

Gospel lesson

We continue this week with Jesus's apocalyptic teaching for the disciples on Mount Olive during the Holy Week, right from where we left off last week.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-parable-talents/>

Matthew 25:14-30

NRSV

¹⁴ "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them;

¹⁵ to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents.

¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.

¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ 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.'

²¹ 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.'

²² 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.'

²³ 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.'

²⁴ 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;

²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

²⁶ 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?

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

The word of God for the people of God

Interactive time



picture cropped from
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-raising-hands-2019333/>;
photo credit: Luis Quintero

Consistent with what we just heard about the need to take what the Master has given us and return back, John Wesley said, "Faith without works is dead."

A powerful way to do God's work is through the church. Pooling our efforts, we can have a greater impact than as individuals working independently. Thus, we seek to expand our Christian community.

Today, I am delighted to invite new members by profession of faith.

See insert. Any who wish to join in the verbal responses as a reaffirmation of their faith are welcome to do so.

<Hymn “Take My Life, and Let It Be”

UMH #399>

Message: In Everything



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/our-hymn-of-grateful-praise/twenty-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/twenty-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Generous Lord to whom we owe everything,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may praise You with utmost thanks in
everything we do. Amen.

Continuing with “Our Hymn of Grateful Praise,” where
do we find things to be thankful for? “In Everything”

“This is Thanksgiving week, so it is an
appropriate time to reflect on the pervasiveness
of the life of gratitude that the [Good News of
Jesus] suggests.”



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/humpback-whale-swimming-in-ocean-4344571/>;
photo credit: ArtHouse Studio

This story was posted on Facebook by Nature Journal

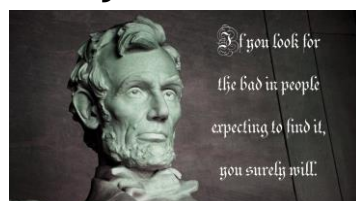
with credit given to Diem Jones:

A fisherman who was fishing east of the Farallon Islands (just outside of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California) spotted a whale who was fully entangled and bound in a fishing net.

The fisherman radioed for help and within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that the whale was so badly tangled that the only way to save her was to dive in, cut the ropes and untangle her... a very dangerous proposition as one slap of the tail could kill a rescuer.

How often do we get entangled in sin like that whale got caught in that fishing net? In the Old Testament, after Joshua died, it did not take long for the people who had professed dedication to God to get back into sin and idolatry. The story today comes during the third time in 160 years that the people were punished for their sin with a foreign king after they had been worshipping Baals and Asherahs.

And when we get caught in sinful nets, not focused on God, how do we behave? Do we show trust of others or just try to get all that we can out of them, whether it is healthy for either of us or not?



background picture from
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/architecture-usa-statue-face-37072/>

Abraham Lincoln is attributed with saying, “If you look for the bad in people expecting to find it, you surely will. What are we looking for in others? How does that affect us – do we not mirror what we see in others? The psalmist spoke about how the sinful fill us with scorn and contempt, but Paul reminded the Philippians not to be anxious about anything.

Instead of fretting about life, we can remember that God is near. The psalmist proclaims that God has mercy on us, providing blessings and relief from our distress. In the reading from Judges, God delivered the people when they repented – God is faithful to the covenant, even when we fail.



picture from MMMS collection

God brings peace when we put our anxieties before God. The Almighty provides all good things for us, gives us cause for rejoicing in all circumstances, and enables us to live. God has invested so much in us, and what do we show for it?

Some, who focus on fear instead of God’s love, share very little or nothing of the love God has freely given us. Then, because they do not trust others, , they essentially removed themselves from the sharing of God’s blessings – just like the slave with only one talent was left in the outer darkness.

Jesus teaches the better way to live. God celebrates the good things we do with the gifts given to us – calls us to share our blessings (we have so many!) and to trust those who share their blessings with us.

Getting back to the entangled whale, what do you think would have happened if she had struggled against her rescuers? Instead, she trusted them, and this is what happened:



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-humpback-whale-in-the-ocean-7767973/>;
photo credit: Adam Ernster

They worked for hours with curved knives and eventually freed her. When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each and every diver, one at a time, nudged them, and pushed gently, thanking them.

Some said that it was the most incredibly beautiful experience they had ever had. The guy who cut the rope out of her mouth says her eye was following him the entire time and he will never be the same.

May you be so fortunate to be surrounded by people who will help you get untangled from the things that are binding you. And, may you always know the joy of giving and receiving gratitude.

To live in joy, look for what you can give thanks to God for in everything.

- † If you are stressed, take a deep breath, pray, let God work, and give thanks to God for walking with you and guiding you through your troubles.
- † If you made a bad choice, perhaps hurting others, repent, pray for direction about how to remedy the situation, do what you can to atone as God guides you, and give thanks that God both forgives and enables forgiveness in this world.
- † Have you been blessed? Count your blessings! Thank those who were instruments of those blessings. Shout and sing God's praises for all to hear, so that all know to look for God blessing them too!



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/our-hymn-of-grateful-praise/twenty-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/twenty-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

How do we give thanks to the Almighty, returning on the investment of all we have been given? By showing love to others too! Tell them about our Creator, our savior Jesus, and the Holy Spirit with us through your words and actions. Because of God's love and goodness, we can then enter into the joy of our Master **in everything**.