

Bath Methodist Churches 15th November by Rev Elizabeth Kirova

This is the day that the Lord has made,
We will rejoice and be glad in it!

STF 139

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| <p>1 Today I awake
and God is before me.
At night, as I dreamt,
he summoned the day ;
for God never sleeps
but patterns the morning
with slithers of gold
or glory in grey.</p> <p>2 Today I arise
and Christ is beside me.
He walked through the dark
to scatter new light.
Yes, Christ is alive,
and beckons his people
to hope and to heal,
resist, and invite.</p> | <p>3 Today I affirm
the Spirit within me
at worship and work,
in struggle and rest.
The Spirit inspires
all life which is changing
from fearing to faith,
from broken to blest.</p> <p>4 Today I enjoy
the Trinity round me,
above and beneath,
before and behind ;
the Maker, the Son,
the Spirit together —
they called me to life
and call me their friend.</p> |
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John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)

Let us pray:

Loving God, we have come to worship you. Help us to remember that you are here with us. May we pray to you and faith, seeing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness; through Christ our Lord.

Let us praise God. Holy God, to you alone belong glory, honour and praise. We join with the host of heaven as we worship you today. you alone are worthy of adoration from every mouth, and every tongue shall sing your praise. You create the earth by your power; And you save us in your mercy, and renew us through your grace. To you loving God, father son and Holy Spirit be all honour, glory and praise now and forever. Amen.

Having brought our prayers of praise we come now to confess ours sins and our fears, which we named before you now.

For the fears that hold us back, **we are sorry Lord.**

For the fears that cause us not to act, **we are sorry Lord.**

For the fears that cause us to think only of ourselves, **we are sorry Lord.**

For the fears that cause us to bring others down, **we are sorry Lord.**

You gave your word, O Lord, when you sent Jesus into the world to save our sins. Your word that said if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and our fears and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So, we hear that forgiveness given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, and we praise you Lord for your pardon and your peace. **Amen.**

STF 478

1 Thank you, O God, for the time that is now,
for all the newness your minutes allow,
make us alert with your presence of mind
to fears and longings that move
humankind.

2 Thank you, O God, for the time that is past,
for all the values and thoughts that will last.
May we all stagnant tradition ignore,
leaving behind things that matter no more.

3 Thank you for hopes of the day that will come,
for all the change that will happen in time ;
God, for the future our spirits prepare,
hallow our doubts and redeem us from fear.

4 Make us afraid of the thoughts that delay,
faithful in all the affairs of today ;
keep us, Creator, from playing it safe,
thank you that now is the time of our life !

Fred Kaan (1929–2009)

Reading Matthew 25:14-30

Sermon

A man is going on a journey and wants to make sure that what he has is looked after- this seems almost alien in some respects- especially half way through this current lockdown! But for me this is another uncomfortable parable. It continues straight after the ten bridesmaids but does not begin with, the Kingdom of Heaven is like. It is another parable and we assume that it is partnered with the one before- possibly as not everyone can relate to being a bridesmaid, but also because as we said last week, the Kingdom of Heaven is quite complex.

There are so many elements to this parable, things that maybe we can relate too or through our own fears get so caught up with that we focus more on the negative, that receiving the lessons within. We can get caught up with the idea that there is someone who always gets more than us, is trusted more than us or even there's always one that gets everything lumbered on them. We can get fixated on what each slave does with what they are given, and particularly on the last slave who just goes and buries the talent because he doesn't like the standards by which his master operates and in consequence loses everything and is thrown into the darkness.

So, I invite you to lay your own burdens aside to hear what is said and maybe during the breakout time, chat with others about how this parable speaks to you. When we hear about the amounts, instead of getting jealous or bogged down by numbers, let's hear that each person is entrusted with the right amount, they were given as to their ability- for we know that God gives us what we can handle. I don't want to get caught up with the talents, only really to say that we shouldn't compare what we have with others- as hard as it is, even if we have the same strengths as someone else, they will use it differently to us. Just like the bridesmaids of last week, they all had the same job to do, but each one would do it differently, each of them was still called to be a part of the wedding.

What I wanted to really explore this morning were the slaves. The first two in the story seem to know what to do with the talents, without any instruction- they go out and make something of them. But the one who only had one didn't seem to know what to do with it, except to keep it safe in a hole in the ground. This reminds me of the saying, if you want something doing ask a busy person.

We are given the sense that the first two slaves know what is expected of them. When the master returns, we learn that the last slave is not a fan of his master and thinks that he should do his own work, rather than getting others to do it for him. This is where the parable challenges for me, as it would feel right that God be the master and we are the slaves. God sends us out to do the work we have the gifts and when God returns, we are judged on what we have done. And a bit like last week, if we have gone out and done our best, been faithful even in our failings, God will know and it says: 'enter into the joy of your master.' So why then, is this third slave not on board with the master? Why is he saying these things? That the master is harsh, reaping and gathering where others did the work.

On one hand, I can see that for some this is what God looks like, a master who disappears and leaves us to get on with things and gets all the glory. Is this your experience of God? How would you describe God? This third slave admits to being afraid and therefore hides the talent. We all have our fears, recognising that God is 'not a tame lion' to quote CS Lewis. But do we let our fears of God force us to hide what God gives us? or do we take the next step, do the next right thing- which is to discover more about God for ourselves. Ask other people, consider the value of the talent you have been given maybe not for yourself but for others.

Interestingly, master doesn't get cross with the slave about his viewpoint, but about the fact that there was a talent in his hand that could have been used- even if it was to be put into a bank. Again, we come back to what are we doing with the things we have been given? Wherever we are on the journey of serving God, whether we are consumed in it, or nibbling away at it, we can still use the talents that God entrusts to us, for our own relationship with God and also to help others in theirs.

To use another parable, those who have ears, hear!

A time to reflect

Prayers for the world, the church, your community, your family, for you.

STF 239

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| 1 Sent by the Lord am I ;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the kingdom comes.
Sent by the Lord am I ;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the kingdom comes. | 2 The angels cannot change
a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love,
of justice and of peace.
The task is mine to do,
to set it really free.
Oh, help me to obey ;
help me to do your will. |
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José Aguiar

Blessing

Go now, and live as children of the light. Put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. Make the most of all God has given you and encourage one another in Christ.

And may God's hand be open to you in kindness; May Christ Jesus welcome you into his joy; And may the Holy Spirit fill you with courage, vigilance and faithfulness. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, **In the name of Christ. Amen.**