

24th Sunday after Pentecost
November 15, 2020

“Faithful over a few things...ruler over many!” (Matthew 25:23)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the coming Lord of all. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, saints in Christ, fellow servants in Christ, Today’s text for this 24th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 25:21.

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”

Here ends our text.

The Bridegroom arrives for the wedding. The Lord returns from His journey. These two back-to-back parables that Jesus told describe the same event - judgement day. Last week’s parable of the wise and foolish virgins described a waiting period, the bridegroom was delayed. Today’s parable says that there was a long time before the lord returned to settle accounts with His servants. But, He did return, make no mistake about it. The day of judgment will come. And like last week’s parable, this week’s parable again describes but two outcomes. There is either entrance into the joy of your Lord, or there is no entrance...nothing but outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Again, this day will come. And in next week’s Gospel which immediately follows today’s text, Jesus tells us exactly who the Bridegroom and the returning Lord is. For Jesus says, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory”, then there will be a separation of the sheep and the goats. Again, there are only two outcomes. The goats **“will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous, (the sheep) into eternal life.”**

It becomes clearer and clearer with each successive parable that the reason why some are inside the banquet hall, in the joy of the Lord, in eternal life, and others are left outside pounding on the door, with weeping and gnashing of teeth, in everlasting punishment is ...that some have saving faith and others do not.

I. God gives us saving faith, and keeps us faithful “over the few things.”

While the parable of the 10 virgins doesn't go into detail of any outward manifestations of saving faith, the parable of the talents and the illustration of the separation of the sheep and the goats...next week's text, does.

For faith without works is indeed dead as James 2:20 clearly says. The servant who buried his one talent did so because it was dead to him. Dead things are buried. There was no connection with the lord who gave him this talent. There was no desire to use the talent for good. Just bury it and forget about it. Clearly there was no knowledge of the lord as a good and kind lord.

According to the servant with the one talent, the lord was only to be feared because he is powerful and reaps what he has not sown. There was no trust, no faith and no desire to have anything to do with the lord. Bury the talent and forget about it. Forget about God. And when it comes time to give an account, well, the servant says these telling words, **“take what is yours”**. For it never had any meaning to him. It was never something that he had any regard for or any connection with.

So, where there is no faith, there is, of course, no righteousness that is revealed from God to faith. So, Romans 1:17 tells us that God's righteousness is given through faith. For **“the just will live by faith”**. (Romans 1:17)

And if there is no righteousness, well, then there is only wickedness. And that is exactly the language that the Lord says to the servant who buried his talent. **“You wicked and lazy servant”**. Cast the unprofitable, useless servant into the outer darkness. For the lord has no use for him.

Now, the other two servants were different. They didn't bury their talents, but used them. There was pride in serving their lord and doing the best they could with the talents that they had been given. You can see that pride and joy coming out in the servant's voice when he shows his lord his work. **“Look, I have gained 5 talents more.” “Look, I have gained two talents more.”**

These servants wanted to honor their lord with activity and not laziness. They wanted to show their lord that he had not wasted his talents on them. And that is the life of a Christian, isn't it? The gifts of forgiveness and mercy that we have so graciously received through faith invoke in the Christian's heart a desire to live a life worthy of the great gifts that one has received.

Man's works don't save a man, scripture is clear. Only the work of Jesus' death and resurrection saves sinful mankind. And faith in Jesus receives the gift of salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit. So that, where there is faith, there are works of faith. As our Psalm for today, Psalm 90:16-17 describes.

“Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children.”

It is God's redeeming work of salvation that appeared to this world when the Word was made flesh. **“and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)**

It is this beautiful saving work of love that Psalm 90 describes in verse 17 that comes upon us through faith.

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,”

Jesus sacrificed Himself for the sins of the world. Jesus was faithful to His Father in completing the work of salvation for all people. He didn't bury God's gracious will for us, but defeated sin, death and the devil and buried our sins at the cross.

So then, when faith is given, when a sinner believes in Jesus as his or her Savior, the **“beauty of the Lord our God is upon us”**. The Holy Spirit creates faith and also establishes the work of our faith – the work of our hands. It is because the works of our hands are established solely by the power of the Lord, that this is repeated for emphasis.

**And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.”**

We can't begin to do any work without the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit's leading. We depend 100% on God for the talents we receive and the good use of those talents for His Kingdom of Grace.

It is the beautiful work of Christ's salvation that establishes us as His children and begins our new life in the Holy Spirit. It is God who establishes the work of our hands...all of the work...all of our talents...all that we do!

The talents and abilities that God gives to His children, He does so for the building up of His church according to His wisdom. Not everyone is a hand. Not everyone is a foot as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12. Some people are given five talents, some two. It's not the amount that is important, for the Lord calls both the 5 talents and

the 2 talents “**a few things**”. It’s being faithful with what we have been given that is important. Lest we become boastful because of the gifts we have, Paul says in Romans 12:3-5

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

So finally, this is how the Lord will talk to His believing servants on the last day.

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

Good and faithful servant. We are called good by Christ’s righteousness given through faith. The little that we accomplish in this short life of ours doesn’t earn our salvation. That’s been won for us by Jesus. Our faithfulness in the use of the talents we are given shows our love for our Lord who is always faithful to us. We are but servants of the Most High God. God has given each of us different abilities and talents to use in service to Him.

II. God makes His faithful servants to be rulers over many things entering into the joy of the Lord

And then comes something quite unexpected at judgement day. The few things of this life turn into many things of eternal life. Servants become rulers. Yes, you heard this right. The invitation to enter into eternal life comes with these words, **“Enter into the joy of the Lord.”** For heaven is pure joy. And Christians are elevated by Jesus to reign with Him. They literally share the reigning of the heavenly kingdom of glory with Him.

Revelation 1:6 tells us,

“and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”

And again, in Revelation 5:10,

“And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

This day will come as a thief in the night. But as sons of the light, our epistle from 1 Thessalonians 5 tells us that it will not be a day of wrath, but our final redemption.

“But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

Yes, we will live together with Him. And that is the bottom line. Living with Jesus, in His joy, the joy of the Lord of Lords and King of Kings for eternity. Oh, how important is the gift of faith, the oil in our lamps, that gives us entrance into heaven, to be with the Bridegroom forever.

Our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is Good and Faithful. He was never lazy – always serving - washing feet, healing, feeding, freeing all people from the servitude of sin with His death. He laid down His life for the sins of the world. That was the greatest talent the world has ever seen. For it gives righteousness and life to all who would believe. John writes in Revelation 19:11. **“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”**

And so, fellow servants in Christ, we thank God for this victory that is ours through faith in the One who is “Faithful and True”. For He has made war with our enemy, the devil, and conquered him.

As we await our coming Lord, John comforts us and inspires us with these words from Revelation 2:10.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” That’s God’s promise from the One who is called Faithful and True - entrance into the joy of the Lord!! Or, in the beautiful words that we’ll hear in next week’s Gospel, **“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. Amen.**

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)