

THE CAMEL-ALLEN CHURCHES

WORSHIP AT HOME – SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2020

2ND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT



As we come to worship let us pause and be still,
and acknowledge that we are in the presence of Almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you.

Hymn

- 1 The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ our Lord:
she is His new creation
by water and the word;
from heaven He came and sought her
to be His holy bride;
with His own blood He bought her,
and for her life He died.
- 2 Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation
one Lord, one faith, one birth,
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.
- 3 Though with a scornful wonder
men see her sore oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder
by heresies distressed;
yet saints their watch are keeping,
their cry goes up: 'How long?'
and soon the night of weeping
shall be the morn of song.
- 4 Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;

till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great Church victorious
shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three-in-One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with Thee.

We make our confession and receive God's forgiveness...

In penitence and faith we come before you,
Holy God and say:
'This is who we are.'
We are the people who long for the new heaven
and the new earth
but can't always take the first step towards it.
Forgive us gracious God.
Lord have mercy.

We are those who love your world
but who too often participate in its destructive patterns
of life
and fail to live up to its beauty and creativity
Forgive us gracious God.
Christ have mercy.

We are the people who commit ourselves to build the
community of the Gospel
but we so often betray that hope and fail each other.
Forgive us gracious God
Lord have mercy

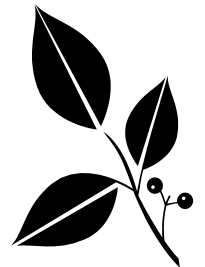
We are those who sometimes see the vision for our
own lives
but we are weak and fall far short of the dream
Forgive us gracious God
Christ have mercy.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his service
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Gloria *(tune: Cwm Rhondda - Guide me O thou Great Redeemer)*

Glory be to God in heaven
Songs of joy and peace we bring:
Thankful hearts and voices raising
To creation's Lord we sing
Lord we thank you:
Lord we bless you:
Glory be to God our King (repeat)

Lamb of God who on your shoulders
bore the load of this world's sin:
only Son of God the Father
you have brought us peace within.
Lord have mercy:



Christ have mercy:
Now your glorious reign begin (repeat)

You O Son of God are holy
You we praise with one accord:
None in heaven or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord:
with the Father
and the Spirit
ever worshipped and adored. (repeat)

Collect

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be
healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



First Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

^{5.1} Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a

thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel Reading 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; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then 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.' ²¹His 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.' ²²And 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.' ²³His 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.”



Reflection

The clock is ticking in our readings today. There is a sense of anticipation, something about to happen, an urgency to respond for the Kingdom is coming... God is on the move.

‘The Parable of the Investment Portfolio’

Our Gospel reading, we call the ‘Parable of the Talents’, It might be better named, ‘The Parable of the Investment Portfolio’, or ‘Speculate to accumulate! or even ‘He who dares wins!’

The story parables were not merely colourful illustrations but functioned much more like jokes or riddles (the Aramaic word for parable can also mean riddle) they drew you in with a familiar scenario and then caught you unawares with an unexpected twist in the tail, a punch-line or explanation which demanded a response.

The difficulty for us in ‘getting the point’ of the parables and responding accordingly is that they don’t often start from a scenario that is familiar to us and so, not only do we not ‘get’ the joke, we don’t even realise one is being told! Hence our first job with parables, as with all scripture, is to ‘hear’ what the first listeners would have heard. What would they have understood by what Jesus said?

What did they hear?

If you scan through Matthew 24 and 25 to 26.1 you will see that Jesus is speaking to his disciples about the end times and his coming again. This is just before the last supper, his arrest and crucifixion. ‘Tell us, they said when will all this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ (24.3)

Jesus answers their question by telling them of false Christs who will appear; speaking of wars, famines and persecutions. Of the gospel of the Kingdom being preached to the whole world. That no one knows the day or the time when the Son of Man will come again,

except the Father. Therefore, they must keep watch and be ready and responsive and our parable explains what true readiness is.

So they hear of the master who goes away trusting huge sums of money to his servants. A talent was around 6000 denarii and a denarii was a day's wage – that's a lot of money in anyone's book, and must have been the first thing that gripped the disciples: How would the servants cope with this huge responsibility – how would I handle it?

The first servant doubles his Master's money – pretty good going. The second one too, but what risks they took! What if it had all gone wrong and the money had been lost? I suspect that even Matthew the tax collector was not used to handling sums like these and most of the disciples, simple fishermen, would have gone for the third option: burying treasure was after all an accepted way of keeping it safe when the bankers of the day, the money lenders, were despised and mistrusted. If you found a good place to bury it, there would be no danger of loss and when the master returned, you had only to dig it up and present it to him safe and sound. He couldn't fail to be pleased, could he?

The hidden challenge in the story

So imagine their shock at the outcome of the story. The first two servants are commended, then up steps the third ready to be told he'd done well, only to be castigated and condemned in no uncertain terms! The disciples would have been caught out by this unexpected turn of events. Jesus was asking them to respond with an *active* readiness, not just sitting back and watching for his coming but sharing the benefits of the kingdom so the rule of God would be extended and multiplied, the benefits enjoyed by more and more

people who would in turn share them with others and so on. '*Being ready consists not only in keeping your slate clean, but in active responsible faithful service which produces results.*' Writes one commentator.

So what might God be saying to us?

What are we doing with what God has entrusted to us? The Good news of the Kingdom in all its aspects salvation, reconciliation with God, relationship with Jesus, filling with the Holy Spirit, deliverance from evil and death; healing, wholeness, eternal life. Yes, a battle now, but God's strength and presence and power through his Holy Spirit and one day, when he comes again, victory and the complete benefits of the Kingdom in a new heaven and earth. Anything and everything that God has given to us is to share and there is an urgency to this, for God is on the move, Jesus is coming soon.

What will he find we have done with what he has given to us? How can we share the good news of the kingdom of God before he comes again?



Hymn

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you

O Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Affirmation of faith

We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our heart through faith,
and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.

We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Holy God, if we are presuming on your mercy, alert us and shatter our complacency; if we are doubting your mercy, affirm in us the reality of your forgiveness. May we as the Church, encourage and warn, but never condemn; acknowledge sin, but never judge.

Christ will come again: **make us ready to meet him.**

Holy God, help us all to speak out your truth, and draw attention to whatever needs changing in our world, our expectations and assumptions our management of resources and finances, our systems of government and our attitudes. May all peoples come to recognise your truth.

Christ will come again: **make us ready to meet him.**

Holy God, fill our homes and places of work with so much love that tensions and barriers melt away, conflicts are resolved and troubles lightened by being shared. Open our hearts to hope again where we have given up.

Christ will come again: **make us ready to meet him.**

Holy God, may all in misery and despair turn to find you close beside them in their heartache, not condemning but loving them in their pain. May all who are locked in terror or guilt be set free and may those whom long-term illness wearies – and those who care for them - be strengthened to persevere.

Christ will come again: **make us ready to meet him.**

Holy God, Lord of the living and the dead, we commend to your mercy all who have died, and thank you for that eternal healing which frees us from all pain and suffering.



Christ will come again: **make us ready to meet him.**

Holy God, we thank you for the gifts and talents you have given us. Give us courage to use them for the good of the world.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**



Hymn

- 1 Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world His worthy praise may sing.
- 2 Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of His word?
- 3 Go forth and tell! men still in darkness lie;
in wealth or want, in sin they live and die:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like Yours which cares for all mankind.
- 4 Go forth and tell! the doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts – let no-one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for His sole glory use.
- 5 Go forth and tell! O Church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations His great name adore
and serve Him, Lord and King for evermore.

Final prayer and blessing

'Now to him who is able to keep you from falling,
and to make you stand without blemish
in the presence of his glory with rejoicing,
to the only God our Saviour,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
be glory, majesty, power, and authority,
before all time and now and for ever. Amen. *(Jude 1.24-25)*

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you
and with those whom you love,
this day and always. **Amen**

