

Worship at Home—15 November 2020

Call to Worship

"I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground." [Matthew ch 25 v 25]

Gathering Prayer—Krys Hume

God, our heavenly Father, we praise you for your love that has no beginning and no end. We praise you for the love that created the world and came to us in Jesus; for his living, dying and rising again as a sign of your love that knows no boundaries, and has no limitations or conditions. There is nowhere we can go where you are not present. We cannot hide, we cannot run, we cannot be there before you. You are always ahead of us, preparing the way, and waiting to welcome and hold us in your arms, if only we will let you.

Father, we are only too well aware that often we are not the people you meant us to be. We are not living the kind of lives that you created us to live, and our words, thoughts and deeds do not always bring you the glory they were designed to do. You give us free will, but all too often we use that free will to please ourselves and not you, to live for our own ends and not for yours, to spoil our relationship with you and with each other. We say we are Christians but we do not show Christ in our lives.

Father, forgive us when we make poor choices that hurt others or damage your world. Forgive us when we simply drift along and let things happen. Forgive us when we deliberately turn away from what we know is right. We seek your forgiveness in the confidence of your boundless and unconditional love, and ask that your Holy Spirit may guide us in your ways, and give us the strength and resolve to live our lives according to your will.

May the mind of Christ our Saviour live in us; may the word of God dwell in us; and may the love of Jesus fill us as we worship you. Empty our minds of everything but thoughts of you, and help us to focus on your message of eternal love and forgiveness.

And now let us join together in our 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 debts as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. AMEN*



It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the deaths of

Elsie Fraser
4 Rowantree Avenue

George Skeoch
3 Stewart Avenue

Please pray for the families

**Bible Readings from Psalm 123; and
Matthew 25 v 14—30 (The Parable of the Talents)**

Psalm 123—A Song of Ascents

I lift up my eyes to you,
To you whose throne is in heaven.
As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes look to the Lord our God,
Till he shows us his mercy.

Have mercy on us, O lord, have mercy on us,
For we have endured much contempt.
We have endured much ridicule from the proud,
Much contempt from the arrogant.

Matthew Ch 25 v 14—30 (The Parable of the Talents)

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.



“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

WORSHIP LEADER Professor John Sawkins

SCRIPTURE READERS: Morag and Peter Sawkins

Sermon

Introduction

Talent shows of one form or another have been a staple of British light entertainment for many, many years. Very few people today will recognise the name Carroll Levis, but in the 1930s and 40s he hosted a radio and stage show which toured around the country spotting up and coming new stars. In the 1950s and 60s a new talent scout, Hughie Green entertained us with the long running hit—Opportunity Knocks. And, coming right up to date, the talent show still has a prime time Saturday night slot with Simon Cowell’s Britain’s Got Talent.

(I hear by the way that on Channel 4 on a Tuesday night—you can watch a show with people baking—but I don’t need to say any more about that here).

The word ‘talent’ derives from words in Greek and Latin meaning ‘weight’ and then a ‘sum of money’. It was not until the mid15th century that the word’s meaning took on this idea of a talent being a gift or a skill. And part of the reason for this change in meaning was today’s gospel reading—the parable of the talents.

The Parable

So let’s look at the parable itself.

The version of the story we have in Matthew’s Gospel has a master going off leaving his slaves with five, two and one talents to look after, with the expectation that he will return and ask them to account for them. A talent here is to be understood as a unit of money—a rather large unit of money—perhaps what a working man might expect to earn in 10 to 15 years.

Now before going into the detail a little more, let’s pull back out to see the bigger picture of where the parable sits in the gospel, and how it might have been understood.

It comes quite late on in chapter 25 in the final block of the gospel in which we have a sequence of events and stories leading up to the end of Christ’s life. From chapter 23 onwards we have stories which talk about judgement, about the end times, about the need for his disciples to stay faithful and watchful.

Professor Tom Wright, the former Bishop of Durham, ties this parable to a similar one in Luke’s gospel in chapter 19, where we have ten slaves each given the same amount of money. In that gospel and in this section of Matthew’s gospel we have the idea of a faithful God entrusting talents to Israel.

Thus the scribes and Pharisees had been given the law of Moses. That was a great gift.

They had also been given the Temple, the sign of God’s presence amongst them. Again that was a great gift.

They had been given a wonderful promise, about how God would bless not only Israel but, through Israel, the whole world.

And they had buried all these gifts in the ground.

They had turned the command to be the light of the world into an encouragement to keep the light for themselves. They had fenced God off. They had hoarded the message of his promises and love to themselves.

They had been worthless slaves. And now, their master was coming back, and he was going to call them to account.

So there was the sense of a threat hanging over this story. The threat of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple itself, which was how the master would punish the servant who had not done his will.

So that's the wider context.

The Third Servant

But let me take us back to the detail in the parable itself and ask what it's actually about.

What point or points is it making?

Let me first of all say that I don't think it's a lesson in economics.

Now it's true in our modern market system that you need money to make money, and the more money you have the more money, potentially, you can make.

And it's also true that in many economic systems, particularly those with poor regulation, it's a case of 'winner take all', I don't in fact think this is the point. And I don't think that we should fixate on the narrative that the two slaves who did well doubled their master's money.

No, the plain and simple reading of the parable is surely that we should be faithful and active in using what we have—money, gifts, time, our talents—in ways of which our master would approve. Or to put it another way, "use it or lose it!"

So far, so unsurprising.

But let me suggest that the meaning of this parable can be opened further by looking in more detail at the response of the third slave.

Here's what we have in verse 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; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground."

...I was afraid.

That's the lynchpin of the parable for me. It's about faith and fear.

To be faithful is to be trusting and outward looking and willing to lean into possibility and potential.

To be fearful is to be suspicious and insecure, self-limiting in ambition, unwilling to step out into that possibility and fulfil a God-given potential.

Fear

Fear, a natural human emotion, is hardwired into us all from birth of course. And it's an essential part of our human make up. Vital to protect us from danger and harm. But, as with all parts of our make-up, if it becomes over-developed or given too much rein in our lives, it is incapacitating and energy sapping.

Fear has been part of the story of the human race from the very beginning. Look back to the Garden of Eden when the Lord talks to Adam who has, against the Lord's will, taken the forbidden fruit. He says, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."
[Gen 3 v 10]

I hid....

So it is fear that can so often hold us back from using our talents wisely and share them openly.

Fear comes in many forms of course. We may be afraid of what others might think of us. Or what others might demand of us, or what others might need from us. Fear gets in the way of using our talents, and so we bury them. And, hidden away, they can do us no harm of course, but they can also do others no good.

That was the charge against the third slave—he did no good with what he had been given. He hoarded the talent and failed to realise its potential.

Faith

And the counterpoint to fear is faith—and that is what the slaves who used their talents demonstrated.

Faith is about trusting. Faith is about possibility and potential. Faith is about taking your foot off the bottom of the swimming pool and actually starting to swim trusting that the water will buoy you up. Faith is about taking a risk.

Sometimes its rather hard to judge for ourselves when to hold back for fear of the consequences, or to take a risk and step out in faith. And that's when we need the encouragement and help of others.

Education

For me one of the greatest privileges and delights of working in education is to work to identify the potential in every single individual student—and to nurture, encourage and give the individual space to explore that potential, and to grow.

Down at Heriot-Watt I've seen it so often. Great potential, great talent hidden away in young students, often because of the fear of what others might think or say. And for all sorts of reasons.

Because it's not 'cool' to been seen to be bright or to work hard or to talk openly about your enthusiasms and talents whatever they are.

Because it's better to keep your head down and get by and bury your talent in the ground for fear or ridicule or worse.

Because nobody has taken the time before to talk to you about your potential.

And at their best, teachers, particularly experienced teachers, become expert at spotting and gently supporting the pupil or student to take a risk, step out, realise their potential and use their talent—whatever it is—and to enjoy and rejoice in it.

Ourselves

Can we think back to those who at different times in our own lives spotted potential or talent in us? Can we think back to times when others were prepared to take a risk with us, by inviting us to do a task which we had no idea we could accomplish?

Sometimes we are too blinkered by fear to see it. But when someone else sees a talent in us which we cannot see for ourselves when someone trusts us enough to ask us to undertake a task we feel ill-suited for, that is the not the time for fear, but for trust.

Using our Talents

So this is not a parable about making money but about overcoming fear.

And it is not a parable about reckless risk taking, but about faithful offering.

We are made in the image of God.

We are God's children.

Our talents are God-given talents.

Our gifts are God-given gifts.

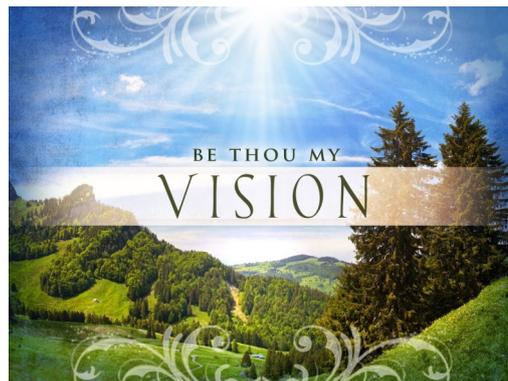
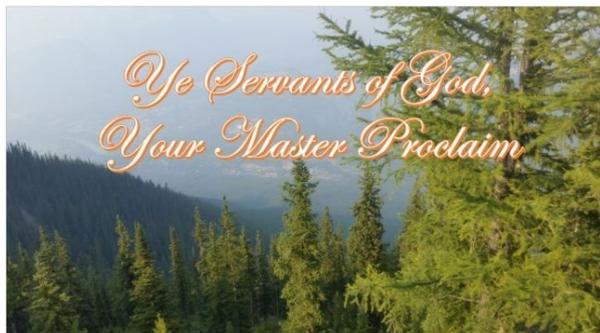
And these gifts are to be used—not buried in the ground—but brought out in the open for the well-being of our neighbours, for the building up of our community, for the praise of God.

As we step out into the new week, let us do so in faith and in hope, knowing that God will take all we are able to offer, and use it for the building up of his Kingdom wherever we live and work.

Amen.

Hymns:

Ye servants of God
Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart



Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
And publish abroad his wonderful name;
The name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;
And still he is nigh, his presence we have;
The great congregation his triumph shall sing,
Ascribing salvation to Jesus our king.

'Salvation to God who sits on the throne!'
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son:
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right:
All glory and power, all wisdom and might,
All honour and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.
(Amen, amen).

Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
Thou my best thought in the day or the night,
Waking or sleeping, the presence my light.

Be thou my Wisdom, be thou my true Word;
I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father: thine own I would be;
Thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower;
Raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou, and thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, after victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

News from America—Easter

Assuming British Airways don't cancel Easter's flight, she will be returning to the UK on Monday 30 November. Her flight leaves 10.30 pm on Sunday 29 November from the States.

Easter sends her love and thanks for all the correspondence and calls she has received over the past month and looks forward to being back home soon.

Easter will also be preparing the Services, technology willing, for the 22 and 29 November and these will be able to be viewed on our website.

Pastoral Prayer

Heather Merriman

O God, we thank you for who you are and all you have done for us. You told us to seek your presence and to call on you continually, we do that now. You have told us to remember your wondrous works and proclaim them to others. You are our God and there is none like you. You never fail, your promises are always kept.

Lord, where we have failed or forgotten you this week we ask your forgiveness. When we have loved the world and ignored your Word; where we have been selfish instead of selfless; when we have been focussed on ourselves and not on you, forgive us and help us to do better in the days to come.

You have redeemed us, called us, made us your own, we are yours and all of our hope is in you. Thank you God for all the gifts you bless us with day by day.

But Lord we also know that there are many who are struggling and suffering around our world. We lift them up to you now. We pray for our local community—for individuals, for families, we pray for the schools and nurseries, for local businesses. We pray for those who are grieving, who are sick, who are disappointed, who feel hopeless, who are lonely, for those who feel they are not enough. We pray for those whose circumstances are dreadful and filled with reasons for sadness or sorrow; they need you. Be all that they need and provide for them Almighty God.

We continue to pray for Easter and all of her family. Comfort them Father and hold them as they mourn Rosemary's death. We pray that when the time comes for Easter to leave America that you would be with her in that difficult journey. We pray for your peace, comfort and encouragement.

We continue to pray too for the coronavirus pandemic. Lord we long for relief and for an end to this, and we know that you hold all time in your hands, that you already see the end. So help us to be patient and to keep trusting in you. To keep doing all that we can. To keep praying for healing of those with Covid, for those who have lost loved ones, for those who are on the frontline, for those who live in fear or struggle with the restrictions and all its implications.

We pray for the USA in light of the election. We pray for wisdom, we pray for peace, we pray for your protection over that nation. Across the world God there are so many things to pray for, and God we know that you see it all, that none of it is beyond your knowledge. Thank you for being all-knowing and for caring so deeply for each one of us, caring about the biggest and smallest things that fill our minds and our days. Thank you for being sovereign over it all. We take time now to pray for those specific people and situations on our hearts this morning.

Time of silence.

As we've heard Jesus' parable today, God we pray that you would help us to take risks for you, to stand up for justice and for those who can't defend themselves, to stand alongside those who are fighting battles for what is right, to walk with those who need it. Give us courage to be bold and to live the right way even when it's difficult. Walk closely beside us this week Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Remembrance Day - Lest We Forget



Magnus laying the Remembrance Wreath on behalf of Currie Kirk

Wreaths: Currie Kirk, Edinburgh City Council and Masonic Lodge

The three servants

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Lord God, we thank you
that you have made each of us different.
Each of us unique.
Each differently abled.
Each with something to contribute
to your work in the world.
So help us not to compare ourselves with
others but to know that we are enough just
as we are.
Remind us that no one else can do what we
can and that if we hold back, your work and
the world will not be complete.
God who created us, we offer our whole
selves back to you,
for your glory.
Amen.



Question...

Is it ever a good thing not to do what you're told?

Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Matthew 25:14-30. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+25%3A14-30&version=GNT>
You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.
If you want to you could mime or act out the story as it is read. You could even have costumes and props if you wanted to!

Talk together...

Have you ever been trusted to look after something?

Who took the greatest risk in the story? Why do you think they did that?

Is there anything in the story you think is unfair?

What kind of person does the master sound like?

Jesus was not comparing the master to God in this parable, in fact the master seems to be quite opposite of what we know of God. Instead Jesus was teaching people more about faithfulness, staying true to God and to what is right in His sight, even if that means taking risks in our world.

Do you think we should be more concerned with what God thinks of us, or how the world sees us? Why?

What could taking risks for God look like? What encourages you to take risks?

If you were given £10, how could you use that to raise more money?

Pray together...

Dear God... You'll need: Paper, pens

Give each person a piece of paper and a pen to write their own letter to God. You might want to write about what you expect God to do, about using what God has given you, or about how you will be faithful to him. Maybe you have a question for God or perhaps you want to thank Him. Write what feels right to you, there is no right or wrong thing to talk to God about.

Praise together...

O God you search me and you know me:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3_D19Vo)

[v=mEGc3_D19Vo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3_D19Vo)

Our God is a great big God: [Our God is a great big God](#)

Challenge...

Give each person (or team!) the same number of Jenga bricks (or similar).

Challenge each person to see who can build the tallest tower in 2 minutes.

More stable towers can be built by placing the bricks horizontally, but taller towers can be built by placing them vertically – in order to win the challenge, they will have to take risks. Reflect on this afterwards.

Play together...

Charades

On post-it notes or small bits of paper write down as many different talents as you can think of. Write each new idea on a separate piece of paper. Fold them up and gather them in a bowl/hat/container.

Now play a game of charades where one person chooses a piece of paper out of the pile and acts out the talent written there. The person who guesses it correctly gets to go next.

Hunt the coin

Hide a coin (real, pretend or chocolate!) for everyone else to find. When it is found let someone else have a turn of hiding it.

Kirk News Update

Currie Kirk comes under Tier 3 Guidelines.

We are still operating under Tier 3 Guidelines which means the Church Office will **NOT** open on Tuesday mornings, likewise the Gibson Craig Hall too, and Nina will continue to work from home. However, should you wish anything picked up and stored in the Hall for future attention, please contact either Nina on 0131 451 5141 or Gordon on 0131 449 2313 and we'll do our best to arrange uplift.

Hopefully, these guidelines will be short lived.

Gordon
Session Clerk



Currie Kirk Guild

Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 17 November at 2 pm** when Derek Blyth will be talking about "Edith Piaf" complete with music. If you would like to join the Guild for this meeting please send your email details to Louise who will send you the link. You should have Zoom loaded onto your computer/tablet.



Due to the closure of the church office, it is no longer possible to leave Advent Calendars and Selection Boxes there. For the present email me at elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk and I will collect them or alternatively drop them off at my door—13 Dolphin Gardens West—I have a box at the side of the house, just in case I am not in! If you wish to phone ahead my telephone number is 466 3472—we are allowed to chat outside!!



Louise Lamont, Guild President



65th Edinburgh (Currie) Company—The Boys' Brigade

The Anchor and Junior Section Boys have been given Poppy Scotland poppy badges to wear. We spoke about Remembrance Day and also Project Nova—a project put forward by veteran support agencies who are suggesting that people paint a poppy on a pebble and then place that pebble poppy at the local war memorial or on your door step.



We thought that this would be something that each member of the Boys could participate. A gallery will be created that can be sent to Project Nova and displayed in Gibson Craig Hall, once we get back there.

Still time for the Guild and the Congregation to get involved. Leave your painted poppy pebble at the War Memorial or on the door step at the Gibson Craig and Diane will coordinate the Gallery.

Diane Brown

