



Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed

*during the week beginning
Sunday, 15th November 2020*

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

One of the predominant themes of this year's Advent study is waiting; waiting for God to act, particularly in times of doubt and uncertainty. Many of us find waiting hard. Patience may be a virtue, but our contemporary context is that, in this world in which we live, most of the time, we can pretty much have what we want when we want it. We can get quality fast food to take away or have delivered, and technology means we can have instantaneous access via our online media.

But God's timing is not our timing and God is not contained to our human expectations. Rather, God has expectations of us, as we wait, and the timing is his not ours, so we may be waiting for a while...

Waiting has been a very prominent theme during this year of 2020. Many of us have felt exiled during the Coronavirus pandemic, forced to be away, for prolonged periods, from our churches and our communities, socially and physically distanced from our families and friends. Many of us are still feeling the effects of being distanced and or isolated from family and friends living in places where visiting is not permissible, especially in during times of sickness, adversity, dying and death.

We have been cooling our heels waiting to return to church as we remember it: church with congregational singing, without restrictions on our activities as a congregation, and our ability to offer hospitality and welcome to visitors. Waiting is going to be especially difficult as we approach Christmas, but we must stick with it.

As Bishop Nick Baines comments in his text ***Freedom is Coming***, "in Isaiah 40 the exiles are encouraged to wait for God but not give up hope. Their strength will be renewed because they are drawn by faith in the God of their history, who has proved himself to be faithful in the past. Not rushed, but faithful. There are no shortcuts to waiting. The waiting for God is a renewing experience because in it we let go of the frantic demand for significance and learn to inhabit the space into which God will eventually come".

Our Gospel reading this week is also focused on how we can be productive while we wait. Jesus is very explicit. Waiting demands productivity while we wait. We will be held accountable for what we did and didn't do during this time of waiting...

Families@Five will be on Saturday, 5th December 2020 at 5.00pm at the Cathedral.

**Eucharists are offered at Christ Church Cathedral on Sundays at 8.00am and 10.30am,
and Monday to Friday at 8.30am (following Morning Prayer).**

Eucharists are also offered at St Peter's Hamilton at 11.00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Communion (Wednesdays and Sundays)
are streamed each day:**

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Judges 4: 1-10

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years. At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, ‘Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.’” Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” And she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

Psalm 123

- 1 To you I lift up my eyes:
you who are enthroned in the heavens.
- 2 As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master:
or as the eyes of a maid toward the hand of her mistress,
- 3 So our eyes look to the Lord our God:
until he shows us his mercy.
- 4 Have mercy upon us O Lord have mercy upon us:
for we have had our fill of derision.
- 5 Our souls overflow with the mockery of those at ease:
and with the contempt of the proud.

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction

will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Matthew 25: 14-30

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: “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.’

Reflection on a page by *The Reverend Angela Peverell*

Safe but not wise...

According to Matthew, Jesus has had just enough time to draw breath, following the telling of the parable of the wise and the foolish bridesmaids, before he launches into yet another eschatological lesson for the disciples... "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summons his slaves and entrusted his property to them..." The man, the master of the slaves, is generous beyond measure, giving five talents to one slave, two talents to another, and one talent to another, "each according to his ability".

A talent (equivalent weight of 3000 shekels) was worth a lot of money, even back in the first century. As a measure of weight, a talent by today's standards would be equal to 35 kilograms. Measuring silver or gold we are talking a fortune! As a unit of currency, a talent was worth about 6,000 denarii. A denarius was the average payment for a day's work. Therefore, one talent was worth sixteen years of work! Two and five talents were worth a considerable amount of money!

The ability of the slave with five talents would appear to have been very high, returning a yield of five more talents on his master's return. A potentially life-changing amount of money! The slave with just two talents has also managed to double his money! But the slave with only one talent has done nothing more than bury his treasure in the ground. Recalling the parable of the treasure in Matthew 13, this was the usual practice to ensure that something treasured and of value was safe. But was this a wise decision by this slave? It turns out that it was a foolish choice! The master would have accepted at least bank interest, but no effort to make any yield on this significant sum will have dire eternal consequences.

Jesus is not sugar-coating these parables about the kingdom of heaven, in the same way as he was being very direct in the earlier parables about the kingdom of heaven as it relates to the behaviour of the elders and chief priests in the temple. Jesus has no expectation of apathy on the part of the disciples, and neither is Matthew intending apathy from us the readers. This is a very intentional message for God's people, that while we wait for Jesus' return, we have been entrusted to make disciples of all nations and baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19) We are called to be productive according to our abilities.

Jesus is being very intentional about the expected productivity of his disciples, entrusted with the metaphorical talents that have been freely and individually given to us. This parable emphasises effort and proactivity, not passive waiting, no matter how long we are required to wait. We are called to be wise, not just to be safe. And this parable, particularly, focuses on our individual efforts, not the collective efforts of others. The effort is individual, based on our individual abilities, for which we will be called to account individually.

But that doesn't stop us from working together as a team, supporting one another in our individual and collective efforts, because Jesus will go on to say at the end of this chapter that we will also be judged on our merits of righteousness and mercifulness. We would be wise to be always looking out for one another, especially those who are hungry and thirsty, the strangers in our midst, the poor and naked, the sick and in need, and the prisoner. The wisdom of the righteous is to show mercy, even when it might not appear to be the safest option...

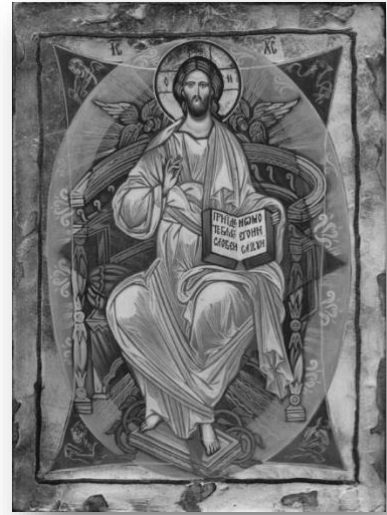
Readings for next week – The Feast of Christ the King

Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24

Psalms 100

Ephesians 1: 15-23

Matthew 25: 31-46



Prayers for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and
distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and
fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Dean Katherine or Reverend Angela if you have any concerns at this time and if you would like for us to visit you at home.

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