "if you had worked as hard for the two years as you did for the last 8 weeks you might have got an A." I didn't mind. I am not sure a higher grade in a Chemistry exam would have made much difference to my life.

There is a danger that some people can regard Christianity, and Judaism for that matter, as a kind of a heavenly examination system – course work included. Some people see God as having given us a syllabus to study, things to learn and do, rules to keep, then one day he will come and set a final examination to see who passes and who fails. If that were the case how well would you do?

Some parents offer rewards to their children to encourage good grades – and regret it when the bill comes in. I was never offered such inducements and the bill would not have been large anyway. Some people see there will be particularly good things for those who get A\* and especially bad things for those who get bad marks in the heavenly test.

Reading the parable of the talents can make us feel that this is the case but that is not what the parable is all about. Whilst each parable Jesus told is of importance no one parable can be seen as holding the whole picture. The idea of an examination test system needs to be looked at in the light of the whole of Jesus ministry. Looking at the complete ministry of Jesus and the Scriptures should make us protest against such a view of the Gospel, of God himself and therefore the Christian faith. Jesus declares he came not to call the righteous but sinners. He had come to seek and to save the lost. He warned the scribes and Pharisees that the tax-collectors and prostitutes – who would have failed any examination that the Judaism of their day would have set – would be going into the kingdom of heaven ahead of them.

So if that is the case what is the Parable about? It is a message about what people have done with the message of God's love. The Scribes and Pharisees had been given the Law of Moses and the Temple as signs of God's presence amongst them. They have been given wonderful promises about how God would not only bless Israel, but also through Israel bless the whole of the world. Yet they had buried these promises "in the ground", they had turned the call to be the light of the world into an encouragement to keep the light for themselves (Matt 5:14-16.) They had been the worthless slaves. Now when the master was in their midst they were being called to account and the threatened destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was to be seen as the master's punishment on the servant who had not done the master's will.

The emphasis of the parable falls on this third servant; but who are the other two? They are like those who have taken the light that Jesus has revealed and started sharing it with others; those who have taken the mustard seed and planted it that a tree may grow. Now, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he forces the final confrontation between God's Kingdom and the system that has resisted and opposed it; those who are loyal to him are like the ones who took the talents and invested them.

This setting means that any sense of a final examination is placed within the larger context in which the love and grace of God are overflowing at every point. Yes, God does long for people to use the gifts and talents he has given them wisely; God did come in Jesus to find out who amongst his people had used profitably the blessings he had showered upon them. Once we have said all this we can perfectly reasonably say that, in line with the whole of the Gospel, God will, still through the person of Jesus, sift and weigh everything the Christian does in the present life. All this is important and cannot be ignored.

*1 Cor 3:10-15 - According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire*

*2 Cor 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

We must make sure we recognize that this parable and others like it does not give a complete picture of God, the creator, the maker and lover of the world, the God who sent Jesus as a personal expression of his love. The Parables give a cause to reflect further upon the message of God.

So in the light of all this what does this parable mean for us? God has given us a message to tell and a variety of ways to tell it, by word and by deed and we are to share the message and not keep it hidden. It is not by exam results we enter the Kingdom but by grace. As citizens of the Kingdom we use the gifts for sharing this grace with others that they too may enter the Kingdom. My time, my gifts, my all are God's and I offer my all as a love gift to Jesus. May I then hear those wonderful words – "Well done good and faithful servant."

### StF 446 – I will offer up my life

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| 1) I will offer up my life,<br>In spirit and truth,<br>Pouring out the oil of love<br>As my worship to You.<br>In surrender I must give<br>My every part;<br>Lord, receive the sacrifice<br>Of a broken heart. | 2) You deserve my every breath<br>For You've paid the great cost;<br>Giving up Your life to death,<br>Even death on a cross.<br>You took all my shame away,<br>There defeated my sin,<br>Opened up the gates of heaven,<br>And have beckoned me in. |
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*Ch) Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring  
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?  
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung  
As a praise of Your name  
For the things You have done?  
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,  
Of the debt of love that is owed  
By this thankful heart.*

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### Prayers of Intercession

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

We are God's children, and he loves us. Let us pray to him now.

We bring to his love those whose Christian ministry is in prisons, hospitals, schools or industry; those who work among the homeless and the very poor and vulnerable.....[Silence]

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

We bring to his love the areas of political tension and unrest in our world; the unresolved conflicts and the deep seated grudges that hinder peace.....[Silence]

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

We bring to his love the hurt and the wounded, the abused and the frightened; those in hospital and those separated from loved ones in hospital.....[Silence]

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

We bring to his love the needs of those who live and work around us; those who have been made redundant and whose employment is under threat.....[Silence]

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

In silence, now, we bring to God's love the special needs and concerns known to us individually.....[Silence]

L: Father, you have called us **R: Let our lives show your glory**

With special Joy, Father, in the knowledge that we can trust you unconditionally, we offer you our prayers, through Jesus Christ, **Amen**

## 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, the power, and the  
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 608 – All praise to our redeeming Lord

- 1) All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
Who joins us by his grace,  
And bids us, each to each restored,  
Together seek his face.
- 2) He bids us build each other up;  
And, gathered into one,  
To our high calling's glorious hope  
We hand in hand go on.
- 3) The gift which he on one bestows,  
We all delight to prove;  
The grace through every vessel flows,  
In purest streams of love.
- 4) Ev'n now we think and speak the same,  
And cordially agree;  
Concentred all, through Jesu's name,  
In perfect harmony.
- 5) We all partake the joy of one,  
The common peace we feel,  
A peace to sensual minds unknown,  
A joy unspeakable.
- 6) And if our fellowship below  
In Jesus be so sweet,  
What heights of rapture shall we know  
When round his throne we meet!

*Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642*

## Blessing

No matter who you are or what you have done, no matter where you are or what you are facing, no matter how you feel or whether you understand it; the truth is this you can live in hope, joy and peace for Christ has come and dwells with us. Amen.