

November 15th Worship
24th Sunday After Pentecost

Introduction to the Day

Our readings during November speak of the end times. Zephaniah proclaims that the coming day of the LORD will be filled with wrath and distress. Paul says it will come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather around signs of hope—word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the good news of Christ’s coming among us.

Prayer of the Day

Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Lesson – Amos 5:18-24

⁷Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is at hand;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

¹²At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
“The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do harm.”

¹³Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.

¹⁵That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

¹⁷I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the LORD,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.

¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the LORD’s wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Gospel – Matthew 25:14-30

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 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.' ²⁴Then 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; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But 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? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

We find ourselves at part two of our mid-November three week sermon series - Out of the ordinary - Where, as we approach the end of ordinary time in the church year, we hear from prophets that call us out of our comfort.

Last week we had Amos calling us to fight and work for a world that realizes justice, that justice would roll down like a mighty water. We continue this week and we will hear from the Prophet Zephaniah.

Along with the Prophet Zephaniah we hear Jesus tell the disciples the Parable of the Talents, where there is a master going away and puts in charge three of his workers. He gives them control of his talents. Now, a talent was about 15 years worth of labor, so it is no small deal that this master, this man is going away from town and he's putting five and two and one talents in the hands of his workers.

The worker to whom he gives five talents, goes out and doubles. And the master returns to five more talents. The worker to whom he gives, two doubles that and the master returns to two more talents, the worker to whom he gives one single talent sees it, fears what might happen if he messes it up, and buries the one talent in a hole. So, when the master returns, he says, "here you go, I didn't lose it. You still have your one."

And, like any parable we are to question, what does all of this mean? Who are we in this parable? Who are we in this story that Jesus is telling? Why might Jesus be telling this story to his disciples? What is at the heart of it?

It is an image of the church...to put it bluntly. This is an image of the church. As people of faith, in our baptism, we are called claimed, gathered into one body. But beyond that, we are sent. Going back to the great commission when Jesus tells his disciples "go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing and teaching them all that I've commanded you."

We are given that mandate in our baptism. We are given that mandate in our baptism that as church we are to act as the worker who was given five talents - to go out and duplicate. Or, the worker who was given two, if we feel like the 'talents' we bring aren't that great - we can still duplicate.

But, we hear the stern warning that the master gives the one who did nothing, who thought it would be more safe to not risk what had been. He holds onto that one talent saying, "I know what I've got here. I know this. And the only way I can be sure that this doesn't get messed up is if I bury this in a hole and make sure nothing happens..." and the master comes back angry.

"How dare you think that, you know how I would handle this one talent."

He was afraid of what could be. This worker who took the one talent and buried it in the hole - He was afraid of what might become. You see, digging the hole and burying it and doing nothing to duplicate, to expand, to multiply, to broaden was more comfortable.

But the master says to his workers, "to those who I trust with little, I will give more."

The one who takes the one talent and buries it is afraid of what could be.

It is more comfortable.

It is more easy.

It is more certain.

If you don't do anything then you know what you will always have.

If you don't try change it then what you have is what will always be.

Zephaniah, our prophet, who we highlight his talking point in this preaching series.

Verse 12, "At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs."

I will punish the people who will arrest complacently.

Complacence is comfortable.

Allowing things just to be the way they've been is comfortable because you know what you have.

Going back to last week, Amos calling us to fight for justice, calling us to imagine how the seams of the people of God might tear open just a little bit and allow expansion. You can't do that simply being complacent. The fight for justice is not one where you can just go dig a hole and say, "I'm just going to keep it the way it's always been."

It can't be that way. Rather the fight for justice needs to be treated like the one who was given five and turned it into five more because it took risk. There will be hurt and there will be discomfort and there will be pain, and uneasiness. We are called as people of God to fight for justice. We are called as people of God to look at what God's church might be, rather than say, we like the way it's been.

We know it's comfortable to do nothing. We know it's comfortable and easy to just say, "look how great it has been. It should be that way again."

Guess what? If all we do is say that it should be one way and don't do anything about it then it isn't going to be that way.

And, the prophets tell us as much. The prophets tell us "you need to get out and do something about it."

The prophets tell us that we cannot just sit in your comfort and complacently watch as the world goes by. Because we, as people of God, are called to imagine what God's church could be. As people of faith we are called to challenge ourselves to think about what we are doing to help dig the hole to bury the one talent.

Our comforts are challenged. Our ordinary, which as people of faith and seemingly and perhaps specifically as Lutherans, our normal is challenged. We don't like change. Right? We are being challenged. These last two weeks in the words from these prophets, we are being challenged to change, to think about what more could be.

And I know it's really weird to think about change and what more could be when we are locked in our homes and can't go out and we are isolated. But, by God, if you could just see who is being reached, we would know that the word of God is spreading, even though we can't be in our building.

This stinks. This all stinks. I'm not going to say it doesn't, but this is church. We have been thrust out of our ordinary, out of our normal, into some make-up of what God desired for the church. And we are faced with a challenge.

Do we want to turn the five into five more? Or, do we want to dig a hole and bury the one to make sure we still have it.

People of God, we have been given a promise. We've been given a hope and we've been given a call to imagine what the church could be. The challenge of this is the question of...

What do we do with it?

Do we act as the first two who multiply the talents they've been given? Or do we act as the one who digs a hole and buries it?

What we become as a church will be defined by how we answer that question. What we look like as a church when we get to the other side, when the metaphorical master returns to see what we've done with our talents is going to be determined by how we answer that question. But the fact is that we've been given a promise, a hope and a call to wonder what church might be.

It is that promise, that hope, that call, and that sending that we need to decide here and now and in the future, what we do with it. And, we remember the challenge, the warning from Zephaniah,

“at that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs. Those who say in their hearts, ‘the Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm.’”

The thinking that we know the way it's going to be. And the thinking that we know that the way that we've always done it as the way it needs to be done, that is the complacence that Zephaniah challenges that is the complacence that the master returned and was so angry about.

When the one thought it was good enough to just dig a hole and bury it.

God doesn't call us into certainty in these texts.

God calls us into discomfort.

God calls us into uneasiness.

God calls us into a hope and a promise

that is bigger than the uncertainty

that is bigger than the uneasiness
that is bigger than the trouble
the difficulty

or whatever you want to call it.

God is with us in the midst of that.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature. Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the nations, sound forth your justice in the ears of all leaders. Increase concern for those who are most vulnerable, especially as international leaders forge trade agreements and cooperate to end human rights abuses. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant light. Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors. Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

Amen.

Offering and Offertory Prayer

Our 4th Quarter Well Offering / Mission Offering:

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and Lutheran Disaster Response.

God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant. **Amen.**

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

Lord Jesus, in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way.

Amen.

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

"Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN"

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

Blessing

May the God of all creation,
in whose image we are made,
who claims us and calls us beloved,
who strengthens us for service,
give you reason to rejoice and be glad!

The blessing of God,

Sovereign, ✝ Savior, and Spirit,
be with you today and always.

Amen.

Dismissal

Beloved of God,
go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

We will be suspending our in-person "Opportunities to Connect" until further notice.

Last call for the purchase/claiming of Church Pews

Please contact DeAnne in the church office if you would like to claim or purchase a church pew.

Funds received over the cost of new chairs will be used towards eliminating the debt from the purchase of the new boilers.