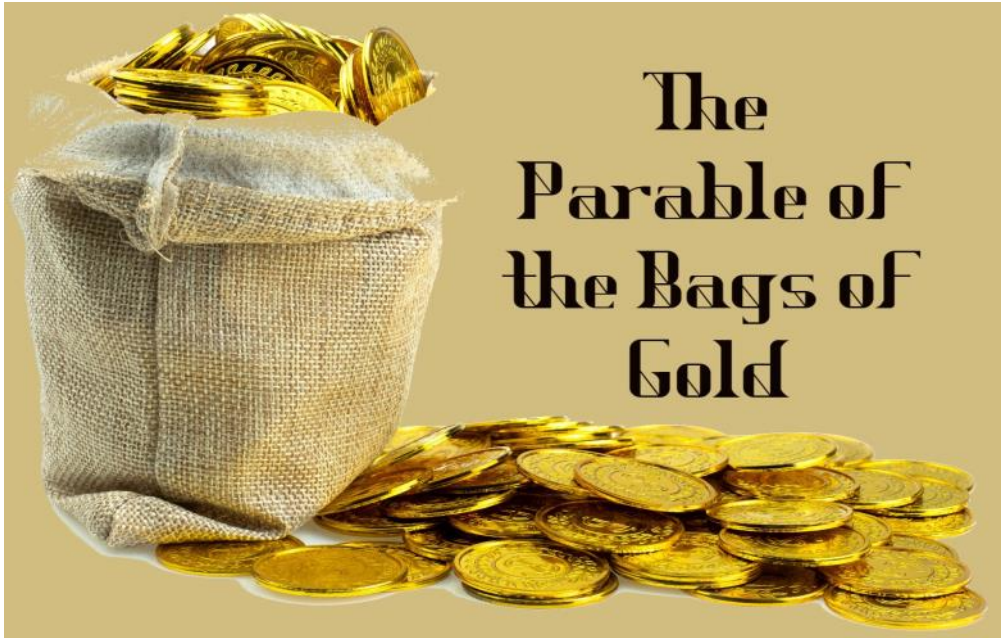


Ardoch Parish Church

Sunday 15th November 2020

Welcome to worship. We return to Matthew's Gospel for these two weeks when Mairi is on holiday.



The Parable of the Bags of Gold

Over the past few weeks, we've been marking harvest and working through eco-congregation themes as stewards of God's world. We've taken a couple of weeks to look at the Bible as the inspired and useful Word of God using metaphors such as physical skills, lights, swords and compasses to see the Bible for what it is. Last week we marked Remembrance Sunday. So, it was actually September when last we read from Matthew and considered what Jesus had to say about authority and the other parable about two sons in the middle of chapter 21.

Today we'll read about three servants who had different relationships with their master. Our opening song of worship is Psalm 123 which is one of the other lectionary readings for today; it shows us what the relationship between master and servant should be.

Our opening hymn is
"I lift my eyes to you" Ian White

I lift my eyes to you, whose throne is in heaven x2
Like a servant to his master,
Like a maid to her lady's hand x3
I lift my eyes to you, whose throne is in heaven x2
We have stood the torments, The laughter of the proud x3
We lift our eyes to you, Lord for your mercy
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Let us pray:

Lord God. We join together as part of your church in our community, in this country and around your world. We take time today to sit at your feet, to look to you as our master. To lift our eyes to you, whose throne is in heaven.

You are the Lord over all creation, you own the cattle on a thousand hills, your majesty and might is beyond our understanding, your plans for eternity so glorious and exciting. With you a thousand years are but a day but some of our days seem like a thousand years. We are without the physical contact we would want; we don't see the people we long to see, we cannot go to the places we want to be, share fellowship and food with those we care for and care about. Lord it hurts and it grieves us, frustrates us and limits us. We call out to you with the Psalmists and shout "why?"

Yet, Lord Jesus, you must have been so much more restricted when you laid aside your heavenly majesty and took on human form to come into this world; limited within a human body to time and to space when you have been above all things and before all things, maker of all things and sustainer of all things. Lord Jesus, grant us the patience and serenity to see these times through but also to see through these times. To see your opportunities for investment in your kingdom; to see our call to your kingdom work; to know you better for our time spent with you and to

love you all the more as a loving master who has grown to trust us, shared his riches with us, shown his love on us and ready to welcome your faithful servants to your eternal presence.

Teach us through your word today as you taught us many years ago to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen

Phyllis McLeod reads from

Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

Phyllis introduces the next hymn which is

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
And publish abroad his wonderful name:
The name all-victorious of Jesus extol:
His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;
And still he is nigh, his presence we have:
The great congregation his triumph shall sing,
Ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

Salvation to God who sits on the throne!
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son:
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right:
All glory and power, all wisdom and might,

All honour and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Gordon's sermon: Who wants to be a millionaire?

Are you glad to see the TV programme back with a new presenter? Did you see the contestant winning a few weeks ago with the million-pound question being about pirates? But never mind the TV programme, who wants to be a millionaire? Would it change your life? Would it shape how you spent your money? How you spent your time? How hard you worked? Whose company you kept? Where – and how – you lived?

Well that is what's on offer here – in more ways than one.

But first we've got a bit of catching up to do with Jesus. Since we last read in Matthew back in September, Jesus has stayed in and around the temple at Jerusalem, telling parables about the Kingdom, answering questions, warning the teachers of the Law – and therefore us too—about hypocrisy, then speaking out about the destruction of the temple and the end of the world. By the start of chapter 25, Jesus is in full flow again telling a parable about the ten bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. This is a very common Biblical image of Christ's return and indeed of our relationship with Christ. They had all been invited but only half of them were ready and only half of them went into the feast. The time that they had spent waiting had been wasted and they were not ready to take up the bridegroom's invitation.

So when we start reading today and the first verse says “so *it* is like a man going abroad,” then the “*it*” is the same “*it*” as the previous parable. This parable builds on the previous one to tell us *how we are* to wait for Christ's return. That

waiting involves working. And it's very well-paid work.

Although we talk of this parable as "the parable of the talents," the translations that we use in Ardoch and Blackford speak for the parable of the bags of gold. It's just a quirk of translation that we use the same word "talents" to mean a gift or skill as people of Jesus' day used to refer to a unit of weight measurement. That's the first clue about how much these three servants were given; it wasn't counted out—it was weighted out. A footnote in the NIV Bibles helps here: "a talent was worth about 20 years of a day labourer's wage. Let's do the maths.

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|---|---------------|
| National Living Wage (April 2020) age 25+ | £8.72 |
| 35 hour working week | £305.20 |
| 52 working weeks | £15,870.40 |
| 20 working years | £317,408.00 |
| 1 Talent | £317,408.00 |
| 2 Talents | £634,816.00 |
| 5 Talents | £1,587,040.00 |

Before taking these figures back to the parable, just look at them in our context. Although it would take about 65 years to earn a million pounds at this rate, but add inflationary increases or promotion along the way, and many of those in current employment can expect to earn over a million pounds – pre-tax of course. Many reading this today are no longer earning a salary but the principle the value of what we earn over our life time remains. How much of that does God trust us with? All of it? How much does he say we can get by on? 90% of it, because the first 10% belongs to him. Are we OK getting by on the equivalent of £900,000 or are we not trusting God with that and cutting back on our offerings to the work of the local church and to Christian ministry elsewhere?

Back at the parable, the master has gone and it's time to put at least 20 years' salary to work; two of them get on

with it and one buries it in the sand, showing no interest, in more ways than one in the work that his master has engaged him for; the mission that he has been equipped for.

On return, both of the first two servants receive the same commendation; "well done, good and faithful servant." What would it be like to hear that said by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? Notice the two servants get the same commendation. It's not about the size of what they generated; it's about what they did with what they had. They were given a huge amount and putting it to work they produced more for the kingdom.

When we accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, we become millionaires in his service. He gave himself for us; gave his life for us; gave us immeasurably more than we could have asked or imagined - and calls us to respond by re-investing his resources for the kingdom. All that we have is from him. So, we don't need to compare what we produce with others, because it all came from God. God's commendation comes not based on what we did in relation to others but in relation to what he gave us.

Which is what makes it so sad to look at the third servant. The master made him a life changing offer - which of us wouldn't find £300,000 lifechanging? And he didn't want to know about it. More to the point he didn't really know the master. Look at what we know already of the master; he trusts and invests in his staff, he gives them all they need to become a success, he recognises their success. He lets them enjoy the fruits of their labour (v28, the one who had five bags now has ten). He is generous and gracious and the third servant's defence does not stand up. (v24: 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.) the servant could equally be translated as saying "I saw you as," (next week that Greek word is translated "See" several

times) The master replies, “OK so that’s how you saw me, That’s not who I am; and you didn’t even live up to your own impression of me and your own moral code. You don’t even know me; if you knew me you’d look at me in the manner of Psalm 123 not look on me in fear. So I have nothing more to offer you.”

And he’s thrown out as worthless; like salt that has lost its saltiness. The parable is told to teach us how we are to wait. In expectation, developing our relationship and knowledge of the master and working for his kingdom.

Who wants to be a millionaire? Here’s today’s million-pound question

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire

50:50

What will you do with this passage?

A) Reassess your use of God's financial provision

B) Risk a bit more for his kingdom

C) Leave things buried rather than get too involved

D) Get to know Jesus a bit better and see where the adventure takes you

May we work this through before God knowing that we will all have to stand before him one day and give that final answer; more of that next week in the final parable of Matthew 25. Amen.

Our closing hymn is “Take my Life”

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing, Always, only for my King.

Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee.

Benediction

By way of benediction we offer the verses with which Paul finished his prayer in chapter 3 of Ephesians:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

May God bless you this week.

Intimations

On Sunday 15th & 22nd November we warmly welcome Gordon Roy who has prepared and is conducting our pre recorded services.

Change to Private Prayer arrangements

As the days grow shorter and colder, the Kirk Session has decided not to open the Church for private prayer on Wednesdays and Sundays from this week onwards.

Proposed opening of Church for Sunday Worship

However, if Scottish Government's regulations permit the Kirk Session would like to arrange services for the season of Advent in the Church starting on 29th November at 12.00am. To comply with social distancing this enables the minister to be in the church as the congregation arrive. More details will be supplied in the coming weeks.

An update on Ann's Spiers personal Appeal

As you will have read in previous intimations Ann Spiers has organised a collection for the Salvation Army, in place of our Blythswood Shoebox Appeal, which is no longer being run out of Crieff. Blythswood boxes went abroad to many countries, but because of Covid 19, people are losing jobs and their homes, so Ann suggested we donate locally as well.

She has had a wonderful response and has already delivered 60 plus parcels to the branch of the Salvation Army in Stirling. Ann is happy to carry on taking in gifts such as socks, gloves, scarves etc. just like we put in the boxes...for all ages. toiletries, toys for children, household items, (only new) Please mark on your parcel the age group.

All wrapped gifts should be delivered to Ann's home by Friday 27th November.

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139

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