



# Camrose United Church

10 a.m.

Sunday November 15, 2020

With God beyond the fear.

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

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## **Candle Lighting**

*We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to*

*celebrate God's presence in our community.*

**☞ Gathering Song: ♪ VU#308 Many and Great,**

## **Entering Worship**

We each come to this time of worship  
opening our hearts, lifting our spirits  
for words of compassion, accompaniment and care.

We come

seeking guidance and comfort.

seeking healing and renewal.

seeking inspiration in uncertain times

to lift us from struggles and stress.

from worrying and wondering.

With hope and confidence in the love of God

may this shared time of worship

bring us closer together as community

bring us closer together with God.

**☞ Hymn: ♪ VU#218 We Praise You, O God.**

## **Scripture Reading(s):**

Scripture is our song for the journey, passed on from  
generation to generation to guide and inspire.

**God calls us to be**

**doers of the word**

**and not hearers only.**

**Matthew 25:14-30** *Common English Bible*

Parable of the valuable coins

14 “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving on a trip. He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them.

15 To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to that servant’s ability. Then he left on his journey.

16 “After the man left, the servant who had five valuable coins took them and went to work doing business with them. He gained five more.

17 In the same way, the one who had two valuable coins gained two more.

18 But the servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money.

19 “Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

20 The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained five more.’

21 “His master replied, ‘Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’

22 “The second servant also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’

24 “Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven’t sown. You gather crops where you haven’t spread seed. 25 So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what’s yours.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You evil and lazy servant! You knew that I harvest grain where I haven’t sown and that I gather crops where I haven’t spread seed? 27 In that case, you should have turned my money over to the bankers so that when I returned, you could give me what belonged to me with interest. 28 Therefore, take from him the valuable coin and give it to the one who has ten coins.

29 Those who have much will receive more, and they will have more than they need. But as for those who don’t have much, even the little bit they have will be taken away from them.

30 Now take the worthless servant and throw him out into the farthest darkness.’

People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

### **Wonderings**

I wonder what challenges you in this story?

I wonder if Jesus was trying to provoke people into being passionate for justice, for fairness?

I wonder why Jesus chose this story to help people understand the Kin-dom of Heaven?

***Prayer for Awareness and God's Grace:***

Creator God,  
who knows us better than we know ourselves,  
You offer us opportunities  
to grow and share with the world.

You offer us gifts of value:  
sometimes treasure,  
sometimes skills,  
sometimes companions for our journey,  
sometimes teachers.

**We don't always use your gifts wisely.**

You give us diversity in ethnicity, culture, and race;  
**but we use them to uphold and support division.**  
You give us skills to share care in the world,  
**and we hoard them**  
**to focus on ourselves and not others.**

You give us direction and guidance  
**and we think we have better ideas.**  
You entrust us, as humanity, with caring for the world  
**and we refuse to cooperate with each other**  
**we allow our fears to overtake us**

**Forgive us God.**  
**We can do better.**

We need your patience and guidance.  
Teach us how to share our skills and knowledge  
with each other.  
Teach us to hear your word that will give us  
the courage to take the right risks.  
Teach us to ask for help, to offer support,  
to risk all we have for the sake of others.

**May we learn how to work together  
so that your world can be a better place.  
Amen.**

***Words of Assurance***

God has promised to be with us,  
to never forsake us.

God has promised to love us and guide us.

God offers us gifts  
and weaves in them  
a love that never ends.

**Thanks Be To God.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** *The Message*

5 1-3 I don't think, friends, that I need to deal with the question of when all this is going to happen. You know as well as I that the day of the Master's coming can't be posted on our calendars.

He won't call ahead and make an appointment any more than a burglar would. About the time everybody's walking around complacently, congratulating each other—"We've sure got it made! Now we can take it easy!"—suddenly everything will fall apart. It's going to come as suddenly and inescapably as birth pangs to a pregnant woman.

4-8 But friends, you're not in the dark, so how could you be taken off guard by any of this? You're sons of Light, daughters of Day. We live under wide open skies and know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we're creatures of Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.

9-11 God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it.

***Message/Reflections:***

Following on the heels of last week's story of the bridesmaid that ended harshly, this week's story also seems harsh and jarring to us. The endings of both stories seem to be very 'judgy' and we might be left thinking is this the Kingdom of God we have come to know? If it's that unrelenting is that where we want to be?

It is perhaps helpful to be aware that the gospel of Matthew was written for people who had good reason to live in fear. By belonging to this new group of "The Way" that believed in the Realm of God, they were already nervous: their leader was executed by Rome; execution crosses were very visible in the landscape as a means of intimidation to those who were seen as a challenge to the power of Rome. Playing it safe was a logical and practical choice for lives lived in fear.

As we read this story in a world many years later, we can probably see so many inequalities and misuse of power. Why would that Property Owner give substantial money to people for safekeeping without telling them what the expectations were?

Why did those who received more not offer support to the one who received the least – or at least offer advice? The one worker was scared of the Property Owner because they had seen examples of lying and cheating

and knew the owner was untrustworthy. If they didn't have the skill to multiply the money wasn't the best choice at least to not lose it?

Were they wanting to play it safe because they were terrified of making a mistake even though they didn't know what a mistake would look like?

Why would the Owner get angry at someone who followed the rules that were given?

Why set someone up for failure by asking them for more than they could give?

Greed, power, and fear are woven throughout this story.

In his context, it could be that the message that Matthew wanted to convey was that there was greater reward in taking risks and not being held hostage by fear.

If the Property Owner Matthew was talking about was Rome, then the harshness of the consequences makes sense.

In many modern unpackings of this story, the valuable gold coins have taken on new meanings. No longer seen as a simple lesson in economics and the capriciousness of those in power, it has become a lesson in using the gifts we are given and the abilities that we have to increase the possibilities of growth and sharing.

We can be asked what gifts and abilities has God given you to be nurtured and multiplied?

What holds you back from sharing what you have been given?

In our world today we see the clash of power when one vision of the world appears to be opposite of another. We have, and in some cases still do, experienced fear that prevents us from being and sharing our best with each

other. There are certainly, still, instances when choosing to do nothing feels like the safest choice.

But we know that choosing to do nothing is choosing not to stand up for what is right.

We know that choosing to do nothing leaves out those who are sick, poor, hungry and desperate.

We know that choosing to do nothing is not an option that Jesus wants us to take.

Tagging on to the ending of last weeks story where the listeners were warned that they would never know what would happen next, so they needed to be ready for all eventualities, the letter to the faithful in Thessalonica reminded them that they, too, had an unscheduled journey ahead.

They believed that Jesus would return, but had no idea when. Paul reminded them of the power of faith, of the power of community. Talk to each other, he said. Look out for each other so that no one is left behind.

God doesn't set us up for failure, Paul said. In fact, through the death and resurrection of Jesus we are told that we can survive any manner of trouble.

Faith in the power of God,  
faith in the knowledge that we are in this – whatever 'this' may be – together,  
faith that we can work through the fear to become more than we are,  
become all that God knows we can be  
is what will get us through these times of trouble.



In Matthew's story told to encourage fear filled people,

I see a warning about leadership who change the rules for their own benefit, and that trying to cover your butt just won't work with people who are that volatile.

I see an opportunity for people of different abilities and gifts to team up together to accomplish more together than is possible when they are apart.

The version of the Matthew story that we used for Children's Ministry this week ends with two questions for the disciples:

Were they like the worker who buried the money?  
Or were they like the other workers who used what they had to make everything better?

While our world is not quite as violent as Matthew's world was, it is not as respectful or cooperative as it could be either.

What questions do you hear for you to consider today?

Are we, as a church, offering our best to nurture those who are scared?

What are we choosing to do to support and help others be their best?

Are we burying our gifts or nurturing and multiplying them so that God's kin-dom pokes through the mess of life around us?

What unknown packages of valuable skills, abilities and choices has God given us that we are asked to faithfully tend to, in community with all of God's people, so that God's possibilities have a way to live in the world?

Work together, Paul tells us.  
Trust in God, Paul tells us.  
Don't be afraid Jesus tells us... often  
Let us ask the questions that will lead us from fear into  
being God's caring, sharing and nurturing community.

### ***Offering Invitation***

God gathers us to hear stories of the past  
so that we can create stories  
of love and care in our now and in our future.  
What gifts of time or treasure do we have  
that God needs us to share?  
Let us consider how we can be part of the solution of  
caring for our neighbours, our friends, God's family.

✠ 🎵 **VU#703 In the Bulb There Is A Flower.**

### ***Prayer of Dedication:***

Holy God,  
who gives to us all that we have and all that we are,  
we offer our gift today so that  
they may be multiplied and shared  
with all of your people.  
Bless our offerings and we will trust that, with your  
guidance they will be used  
to share your love with the world.

**Amen.**

### ***Prayers by God's people for God's people***

Holy God,  
Your patience is amazing,  
your compassion overflowing,  
your love a constant in an unpredictable world.  
We are grateful for your strength, your guidance,  
your faith that we can be your partners in the world.

God, our guide in life

**We pray for those who take on the responsibility of guiding your world.**

We pray for leaders

**that they will acknowledge their gifts that can be shared with others to bring forth a caring world.**

May they be patient and truthful,

May they treat others with care and compassion,

May they admit their mistakes

And ask for no more than they are willing to give.

God of disciples

**We pray for the followers**

that they will follow with wisdom,

with questions, with integrity, with care;

**that they will open their eyes and hearts to the paths you would have us follow;**

that, always, followers will move in

the direction of justice, equality and love.

God of all people

**We pray for the hurting, the weak, the vulnerable.**

In those times of life when we need support the most,

that it will be found in those who surround us.

**May those who are left behind experience your love and compassion through those who come to their aid.**

May those who are angry, calm themselves

and hear the voices of those around them

who need that explosive passion to

hold them up, to hold them together.

**May the grieving and sorrowing, know the peace of your love and presence.**

May we all know that,

in times of trouble, stress and worry

even while we may not be together, we are never alone.

God of our heart  
**we pray for ourselves**  
**that we will be willing to be reminded**  
**of your faith in us;**  
that we will remember that you know  
we are capable of great things when we work together,  
because you give us the talent,  
the treasure, the skills to make it so.  
**May the stories of love and challenge**  
**you place before us**  
**change our living to reflect**  
**the care and love of the world**  
**that you would have us share together. Amen.**

### *☪ Blessing*

Children of the Light,  
let us take our willingness to see,  
to name, to tend, and to care  
out into the world that is  
so often shadowed.  
Let us remember God's promise  
to guide us, teach us and love us all of our days.  
Without knowing all the answers,  
we know our faithful God is with us always and all ways.  
**Amen.**

### ***Changing the Christ Candle:***

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth, showing us where we are  
and where we are meant to be.  
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us wherever we go.

### *☪ Sending Song:* 🎵 **MV#209 Go Make a Diff'ence**

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### **Acknowledgements**

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