

## Introduction

Our readings during November speak of the end times. 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.

## First Reading: Judges 4:1-7

*Deborah was a prophet and judge who, with her general, Barak, led a victorious holy war against a stronger Canaanite force from the north.*

<sup>1</sup>The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup>So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. <sup>3</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

<sup>4</sup>At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. <sup>5</sup>She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. <sup>6</sup>She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, ‘Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. <sup>7</sup>I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.’”

## Psalm 123

<sup>1</sup>To you I lift | up my eyes,  
to you enthroned | in the heavens.

**<sup>2</sup>As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maid to the hand | of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to you, O LORD our God, until you show | us your mercy.**

<sup>3</sup>Have mercy upon us, O | LORD, have mercy,  
for we have had more than enough | of contempt,

**<sup>4</sup>too much of the scorn of the in- | dolent rich,  
and of the derision | of the proud.**

## **Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30**

*Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>14</sup>“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>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.’ <sup>21</sup>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.’ <sup>22</sup>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.’ <sup>23</sup>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.’ <sup>24</sup>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; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

## Prayers of Intercession

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, saying "Hear us, O God," and responding, "Your mercy is great."

*A brief silence.*

God 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.

God of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature (*for the trees of the Assiniboine forest, for the rivers nearby, for the birds and animals around*). Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God 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.

God 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. (*This day, we hold especially in prayer those who we name now, either silently on our hearts, or aloud...* [pause]) Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God 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.

God of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labours. 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 Saviour, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**



## ***A reflection for this day...***

### Awake to the Grace of God

Linked with readings from 1 Thessalonians (5:1-11) and Psalm 90 (1-12), Jesus' parable of the talents invites a full-hearted response to God's lavish gifts of faith and purpose: "Use 'em if you've got 'em!" The people of God are meant to be engaged, alert, and ready to share what we have received from our prodigally (wastefully) generous God. While the parable has sometimes been interpreted in the context of judgment, a careful reading also spotlights the beauty of the faith-generated response to God's lavish grace.

One word for this is *stewardship*. Presented in light of God's gift of faith and purpose, this "churchy" term can today be transformed to new understanding in the proclamation of the gospel text. Instead of the weight of obligation and duty we so often associate with religion, we are invited today to another way: What does it mean to be awake to the grace of God?

On the surface Jesus' parable is a simple premise: the contrast of workers who please and workers who disappoint their master. Psalm 90 sings to us to carefully treasure our lifetimes, for there is something at stake. First Thessalonians is a letter reminding people they have exactly what they need to survive and thrive.

What does it mean to be awake to the grace of God?

In a time in history when so many people are discouraged with work, home, life, and church, a word from Jesus' parables may be healing, enriching, and startlingly attractive. The gospel text today is an opportunity to remind the people of God that there is a depth to faith that is sustainable. In fact, beneath the parables of Jesus is a depth it will take a lifetime to unpack.