

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST WORSHIP SERVICE

WORDS OF WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP: ☪

L: Sing the new day *P: O God, we come*
L: Sing a new song *P: Awakened, we come.*
L: Sing to the light *P: So beckoned, we come.*

GATHERING PRAYER: ☪ *

L: There is a richness here –
P: richness that greets and grows and holds and challenges and keeps.
L: There is a richness here –
P: a richness that surrounds and brings and delivers and gives
L: The richness holds us in our weakness, fills us in our hunger.
P: So here, richly blessed, we have come, and we have been found.
L: Let this time together inspire us in richness and grace. Amen.

OPENING HYMN: #11 V.V. 1, 4 – 6 “Bring Many Names”

SCRIPTURE & REFLECTION:

1 Thessalonians: *Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians was written to encourage them to remain living their new life in Christ in times of tribulation that surrounded them. How might these words speak encouragement and steadfastness to us during the struggles we face today.* Let us listen to the word of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (Reader- Diane Rondeau)

The Day of the Lord

⁵ Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Matthew

In this parable about talents and each servant receiving different amounts from the master, what might we learn about ourselves, our gifts, and God? What is revealed about fear and lack of trust and how that might impact our actions or lack thereof? Let us listen to the word of God.

Matthew 25:14-30 (Reader –Steve Bruse)

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹“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!’

²²“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³“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!’

²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶“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? ²⁷Well 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.

²⁸““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

REFLECTION:

In the Meantime: Part Two

- *Though this is scripture dealing with second coming of Christ*
 - *Helpful anytime of waiting – test results (school or medical) - to hear about a job – refinancing a loan – phone call from a loved one - Covid treatments, vaccine, to be over*
- *Remains the same – God has given us talents, treasures to be put to use and shared in service to God, one another and all of creation – continue to live in the waiting*
- *The lesson we can learn from the story about money and loans is to put our gifts into circulation: This parable, Richard Bauckham writes, "compares the use of all God has given one...in God's service, with the use of a financial loan in order to make a profit for the investor." If we hoard and hide money, it doesn't do what it's supposed to do; in the same way, Bauckham says, "what God has given us--our selves, our lives, our faith, our abilities, our gifts, our possessions--is given in order to be spent and put into circulation," in order to be "the source of further blessings for others and for ourselves" (The Lectionary Commentary: The Gospels).¹*
- *Tiered fountain imagery*
- *What difference between first two servants & third*
 - *Fear vs vision*
 - *Life giving generous God vs. oppressive, cruel & Fear provoking*
- *Thomas Long - "To be a child of the generous, gracious, and life-giving God and, nonetheless, to insist up on viewing God as oppressive, cruel, and fear provoking is to live a life that is tragically impoverished," while those who trust in God's generosity "find more and more of that generosity; but for those who run and hide under the bed from a bad, mean, and scolding God, they condemn themselves to a life spent under the bed along, quivering in endless fear" (Matthew, Westminster Bible Companion).²*
- *First Two – able to enter the Joy of the Master*

- *Dirk G. Lange – God in giving abundant gifts is allowing the servants the opportunity to share in the joy of sharing that abundance with others. “The master, already possessing the gift of the talents, is inviting his servants to share in his joy. When the first two are finally invited to “enter the joy of their master,” they are perhaps not entering a greater fullness than before but rather now are able to recognize the dynamics of joy that undergird the gift of faith. The joy of the master is the joy of the feast that is self-giving, sharing, being distributed into the world.”³*
- *As we wait to get a handle on Covid – in the meantime we are still the church*
 - *Invited to use our gifts – in accordance to what we have been given*
 - *Live as Children of the light - put on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ... encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*
 - *Pledge cards next week*
 - *Church leadership in meeting to follow worship*
- *Anaïs Nin, 20th century - "Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."⁴ – Let us live in courage and share in the joy of the Master, not because we have earned it, but because we have gained a fuller understanding of what it means to live out our faith and the joy that flows from it and so when we come to the end of our lives we may say words similar to God that Erma Bombeck hopes to say when she meets God face to face.*
- *Erma Bombeck, 20th century - "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me."⁵*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION: (Page 2 NCH)

L: We are called to examine our faithfulness to God's covenant with us. God, in whose presence we gather, promises us grace and pardon when we acknowledge our weakness and shame. Let us confess our sin to almighty God.

All: Eternal God, whose Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path, we recognize and confess that we have failed to respond fully to your gracious presence in our lives. Through Jesus Christ you have offered us new life, fulfillment, and the freedom to serve you. We confess that we are captive to sin, that our sin binds us with false pride, and that the wrong we do is made worse by the good we leave undone. Reconcile us to you and to all people, God of mercy, forgive all our sin and strengthen us anew for life as you intend it; through Jesus Christ our savior. Amen.

A Moment of Silent Reflection

WORDS OF ASSURANCE: (Page 3 NCH)*

L: God hears the confession of our hearts and lips. Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven all our sins and by the Holy Spirit we are empowered for new life.

All: We believe the good news of Jesus Christ. Let us rise up to new life in Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit. Amen

A TIME OF PRAYER –

LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS –

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

CALL TO OFFERING  *

L: Children of the light – richness and blessings are ours. Now, the time is ours – isn’t it exciting? Met by God in the holiness of this space, inspired by God’s word, God’s gifts, God’s love. Encouraged by the presence and commitment of everyone else around us – Let’s do something!

God has gifted each and every one of us with different gifts and abilities in varying degrees. Now is the time to

do something new with God's abundant gifts to us. Let us not bury those gifts and blessings but give freely of those gifts and blessings so that God's light and blessings will flow forth from our lives and this faith family into all the world.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: 

All: O God, we have come, and what a delight it has been!

We have come before your table with gifts – gifts of ourselves, gifts of risk, gifts of newness, gifts of trust.

We thank you for the chance to give, and pray that we and all whom our gifts bless will never be the same.

Through our greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: #495 v.v. 1 & 2 “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service”

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CHARGE & BENEDECTION: 

L: Go now as children of the light:

All: Ready to serve! Eager to give! Delighted to love!

L: And may God's blessing: + Source, Word and Spirit, One,
keep, lead and mold you, now and forever. Amen.

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1. https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_november_15_2020
2. https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_november_15_2020
3. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-33/commentary-on-matthew-2514-30>
4. https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_november_15_2020
5. https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_november_15_2020

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:

- **Presentation of proposed changes to Church Constitution and Bylaws**
- **Vote on proposed changes to the Church Constitution and Bylaws**
- **Vote to suspend Article 4 requirement that an individual not serve more than 2 consecutive terms on any given board for this election year only.**
- **Presentation of Nominations for 2021**
- **Accepting of nominations from the floor**
- **Vote on acceptance of the nominations**
- **Commissioning of church leadership to fulfill their elected positions as of January 1, 2021.**

Commissioning of Lay Leadership* (NCH BOW)

Introduction:

L: Affirmation of ministry is the act whereby a local church of the United Church of Christ recognizes the diverse gifts of its members and celebrates the particular ministry of each person in the life of the church or in various settings in the life of the world.

There are different kinds of spiritual gift, but the same Spirit gives them.

P: There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.

L: There are different abilities to perform service,
but the same God gives ability to each of us for particular service.

P: The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

L: Christ is like a single body which has many parts.

P: It is still one body, even though it has many parts.

L: If one part of the body suffers, all other parts suffer with it;
if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.

P: All of us are Christ's body, and each one a part of it.

Presentation:

L: These people, whom we have just elected have been called by God,
in accordance with the faith and order of this church, to serve among us.
They have accepted their call and are before us in witness to their willingness to serve.

Covenant:

L: Sisters and brothers in Christ, it is an honor to be entrusted with the responsibility for particular service in the ministry of the church, whether gathered or scattered.

L: Having prayerfully considered the duties and responsibilities of your ministry, are you prepared to serve with the help of God in Christ's name for the glory of God?

Individuals: I am

L: Do you promise to exercise your ministry diligently and faithfully, showing forth the love of Christ?

Individuals: I do, relying on God's grace.

L: Members of this household of faith, you have heard the promises of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have answered God's call to service. Let us affirm our intention to live in covenant with them. Let the rest of us affirm and witness to the commitment we now make?

P: We gather in celebration of the joy that is ours to be in partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We promise to love you, honor your leadership, and assist you that together we may be a faithful church of Jesus Christ

Prayer of Commissioning:

ALL: Eternal God, you have called these people to serve you in this household of faith and in the world, which you have entrusted to our care and keeping. Send your Holy Spirit on them that they may serve among us with honor and faithfulness. Help them to be diligent in their duties that your church may prosper in the mission you place before it.

May their example prove worthy for all of us to follow, as we are united in Christ's ministry, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

Declaration:

L: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the people of Summit Cong. UCC of the UCC, I rejoice to announce: You are installed and commissioned in your respective positions for your respective ministries to begin on January 1, 2021.

Let us all now join in a round of applause as a symbol of extending our hands to one another in Christian love.

Let us seal this commitment by joining in the last two verses of

HYMN OF COMMITMENT: #394 v.v. 3 & 4 "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"