

## Order of Worship for November 19, 2023 (updated with DS4)

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

**Opening Hymn:** “*Now Thank We All Our God*” – **Hymn #895**

**Confession and Forgiveness** page 203

### Service of the Word

#### Entrance Psalm:

P: Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

**C: In Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness!**

P: Enter not into judgment with Your servant,

**C: for no one living is righteous before You.**

P: I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that You have done;

**C: I ponder the work of Your hands.**

P: I stretch out my hands to You;

**C: my soul thirsts for You like a parched land.**

P: Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God!

**C: Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground!**

P: For Your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life!

**C: In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!**

**Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy)** p. 204

**Hymn of Praise** (*Gloria in Excelsis*) p. 204

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

#### Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found wanting; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen**

**Old Testament Lesson:** Zephaniah 1:7-16

R: Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated His guests. And on the day of the LORD’s sacrifice— "I

will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar!

For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them." The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Epistle Lesson:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

R: Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

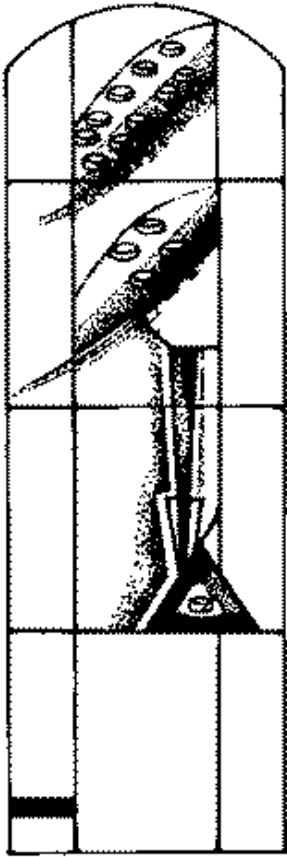
**Alleluia and Verse** p. 205

**The Holy Gospel** Matthew 25:14-30

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: Jesus said, "For it [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I



have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

**Sermon Hymn:** “*Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings*” - **Hymn #782**

**Sermon:** “*Bearing Fruit for Christ*” - **Matthew 25:14-30**

The Department of Homeland Security is the newest of the federal departments. It was created in the wake of 9-11. But it has been riddled with problems. As one report states:

These days, the mess at the Department of Homeland Security is one of the only things that all of Washington can agree on. Disliked by both Democrats and Republicans, DHS has metastasized into the worst version of what we imagine when we think of bureaucracy: rigid, ineffective, wasteful, chaotic, and cruel. Since its inception, DHS has been on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk List,” which highlights programs vulnerable to “fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.” It consistently has the lowest morale of any federal agency with more than a thousand employees, according to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

But we put up with that because no politician will want to cut it. Why? Because of fear. We fear that they will lose the election if they cut security. And that fear is fueled by the specter of 9-11 and what has happened in Israel. It doesn’t matter that more people died in auto accidents each year than on 9-11. Because we fear terrorism, our government will continue to pump money into security against it.

Fear is a powerful motivator. It is what will make students really begin to study after Thanksgiving with only one week left until Dead Week and finals. It is what makes us go through uncomfortable tests on our bodies. It is what makes us obey traffic laws and file our income tax.

We look at the story in Matthew 25, in fact the whole chapter, and can be hit by fear. Last week we heard the story of the Ten Virgins. Five had extra oil for their lamps and five did not. Next week we will hear how Jesus will divide between the good sheep and the bad goats. Today we hear about three servants, each given money by their master. Two good servants invest it and get a return. The third one hides it, gains no interest, and is thrown out by the master. So am I a wise virgin with extra or a foolish one without it? Am I a good sheep or bad goat? Am I the servant who invests the money or the one who hides it? I think we often picture the story as presented in children's books. The third servant is a little guy who is afraid. He is so paranoid that he will lose the one coin given to him, that he takes it to a cave under his house and buries it. He doesn't gain anything from it, but he doesn't lose it either. Yet, for that he is condemned by his master!

I don't know about you, but I feel sorry for that servant. When I was in school the rage among teenage boys was to hit the brakes and the accelerator on your car at the same time so that the wheels would spin, but you'd go nowhere. It was called "Power breaking." It was especially easy to do on one of those Dodges from the early 60s with the push button transmission. It was also murder on the tires. That's why I was never tempted to do it. If I ever had a car, it was my dad's. I would never be caught dead doing anything to put a nick in his car. I was afraid of him. In some ways it was easier simply not to drive his car. That's why I think I would have hid the master's coin, too. I would be so afraid of losing it, that I would have been tempted to bury it.

Yet the master comes down hard on that servant. He doesn't just chew him out. He says, "Throw this worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" is Jesus' favorite expression for hell.

In the middle ages people saw Jesus as a frightening judge who would condemn them unless they lived pious lives. The servant says of his master, "I know that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed." This master sounds like a tyrant like Vladimir Putin. No wonder people in the middle ages were terrified of Jesus.

But all of that assumes that the servant's problem was fear. Yes, he said, "I was afraid, and I hid the money." But the master calls him "wicked and lazy," not a "scaredy cat." If fear is what motivated him, then the last thing he would have done is hid the money. If he knew his master had a name and reputation that made him money, he'd have invested the money. For him to say he was afraid was like saying to the teacher or professor about a due assignment, "My dog ate it."

The servant's real problem was not fear, but indifference. He didn't care. A talent was not a single coin, but a measure of weight. Even one bag of money weighing talent was worth a sizable amount. He could have invested some of the coins, without risk of losing them all.

Even if we are afraid that we haven't done enough for God and used what He has given us, we are not that third servant. Jesus is describing those who are totally indifferent, who don't care.

The harvest is done in Iowa. Despite the drought, the yields still come in. The master says to the lazy servant, "So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?" He was using an agricultural illustration to show that if that servant had invested the money, it would have grown because of the power and reputation of that master.

But how can we invest in what God has given when we are in time of want? Our economy is getting scarier all the time. It isn't just the lack of jobs, but the lack of purchasing power. We don't have what we used to have to spend.

One way a plant bears fruit is by using a time of plenty—plenty of rain, sunshine, and nutrients—to produce fruit. Trees hold back on bearing fruit if they need the water in times of drought just to survive.

But the other way a plant can bear fruit is by sacrificing itself to the fruit. In times of want, in fact, the plant does this all the more. Corn doesn't die because of frost. As the days get shorter a corn plant focuses its energy on the husk—the fruit. It does this so much that the plant will die even without frost.

That is what Jesus, the one who told the parable of the talents, did for us. Jesus the "hard master," sacrificed Himself for all of us. He told the story of the talents just days before He died on Good Friday. He sacrificed so that we, the fruit, could grow.

That affects how we bear fruit. It is not important how much we have, but how loving and gracious is the One who gives to us. God in Jesus harvests where there seems to be no sowing, gathers where no seed seems to have been scattered. He took a small group of disciples and turned them into the Church that grew to populate the whole Roman Empire. In Ethiopia He turns a few thousand dollars into support for missionaries on bicycles who start missions 40-100 miles away from where our friend Kebede is based.

Jesus took His death and apparent defeat and turned it into the greatest victory of all time. He is the master who can harvest where He does not sow and gather where He does not scatter seed. He can use you and me to bear fruit.

When Jesus says, "Whoever does not have, what he does have will be taken away from him," He is not talking about you and me, unless we don't care, unless we are totally into this world and this life. Instead He says of us, "For everyone who has will be given an abundance."

We have that abundance. It is what He has given us in baptism. We are life. And as we bear fruit we will be given all, even more than we need.

### **Creed: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Petitions of the Lord's Prayer**

#### **Prayer of the Church:**

P: Lord, in Your mercy...

**C: Hear our prayer.**

#### **Sharing Our Ministry**

#### **Offering and Voluntary**

### **Service of the Sacrament**

#### **Preface p. 208**

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly, Father, for all times and places are in Your hands and You alone know when Your Son, Christ Jesus, will come again to judge the world and to take to Him all whom You have called in Him to be saved. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

#### **Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208**

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

P: Blessed are You, O Lord God, King of the universe; we thank You that all things are governed by You. Send Your Holy Spirit so that until Christ Jesus comes again we remember His death by participating in the meal of Holy Communion trusting that He gives to His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Hear us as we pray as He taught us . . .

#### **Lord's Prayer, The Words of Our Lord, Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209**

#### **Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*) p. 210**

#### **Distribution of Holy Communion:**

Hymns: "*Come unto Me, You Weary*" - **Hymn #684**

"*Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers*" - **Hymn #515**

#### **Nunc Dimittis (*Now Let Us Depart*) p. 211**

#### **Prayer After Communion:**

P: Almighty and everlasting God, so rule our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and your just judgment, we may be stirred up to live lives that reflect our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**C: Amen.**

#### **Benedicamus and Benediction p. 212**

#### **Closing Hymn: *Christ Is Surely Coming*" - **Hymn #509****

#### **Postlude**