

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Papa Owusu. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Call to Worship

Let our hearts exult our God.

There is no rock like our God.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

You are my God; I have no good apart from you.

God is my chosen portion and my cup.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Let us bless God who gives us counsel.

Let our hearts be glad and our souls rejoice.

Good and Gracious God, your love is never-failing, Your heart is open to us, your presence never leaves us; Thank you for the opportunity of the time with you today and for the heavenly food you always give us in your word. Strengthen our faith, deepen our love for you and keep us in your ways; Let our hearts be enliven today so that through our service today, we will feel fulfilled and resourced for our calling. We pray in the name Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 175 Light of the World

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/03G52K9X2hQ>.

Light of the world,
you stepped down into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see
beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

*So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days
oh so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came
to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.

*So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,*

*here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.*

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

*So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.*

Tim Hughes

Prayers

Praise and glory to you, O God,
You created your children out of your boundless love.

You made us in your image and filled us with your own self.
We thank you for our good earth and our place as your children.
We thank you for those who reflect your glory among us.
We also praise you, O God,
because you created all of us with your dignity.
You make us to shine with your power and presence.
Help us to remember this and to not cloud your light.
Keep us from trying to stifle the holy glow in others
so that we can assist them in claiming their personal dignity.
We pray in the name of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Let us confess our sins to God, and especially how we get attracted
to the power of this world ... *(Silent individual prayers)*

Let us confess together:

**We confess our sins to you, merciful God.
We are tempted and deceived
by the so-called power of this world
which is based on force and violence.
Although we are followers of Jesus
we behave like eternal citizens of this world.
We don't comprehend the power that changes hearts
Have mercy on us and forgive us**

And call us back to you and to your love
that we may truly live as your children.
We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

(Silence)

Assurance of Pardon

God has created us for glory. Receive God's grace and love allowing God's light to shine through you and into the lives of others so they can see their own light. Sisters and brothers hear the good news again, in Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven

Amen! Thanks be to God

The Collect

God of all power and might, give us grace to trust you in the darkness as well as in the light. In the face of danger and adversity be our strength and hope, that we may live and work to your praise and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen**

Hymn: StF 59 Lord, the light of your love is shining

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/op17raOTXbk>

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us —
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness —
shine on me, shine on me.

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story —
shine on me, shine on me.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Today's reading: **Matthew 25:14-30**

The Parable of the Talents

'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."

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Time to Reflect

In this week's lectionary gospel story, Jesus tells a parable that, on the surface, seems like a first-century investment seminar. Two slaves wisely invest the wealth they are tasked to oversee and are commended for producing more talent. The third, however, is gripped with fear... and worried about losing the principal, guards its safety by burying it in the ground. But his approach is harshly

condemned by his master, who notes that, at the very least, he should have put it in the bank.

In the parable, the failure of the third slave is not merely losing money but rather his inability to maximise his master's investment during his absence. The first slave is highly motivated to excel, while the second may not have been as driven but still managed to yield a satisfactory return. However, the third slave's inaction, stemming from his apprehension and laziness, is what is criticised. The master's prolonged absence may have resulted in his being overlooked in daily affairs, and it is possible that he was not well-liked.

In this modern world, the story may be deemed a difficult one as it is about slaves and since slavery is wrong. In the context of the Gospels, slavery was prevalent and accepted, and they were the property of their owners. According to the Scriptures, we are God's creatures, owned by God, as we cannot exist as independent beings - and this relationship has been renewed in Jesus, and we, therefore, live for the glory of God.

In the original Greek, the word 'talent' meant a substantial amount of money. In giving a very tuned ear to the whole story, it might be worth noting that Jesus may have used it deliberately and obscurely to mean something broader than its original meaning. He might

have used it metaphorically to represent all the privileges and opportunities of the kingdom of God.

God has bestowed invaluable gifts on us as individuals and humankind. Sadly, these precious blessings are sometimes overlooked, neglected, or even destroyed, especially when it comes to the natural world. It is incumbent upon us to cultivate and share these gifts as God has instructed, particularly in the often-overlooked corners of our communities.

The question that needs asking in the parable might be: *What are you doing with the resources tendered into your care? How can we use what God gives us to serve him?*

As disciples of Jesus bought with the Saviour's precious blood, we must note that:

- Discipleship is not a risk-free venture. As Jesus closes out his ministry, he once again reminds the church of what is involved with being salt and light in the world. His actions hearken back to the Sermon of the Mount. The kingdom does not belong to those who play it safe but to those persecuted. It's given to the meek and revealed in the eyes of those mourning because they have lost everything.

- The parable urges us to hear the call to faithful discipleship. Here is an invitation to see the gospel as a call to pursue new possibilities, knowing that we have been entrusted with nothing less than the fortune of heaven.
- The deepening gap between rich and poor plays out in many different ways and challenges the church to recall what it means to serve One who had been born in poverty and was homeless for much of his adult life. Our leaders are busy crafting programs to benefit the rich while penalising the poor. Their attention is on self-preservation and the protection of their own interests. Jesus calls the church to live in a risky world, metaphorically calling the disciples to bet the farm on the least likely horse in the race. It is an invitation that calls us to look beyond our self-interests and to be set free from fears which inhibit us from loving others.
- “All those who have, more will be given” may sound like the siren song of prosperity preachers. Yet these words of Jesus are an invitation for his followers to rise from their padded pews and to accept the call to an adventuresome faith grounded in both the Sermon on the Mount and the words of the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

May we be guided to be faithful discipleship of Jesus and be fruitful with our talents and gifts. **Amen.**

A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)

Bidding: God is our strength and salvation.

Response: In him we will not be afraid.

God, the strength of all that trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong,
give us courage to stand for the truth,
courage to proclaim the gospel,
courage to persevere in times of trouble.
Give us a mind to know what is good and true.
Give us a will to be faithful to you.
Give us a heart to love and serve you.
We pray for Christians working in dangerous places,
for all who are facing persecution for their faith,
for all who suffer mockery and scorn.

God is our strength and salvation.

In him we will not be afraid.

God of love, may we learn to live in harmony and peace.

We pray for all places where there are conflict especially political conflict, for the continuing war in the Ukraine and that in the Middle East where there is violence, oppression, or tyranny;
for all places of unrest, crime or neglect.
Strengthen all who work for freedom and justice.

God is our strength and salvation.
In him we will not be afraid.

Lord of all, give hope and strength to a hurting people
as we continue to struggle through the ravages of current economic hardship
We pray for all who are suffering from famine and drought,
all caught up in storms or earthquakes, We pray for those who have suffered in the recent earthquake in Nepal.
Give courage to all who have fallen ill, ...
all whose sickness finds no cure, ...
all who are afraid for their future.

God is our strength and salvation.
In him we will not be afraid.

We give thanks for those who are now where sorrow and pain are no more:
we rejoice in the fellowship of your saints,

and commend our loved ones departed to your almighty love.

God is our strength and salvation.
In him we will not be afraid.

The Lord's Prayer

We bring our prayers together in the words of the prayers that Jesus taught the disciples and us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.

Hymn: StF 545 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here <https://youtu.be/x3jtklzbApA>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise,
be thou mine Inheritance, now and always:

be thou and thou only, first in my heart,
O sovereign of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935)

Blessing

Abide in the presence of the Almighty, let your life be filled with traces of his glory; As we end our service, may the love of the Creator be all around us, the love of the Saviour be above and beneath us, the love of the Holy Spirit be within us; And the blessing of God almighty, the father, the son and the holy spirit, be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Retire in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen!

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