

## Pentecost XXIV

Epistle:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>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! <sup>4</sup>But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; <sup>5</sup>for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; <sup>7</sup>for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup>who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Gospel:

Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup>'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>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." <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>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." <sup>23</sup>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." <sup>24</sup>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; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"...since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love..." In the name...

I made the following claim last week: That one of the most profoundly under-preached attributes of Jesus is his unhurried nature. Jesus has all of the time now and in eternity to be Jesus. He does not have a watch, but he has time. Jesus is profoundly patient and unhurried in bringing his Kingdom to bear. The heavenly perspective is unflappable. Eternal perspective is awake! It is lucid, animated, lively, wild, and glorious! But it is not worried about it. It has no anxiety. It is not compulsive. It is the most timely and perfected present-ness that leaves off the troubles yet-to-be-seen, and instead spills wisdom into the world with each moment.

The same claim seems to creep up in both the epistle and Gospel this morning. On the one hand, the day of the Lord is full of anticipation for the faithful, ~~and full of fear for those who want nothing of God. That is, by the way, the thing said to those who want nothing of God. The same is said to those of anyone. If I want nothing, for fear of my loss, and suddenly, he shows up on my doorstep, the thing is to fill the mind with~~ Scriptures seem to assume the same of those who reject God: they work ~~how up. Which is not, he might not have mercy on them— the same~~ several places, but it is to say that the faithful have absolutely nothing to fear. They are instead filled with anticipation. Like the five wise virgins or bridemaids of last week's Gospel. I mention this because this passage was taught to me as a child with some fear. Even though it says very clearly that the faithful have nothing to fear. To the contrary, those who love this Jesus, who love his gospel and his Church, are awake, sober, and hopeful. Their hearts are guarded with a breastplate of faith and love when Jesus returns. Their minds, it says, are guarded with the helmet of the hope of our salvation. This is where I, as your priest, get really comfortable talking about being 'saved.' You wanna get saved this morning? We'll have an altar call in a minute, but it will be the altar of his body and blood. In the meantime, salvation is at hand. And Paul calls it faith, hope, and love this morning. It's the eternal perspective of last week: lucid, animated, lively, wild, glorious, non-anxious, and present. Oh so present.

for we are not destined for wrath.

And according to the Gospel lesson, this sober expectation of hope is rooted in work. A day's work, which leads to a week's work, which leads to a lifetime's work. It's the same work that we mark so clearly at a funeral. The faithful plant seeds of faithfulness throughout their lives in big and small ways, it is watered by the grace of the only One who can make it grow, and then it bears fruit in keeping with the very salvation they seek! It cares for the work of THIS day with the same attention that it gave to YESTER-day. Paul describes it as "belonging to the Day." We are those who "belong to the day." And he contrasts it with those who "belong to the night." I've already described the unhurried, expectant, and hopeful character of those who "belong to the day;" and so you could imagine the characteristics of those Paul describes as "belonging to the night." They are filled with the compulsive anxiety of the Father of all lies, for they are self-deceived. They bury the treasure, fear the Master who gave it, and hope that he never returns

for an accounting. But those who "belong to the Day," take the good treasure of life and of breath and of gifts and of love, plant the seeds of those love throughout the world in their daily labor, and await with delight the return of their bridegroom and master. For he is tender, he delights in his people, he loves their simple labors of love, reconciliation, and peace-making in this world.

Lest I sounds too other-worldly and sublime, I do not wish to sound naïve. Simple work is hard work. Love is not always welcome. Those whom we have commemorated and eulogized in this very room logged long hours in the Kingdom. It stung at times. The Christian life is difficult. But it's hopeful pain. It is faith-filled exhaustion. It is a light burden, but it is a burden nonetheless.

When the world says 'peace,' grow suspicious. They are often deceived by the peace of mammon, riches, power-plays, and envy—all of which are temporary and oppressive. When Christ says 'peace,' be filled with hope and love. Even if you're alone. And war-torn. And agitated by the ever-broken world around you.

You probably remember that Whole Foods bag that still sits in my living room. That's a peace that makes me suspicious: "Improving lives with every purchase." Which is precisely NOT the prayer of the faithful bridesmaid. Wisdom is not born of our transactions, no matter how much organic chapstick I lather on my grass-finished lips. In fact, one of the great gifts of the church is its avoidance of any transactional charity. The church, instead, is wise in love. Her charity is not for sale, and her wicks and oil are provided by her very master. The talents that we multiply were GIVEN to us—not earned. Do not let the haste of indifference prove your ineligibility, when all that is required is given. Do not bury grace.

At this altar, the bridegrooms comes. THAT is the ~~only~~ altar call of salvation. Our only haste is in receiving his good gifts.

Enter the joy of your master.

There is something asynchronous or wild in this passage:

"I reap where I did not sow, & gather where I did not scatter."

Whatever the metaphorical investment strategy that this passage suggests, it isn't axiomatic.



There are 2 guarantees in this world:

1. a lagging disappointment of how broken & weary everything finally is
2. the Divine promise that God has made everything new & that all the promises of God are yours, every day, in Christ our Lord.

So take those same promises, gifts, talents, and cast them about. Foxes walk tracks in any direction. Be a fox. Double the yield.