

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET BOX 385 GAYLORD, MN, 55334

Stewardship Sunday November 15, 2020



MORNING MEDITATION

John A. Shedd, 20th century

"A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are for."

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

"WE ARE CALLED"

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NO MATTER WHO I AM, NO MATTER WHERE I AM ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, I AM WELCOME HERE.

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

ONE: WHO ARE YOU?

ALL: I AM A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD!

ONE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

ALL: I AM A PERSON OF WORTH TO BE VALUED!

ONE: THEN WHAT WILL YOU DO?

**ALL: I WILL LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE OF MYSELF
AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE**

PRELUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

THE CALL Psalm 90:1-8 (9-11), 12

O God, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals." For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. . . So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Sing the new day

People: O God, we come.

One: Sing a new song

People: Awakened, we come.

One: Sing to the light

People: So beckoned, we come.

GATHERING HYMN

"GOD, WHOSE GIVING KNOWS NO ENDING"

NCH #565

PIANO: PLAY THROUGH ONCE

**PEOPLE: GOD, WHOSE GIVING KNOWS NO ENDING, FROM YOUR RICH AND ENDLESS STORE,
NATURE'S WONDER, JESUS' WISDOM, COSTLY CROSS, GRAVE'S SHATTERED DOOR:
GIFTED BY YOU, WE TURN TO YOU OFFERING UP OUR SELVES IN PRAISE;
THANKFUL SONG SHALL RISE FOREVER, GRACIOUS DONOR OF OUR DAYS.**

PIANO: PLAY THROUGH ONCE

**PEOPLE: LEND YOUR JOY TO ALL OUR GIVING, LET IT LIGHT OUR PILGRIM WAY;
FROM THE NIGHT OF ANXIOUS KEEPING, LOOSE US INTO GENEROUS DAY.
THEN WHEN YEARS ON EARTH ARE OVER, AND WE'VE LIVED OUR HUMAN SPAN,
GOD, FULFILL BEYOND OUR DREAMING, ALL OUR STEWARDSHIP BEGAN.**

PIANO: PLAY LAST FOUR MEASURES.

GATHERING PRAYER

There is a richness here – a richness that greets and grows and holds and challenges and keeps.
There is a richness here – a richness that surrounds and brings and delivers and gives.

The richness holds us in our weakness, fills us in our hunger, finds us when we're lost.
So here, richly blessed, we have come, and we have been found.
Let this time together inspire us in richness and grace. **Amen.**

CONFESSION

One: There is a richness here – a gorgeous, flowing richness of unending abundance.
But that doesn't mean that it guides us.
Our ways – within and beyond our control – speak of something different:
of lack,
of fear,
of something other than an acknowledgement of
God's endless and beautiful river of grace.

**People: But how do we step into that river? Do we step into it with trust?
Do we trust the current of God's generous gifts?**

One: Or do we run from the river?
For when we run, when we turn away from God's gifts in distrust,
We lose the refreshment and joy of that richness...and something else reigns.

People: Then, what's left?

One: Now is the time – now is the time to consider just how we distrust God's abundance.
Now is the time – now is the time to begin something new.
Now is the time – now is the time to trust ... differently.

Silence

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Let us pray: We haven't always trusted, God. But now we do.

**People: We acknowledge the richness of your blessings
We see your flowing river of love
And we wade into your grace.**

One: There is a richness – a richness that says "yes" – eternally –
even in the face of our behavioral "no"s.
There is a richness that penetrates distrust and offers so much more.
This richness forgives and gives even more.

People: We know this forgiveness. And we thank you, God.

GLORIA

LECTIONARY TEXT

Matthew 25:14–30

[Jesus said:] "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 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.' 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.' 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.' 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.'

"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; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 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? 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. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 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. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

SERMON

I don't know if there is any truth to it or not but the story is told that when Britain faced a critical shortage of silver during the days of WWII, Winston Churchill launched a search of possible sources of silver. They discovered some sterling silver statues of saints in some of their churches and cathedrals. When Churchill was made aware of this he said, "Well, it's time to put the saints into circulation!

The parable of Jesus that we find in our Gospel reading for today is about saints in circulation. Now first, let's be honest. There are some troubling elements to this parable that do not quite square with Jesus' earlier teachings in this Gospel and the ways in which he spoke of God. One difficult part is at the end of the parable where unfaithful servant who failed to use his master's money wisely is cast into "outer darkness". I read this symbolically of course, but still the language seems unusually harsh. Another troublesome aspect of the parable is the way the unfaithful servant is described as being "wicked" and "lazy". These are descriptions that are totally uncharacteristic of the Jesus Matthew has described for us in his Gospel. I suspect that these descriptions were likely added to the parable during the oral transmission of the story (when Jesus' followers retold these stories in different settings). In spite of these troubling elements, there is a powerful message for us in this parable!

Jesus tells of a master who is going on a journey and before he goes, he calls three of his servants to him and he entrusts them with the care of his property. To one he gives five talents, to another two talents and still to another one talent. A talent is a lot of money. One talent was equal to 3,000 denarii and a denarius was equal to a day's wage for a common worker. So, the servant who was given one talent was given more money than a common worker could have earned in a life time. The master makes his servants stewards of what belongs to him. This is the master's money.

I like the story of the elderly woman who had just finished shopping and returned to her car. She found four men inside. She dropped her shopping bags and drew a handgun. She pointed the gun toward the men and screamed for them to get out of her car. They flew out of there like crazy. Somewhat shaken, she put her gun away, picked up her bags, and got into the front seat. But for some reason the key would not fit the ignition. Then it dawned on her; this was not her car. Her car was in the next row. So, she found her car and drove down to the police station to turn herself in. AS she told her story the officer behind the desk who was about ready to fall out his chair laughing pointed her to another desk where four men were report a carjacking by a little old woman with a handgun. She thought it was her car, but it really belonged to someone else.

We think what we have is ours- we earned it, we worked for it, it's ours. Except that it isn't. It's God's everything that we have really belongs to God. God has never passed ownership of anything over to us. God who created all things still remains the owner. You and I, we are caretakers of what God has entrusted to us. Many years ago, my life changed when someone shared with me the truth that God remains the owner of all things. How I saw what I had, how I responded to God and to others changed as I realized that the truth that God- who is the creator of all things- is still the owner of all things. We are caretakers. God lets us take care of everything that belongs to God.

And for God to put us in charge caring for what is rightfully God's, requires a deep trust on God's part. Think of all that God has entrusted to us! Author and advocate for the poor Shane Claiborne once shared that one of the best lessons he ever learned was from a homeless kid in India. Every week there would be a part for the street kids, 8-10 years old who were homeless, begging to survive. One week, one of the kids told Shane that it was his birthday. So, Shane got him an ice cream cone. The birthday boy was so excited he stared at it mesmerized. But what he did next was brilliant. He yelled at all the other kids and told them to come over. He lined them up and gave them all a lick. His instinct was: this is so good I can't keep it for myself.

I see God this way. So much good that God just HAD to share it with us. But the third servant didn't see things that way. He had one talent, worth an amazing amount, but he acted as though he had nothing. He did nothing with the talent. He may have looked at the other two servants and thought, "Compared to them, I've got nothing." It is as if the master is saying "You had my valuable gifts in your hand, and you didn't think that they were valuable." The slave with one talent didn't have nothing. He had something precious- he just wouldn't see it!

How much do you and I have? Something? Nothing? An abundance? I recently read that most people say they would be happy if they had about 20% more than they have right now. The only problem is that if we say that we would be happy with just 20% more, then whatever we have now is never ENOUGH! Jesus tells us that he comes so that we might have life and have it abundantly- a full life! What do we see when we look at what God has entrusted to us? Are our hands full? Or empty? Are they open to others to give? Are we generous? Or tightly grasping?

Ultimately, Jesus' parable of the talents today inspires a response in us. In two of the servants their response to what the master had entrusted to them was to use their talents well. To be good caretakers of what their master had entrusted to them. In contrast, however, the third servant's response was to do nothing. To bury, to hide, to hold on, to live in fear.

How about us? How do we respond to what God has entrusted to us? Author Adam Hamilton tells of a time when he and his family took a camping trip to the Grand Tetons. They arrived on his birthday and set up their pop-up camper. After they were settled, he and his wife told their daughter that they could have \$20 spending money for the three days that they would be in and around Jackson Hole. Hamilton and his daughter Rebecca then went to the gift shop before heading out on a walk around a small lake. They no sooner walked into the shop when Rebecca started looking at ball caps. She found one, tried it on and said, "Dad, what do you think of this hat?" He said, "Becca, it's really cool. But all you have is \$20 and that hat will take all of your money. Why don't you wait and make your money last for the next few days." But she said, "Dad, you told me it was my money and I could get whatever I want. And I really want this hat!" As hard as Adam Hamilton tried to talk his daughter out of it, she would have no part in waiting. So, she bought the hat-used all of her \$20. The two then went for their walk around the lake and came back to watch the sunset from a park bench. That's when Rebecca handed her father the hat and said, "Here Dad, I bought this for you. I love you Happy Birthday." Adam Hamilton says he sat on that bench, took his daughter in his arms and started to cry. He now says that the hat is among his most treasured possession, his most often worn hat because every time he wears it, he thinks of his daughter's sacrifice for him. His little girl gave up all her spending money because she wanted to tell her Dad how much she loved him.

Isn't this how God looks at our acts of generosity? When we are generous with God, aren't our gifts a way of saying, "God, I'm returning to you a portion of what you have entrusted to me to say thank you and I love you. When we give generously, we don't give because God needs what we have. We give out of love. As someone wisely has said, "You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving!"

We have a generous God. We don't need to bury the blessings, the gifts, the abilities and the resources that God has entrusted to us. We don't need to give like our generous God has been stingy

with us. Instead we can have generous hearts- generous lives. Generously reaching out to God, to God's work, to our neighbors and to the waiting world around us. And God will consecrate our lives and our cups will run over and our blessing will be too sweet not to share. Thanks be to God! Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

STEWARDSHIP HYMN

"TAKE MY LIFE"

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Children of the light – richness and blessings are ours.

Now, the time is ours – isn't it exciting?

Met by God in the holiness of this space, inspired by God's word, God's gifts, God's love.

Encouraged by the presence and commitment of everyone else around us –

Let's do something! Let's try something new!

We've given before, we've given to the church.

Let's keep giving. But let's give something new.

Maybe it means that we add a few dollars to our usual pledge.

Maybe it means that we add a pledge of time that we haven't included before.

Maybe it means that we make a commitment of giving for the first time ever.

Now is the time to do something new about God's abundant gifts to us.

DEDICATION

One: Let us pray.

People: O God, we have come, and what a delight it has been!

We have come before your table with gifts –

gifts of ourselves, gifts of risk, gifts of newness, gifts of trust.

**We thank you for the chance to give, and pray that we and all
whom our gifts bless will never be the same.**

Through our greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SENDING HYMN

"GO NOW IN PEACE"

BENEDICTION

ONE: Go now as children of the light:

**People: Ready to serve,
Eager to give,
Delighted to love.**

One: And may God's blessing: Source, Word and Spirit, One,
keep, lead and mold you, now and forever.

People: Amen.



Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who is born of God knows God."

1 John 4:7

**Today we celebrate the In-gathering of our 2021 pledges of time, talent and monetary gifts. Thank you for your willingness to share your love!
Pledge sheets can still be dropped off or mailed to the church.**

Tithes, Offerings and Pledges can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334. *You can also donate on our website
or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.*

Remember in Prayer: Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother), Dick Carlson, Ann Pinske (Ted's sister-in-law), Ewald Keller, Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com • Website at listen2god.org

- ❖ Our **From the Heart Offering** in **November** goes to ***Santa's Helpers***. Deposit your donation in the Heart Basket near the Sanctuary doors.
- ❖ **Men's Fellowship** meets every **Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in church in the Fireside Room.**
- ❖ **Women's Fellowship is again selling dish cloths.** There are multiple colors and the cost remains at \$1.00 each. They will be on the table in the Fellowship Hall.

Mark your Calendar:

- **All Church decorating** in preparation for Advent – **Next Sunday, November 22 after church.**
- **Hanging of the Greens Celebration Service** – **Sunday, November 29 at 9:30 a.m.**



The Mission Board is joining forces with Alloy Insurance this season to keep local kids warm this winter.

Bring your donations of gently used or new winter wear to church until the end of the year.



Mission Board will also be collecting donations of new toys, games, hats and mittens, quilts and wrapping paper for ***Santa's Helpers.***

These items can be brought to church and placed by the Mitten Tree. Donations will be accepted thru December 6th.