***worship@home resources   
for 15 November***

Call to Worship

From the rising of the sun till its setting in the west  
**May God’s name be praised**

On the lips of children and in the visions of the old  
**May** **God’s name be praised**

In the forgotten corners of our hearts  
**May** **God’s name to praised**

**Let all that has life and breath, praise the Lord!**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin nation who have been the custodians of the lands on which we live and worship for thousands of years.   
We pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to walk with all the First Peoples of this land in their search for justice.

HYMN TiS 47 Our God our help in ages past

Our God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of your throne  
your saints have dwelt secure;  
sufficient is your arm alone,  
and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
or earth received her frame,  
from everlasting you are God,  
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight  
are like an evening gone;  
short as the watch that ends the night  
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever rolling stream,  
Bears all of us away;  
we fly forgotten, as a dream  
dies at the opening day.

Our God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
Remain our guard while troubles last,  
and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts 1674-1748 *alt*.

YouTube version with original lyrics here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzV7bXYJND0>

prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we thank you that you have made us for yourself  
and called us into the fellowship of your people.  
**Even while we worship today, may we receive your blessing  
and may we be equipped by your Holy Spirit  
to live as your witnesses throughout this coming week.**

Gracious God,  
We recognise those places in our lives where we have been hurt or rejected  
and we offer them to you.  
**We recognise those times when we have hurt or rejected others  
and we offer them to you.**And we recognise the ways that we have failed  
to believe in your forgiving power.  
**Come and cleanse our hearts,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.**

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

In the name of the one who prayed ‘Father, forgive them’,  
know that you are cleansed, renewed and loved.  
**Help us to live in the strength that comes from God’s love. Amen.**

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
   from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
   who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
   he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel  
   will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is your keeper;  
   the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
   nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
   he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep  
   your going out and your coming in  
   from this time on and for evermore.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When 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! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But 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. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Matthew 25:14-30

For [the kingdom of God] 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.

REFLECTION

The normal way of reading today’s parable has been taught to us from Sunday School onwards. The talents in question are God-given skills or abilities that each of us are to use for the sake of those around us. We are not to keep them hidden in the ground as the third wicked and lazy servant did. This interpretation is so ingrained that we have taken the word ‘talent’ and given it this meaning in the English language.

But I doubt that this is what Jesus had in mind or that his first hearers would have heard. The first struggle is with the term ‘talent’ which was a measure of weight for gold or silver or coins. A talent was roughly 30 kg and this much gold or silver was the equivalent of around 15 years of income for an average worker. We’re talking about a lot of money! So the parable is about something very precious yet available to be shared and grown. If the wealthy merchant handing out the talents is God, then perhaps the talents represent Jesus’ gospel message about God’s abundant love and grace and how to live a life pleasing to God – filled with justice and mercy. The third servant fails in the task of sharing these abundant riches with others. This is a communal failing rather than simply an individual one.

An alternative interpretation is that the owner of the talents is not God, but rather the Roman Emperor or King Herod, his puppet king. They are the only people wealthy enough to have such large sums of money to hand around. The Romans took over Jerusalem in 62 BCE and have now gone away, leaving the country under the rule of the Herod family. People can play along with their rule and their system and get rich – as the chief priests did in Jesus’ day – and as the first two servants in the parable do – but one day there will be a reckoning. That reckoning with Rome may be terrible – as the Jews discovered in 66-70 CE – and as Jesus himself will shortly discover on the cross. A wiser course of action is not to play their game but rather to hide the money away in the ground (see the warning in Matt 6:24).

So perhaps there is a positive way to hear this parable – share God’s love and God’s ways to shape life around you. There is also a negative way to hear the parable – don’t let the world around you shape you into its mold but resist the lure of power and money.

HYMN TiS 666 We are marching in the light of God

We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching Oo we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching Oo we are marching in the light of God.

We are living in the love of God …

We are moving in the power of God …

South African traditional hymn *tr*. Anders Nyberg 1955–

YouTube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn16ABWn20c>

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Living God,  
Hear the prayers we bring for your world and your people today.

In this NAIDOC Week that celebrates our indigenous peoples and cultures,  
we pray for our indigenous brothers and sisters.  
Give us the courage to accept the realities of our country’s history that many First Nations people were killed or massacred in the frontier wars trying to protect their land.  
Help us to remember that this land was never ceded and so remains aboriginal land.  
Teach us to listen and to act with respect to all cultures including the cry of indigenous peoples for their voice to be heard and their sacred places protected.  
Help us to share justly the resources of this land.   
God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

This week we have also marked Remembrance Day when we recall wars fought and sacrifices made, not only by soldiers on the battlefield but also by those left at home and those who worked to put shattered lives back together.  
Help us to remember that so much death and suffering has been caused by the pride, greed and ambition of political leaders.   
Help us to see that skin colour or religious faith does not make a person any more or any less worthy of safety, justice or prosperity than others.  
Remind us of Jesus’ call to be peacemakers.  
Help us to work with all our neighbours for peace, reconciliation and the common good of all people.  
God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We have watched with grim fascination this week the aftermath of the US election. Words of division and discord continue from one side alongside a plea for unity from the other side … but even this way of speaking shows how deeply the country remains divided and fractured.   
We pray for peace on the streets and healing of the nation.

We pray for the incoming government and its leaders that they may rule for the benefit of all and that issues of racism and injustice be addressed.  
We pray also for the millions of people in the US and in many other countries suffering from coronavirus and pray that a safe vaccine would be developed soon and distributed to every country.  
God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We pray for the communities that we are part of that are slowly re-emerging after an extended lockdown.  
We give you thanks for the doctors, nurses, teachers, delivery drivers, political leaders and all those who have helped us through these last several months.  
Open our eyes to the needs around us and show us where we can bring your hope and love.  
We also pray for those people known to us who are struggling with sickness – whether physical or mental – or struggling to put their livelihood back together.  
We pause to name them before you now…  
God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We pray now in the words Jesus taught us, saying: **Our Father in heaven…**

BENEDICTION

Go into the world in peace;  
may you carry God’s wisdom,  
speak forth Christ’s love,  
and embody the Spirit’s hope,  
wherever you are and whoever you meet.

**We will seek peace and pursue it.**

SENDING SONG TiS 779 May the feet of God walk with you

May the feet of God walk with you,   
and God’s hand hold you tight.

May the eye of God rest on you,   
and God’s ear hear your cry.

May the smile of God be for you,   
and God’s breath give you life.

May the Child of God grow in you,   
and God’s love bring you home.

Words © Aubrey Podlich 1946– Music © Robin Mann

YouTube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ6RaKX4_I4&t=12s>