



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon for the Second Last Sunday (Proper 28A) 2017

*The Forgiveness of Christ inspires us to
forgive others!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 25, 14-30:

- ESV ¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.
- ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.
- ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.
- ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.
- ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.
- ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
- ²⁰ 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.'
- ²¹ 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.'
- ²² 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.'
- ²³ 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.'
- ²⁴ 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,
- ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'
- ²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed?
- ²⁷ 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.
- ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.
- ²⁹ 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.
- ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and bless our hearts with Your holy Word. Prepare us for the Last Day. Make us fruitful servants of Your gifts. Amen.*

Dear Congregation in Christ!

- End-times it is we need to focus on these Last Sundays of the Church Year. Will the Last Day be a day of wrath or a day of mercy?
- The prophet Zephaniah declared a day of wrath against God's own people for their complacency, their lack of trust. He called it a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness a day of trumpet blast and battle cry.
- On the other hand the apostle Paul paints a somewhat different picture of the Last Day. It will come suddenly and without warning, like a thief in the night. People will be caught up in their false securities. And yet, notice, the image Paul uses. Labour pains. The destruction of the end are the labor pains of the new birth. The pain of labor gives way to the joy of birth. The death and destruction of the old creation gives way to the life and salvation of the new. The worse it gets and looks, the closer the new birth. That is why Christians can look forward to the Last Day with anticipation. Dawn is always on the horizon whilst the thick clouds gather over us.
- As God's beloved children, we are children of the light, not of darkness! [1Thess 5, 9-10]: *"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."*
- That is our destiny spelled out there for us as children of the Light! God does not want us to remain in darkness and under the wrath of God. This is something we have to remember as we hear the parable for today!
- The parable starts off with Gospel: The master hands out His property to His servants. He entrusted them with all He has. He didn't give them all the same quantity. He gave to them according to their abilities. What better way could there be? He takes into account our individualities. This way ensures that the gift by the master does not become a burden to His servants. He knows His servants!
- Now, as soon as they have received the gifts of their Master, both, the one who received five and two, immediately went and gained some more of it using the gifts.
- The person who had received only the one gift, did not follow the pattern of the previous two. He went and hoarded it, buried the one gift instead of gaining more of it.
- Of course, we need to know what does Jesus aim at when He tells this parable. What gift is He speaking of? What gift works like this?

• In Matthew chapter 18 Jesus spoke about giving the disciples the keys of heaven, namely the forgiveness of sins. In that same context Jesus also told the parable about the master and the unforgiving servant. The master came to settle His accounts with His servants. He had forgiven this specific one all his debt, but the forgiven one then refused to forgive the person who owed him. Here we have the similar situation of master and servants.

• If the gift is the forgiveness of sins, then it does make good sense why the one who received more will be able to forgive more and gain more forgiveness.

• And then it becomes crystal clear that the servant who had received a little of forgiveness, yet goes and keeps it for himself, does not hand it out, that such a person will face outer darkness. In the Lord's Prayer we pray the petition: *Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespassed against us.* The gift of God is a real gift which empowers us to do to others as was done to us. If we refuse to forgive others who have sinned against us, then we are holding back the Holy Spirit who wants to multiply the extraordinary gift.

• We have all received mercy by the free gift of God's Grace, paid for by Christ's ministry which culminated in His death on the cross. A huge payment which we have personally received in Baptism from Him. It counts for us! And its real. We are justified by the Grace of God. And this justification immediately sanctifies us too, that is, it makes us holy, that is it prepares us to use that gift of God in real life situations! The Holy Spirit drives us to make use of it. Applications abound in this world! They are to be found everywhere, even when we are lying sick in bed. Once we realise and are taught by the Word of Christ what it means for us, it creates a new openness in us to be merciful to others, as God has been merciful to us.

• And remember, the sermon on the mount, declaring the great promise of Jesus, that blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Do you see the promise: If you use it you gain more. If you refrain from using it, even the forgiveness given to you will be taken away, in the end. So, this parable for today is all about receiving the forgiveness of sins and handing it out to those who trespass against us! In this way the kingdom of God gains, because the mercy of God is flowing into the world, even towards our enemies!

• And here is the cherry-on-top promise of our Master: "Enter into the joy of your master"! Handing out the forgiveness of sins to others, to those who have trespassed against me, creates joy on all sides!

• Here we should not allow that our old Adam rules the day. He thinks like the one who has received the one talent and went and hid it! If you don't value what you have received as a great gift of God, you will not use it in your daily lives. You will basically

bury it. And that implies that you don't believe that God is a gracious Giver of mercy, rather you see Him only as stern judge who reaps where He doesn't have sown.

- The truth is: Forgiveness of sins is the power that builds God's church, our eternal home. Forgiveness of sins purifies our relationships. Forgiveness of sins is the real gift of God which genuinely equalises all people at the core, without having to change their different roles in society! It washes away dividing walls and issues and gives me a new view of the other person kneeling next to me or in front of me asking for forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins, let it be said in our stressful society, gives peace in our hearts. It is holistically healthy. You can offload everything that bugs you, that burdens you to the core. Think of what it is, something you cannot deal with, or something you don't know how to deal with, and how it burdens you, mixed together with feelings of guilt and weakness and hopelessness.

- Bring it all to the Lord and leave it here at His altar. Don't take it home with you. Leave your burdens with the Lord. And now it comes: He will open your eyes- be ready for it- and you will see others around you who need this wonderful gift of release and relief just as much as you needed it. Forgiveness of sins relieves us of our burdens and pulls us upright so that we see others, suffering around us. It opens our eyes to see others. It makes us peaceful and gives us time to see the being in front of me, not only the human as a function. To be able to see the being, we need to hear what that other person communicates to us, what that heart and soul has to share with me, so that a connection will be made and relief can be spoken onto that person.

- Forgiveness of sins is better than any holiday, because it has the power to eliminate feelings of guilt in the deepest core of our existence. This affects our whole body. Whatever I henceforth do, I can do with a joyful spirit. It is true, Jesus turns water of washing into wine, forgiveness of sins into joy, into realising, I am going to live forever, hopefully with my enemy! This world and nothing in this world can take that LIFE away, unless I invite it to do so, unless I allow my old Adam to clamp me down on receiving forgiveness of sins and handing it out.

- Last but not least: Forgiveness in Christianity is a gift from God, not a virtue, not a work we have to produce. None other religion has it as a gift. Psychology also uses it as something you have to work on. But, here we have it as a divine gift, as a talent to work with. What an enormous blessing of our Lord! Holistic therapy every Sunday morning fully paid for, for you! Your sins are forgiven! *Go and share this with others! Amen.*

The Lord Jesus Christ says: "Surely I am coming soon.'Amen. Come. Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you." Amen.