

FAITH @ HOME

Week of November 15, 2020

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

REFLECT: Instead of answering questions directly, Jesus often taught in stories called parables. In this story, Jesus talks about three people who had different amounts of money (a talent was a coin that was worth a lot of money). Each of the people did different things with it, but the main idea was that the first two used money well, and the last one hid the money instead of using it. The landowner who gave them money was very happy with the first two people, but not so happy with the last one.

This parable could be about what we do with our money, (do we give it to God generously, or do we hide it) but it could also be about what we do with the gifts God has given us. Some of us have a wonderful ability to make others laugh, another might have the ability to be a good teacher, and still another might be really good at planting beautiful gardens in God's creation. God gave us those gifts to use in ways that bring us, God, and other people joy. God gave us gifts to help others and to serve God. When we don't use our gifts, it is sad for everyone! God wants us to use our gifts.

RESPOND: Draw a picture of yourself. Around the picture of you, draw things you are good at doing (grown-ups might help pre-readers write down what each of these things are). These are your gifts from God! Talk together about ways you can use the gifts God gave you to serve others, God, and to bring you and others joy.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MICHELLE BULLOCK



Michelle Bullock serves as Rector at St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Swansboro, NC. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (Appalachian State University) and Master's of Divinity (Duke Divinity School) and has a background in youth and children's ministry, and formerly served as a school chaplain. She and her husband have two daughters in preschool and elementary school. You can follow Michelle on her website at revbullock.com.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

REFLECT: Have you ever needed encouragement? I know I have! We all need encouragement—words of support from people who believe in us. This is what the apostle Paul is telling the people in his letter this week. He tells them to “encourage one another and build up each other.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NRSV)

What a wonderful reminder! Think back on when you’ve received encouragement. Maybe it was when you first learned how to ride a back and a parent or friend kept saying, “You can do it! Keep going!” Maybe you have struggled with schoolwork—some tough spelling words or really hard math problems—and your teacher explains the problems again and then offers words of encouragement: “You’re doing great. I believe in you!” How have you felt when you received these words of encouragement? Why do you think Paul is reminding Christians to encourage one another? Do we sometimes forget to encourage each other? How can we do a better job at remembering that?

RESPOND: Get some crayons and paper (and maybe some glue or stickers) and write some encouraging notes. Plan to create five notes: 1-2 for people in your house (a brother or sister, a parent, a grandparent), 1-2 for your friends, and at least 1 for someone you don’t know well but you think could use some encouragement. This might be a neighbor or the postal carrier, a teacher or even your minister. All of us, at every age, need encouragement! (As a bonus, you might create a special “encouragement” box of your own, a place where you keep notes of encouragement. When you’re feeling sad or discouraged, return to that box and reread those notes. They can be a perfect pick-you-up when you’re feeling down.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RICHELLE THOMPSON



Richelle Thompson lives in the beautiful bluegrass of Kentucky, near Cincinnati, with her husband, their two children, a horse, a cat, and two dogs. She serves as the deputy director and managing editor of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church and publisher of the daily devotional, *Forward Day by Day*.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

REFLECT: In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus depicts three slaves who were each entrusted with money (talents) as their master left on a long journey. To one, he gave five talents. To the second he gave two talents, and to the third he gave one talent. Each were given talents based on their abilities. Upon his return, he asks what they did with the money. The first and second workers invested their talents and doubled their money, and received the master's praise. The third servant, who was given 1 talent, kept his money safe but did nothing to increase it. As a result, he was condemned by the master for doing nothing to increase or share his talent. Jesus tells us here that he has given us everything that we need. The question is: how do we choose to live our lives based on that?

RESPOND: Success only occurs when we participate and take action. How are you sharing your gifts and helping others? As we see from this parable, a good steward lives for the day their Master will return. This week, make a list of ways that you are using God's gifts to the best of your ability. How are you preparing the way for Jesus' return?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LAUREN WAINWRIGHT



Lauren Wainwright currently serves as the Director of Student Ministries at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Dallas, TX. She has worked with large and small churches across several dioceses over the past 13 years, serving in youth ministry. Lauren is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi where she first began her call to ministry but has called Dallas home for the past 4 years. In her free time, she enjoys reading, Netflix watching, and spending time with her 2 dogs at home.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

REFLECT: This section of Paul's letters to the church of the Thessalonians begins to list specific instructions that he wants to present for each of them to live a life that is grounded in Christ, and open to the work of The Spirit. While this list begins in Chapter 4, the beginning of Chapter 5, we read about the important of vigilance. The importance of being watchful, holding caution, and being "awake" and ready to as people of faith. Sometimes I struggle with Scripture that presents of such messages, because I don't like to sit in that feeling of urgency. But, if we believe that our faith calls us to love, calls us to stand for justice and to break down the sinful structures of oppression, looking into our world, as disciples, our work is urgent! If we believe, that we are called to be the Body of Christ in the world, for those who are seeking such hope, such light, and peace and security, we must be ready to live and walk as witnesses of our life-changing God. Let us not rest, as Paul calls on his readers, for anything less than what is of God. This world needs you.

RESPOND: Life can be full of many distractions that keep us moving and can keep us from being centered in Jesus and his teachings. Try starting with simply 5 minutes and let yourself be still. Maybe you will utilize a meditation app, listening to music, sitting outside in silence, reading a verse of sacred text or engaging in a form of art; but, try to find ways that awaken your Spirit, and turn your eyes, hearts and minds towards God, and make this a daily practice. Maybe you will find that you increase your time as days go on. And let yourself be awakened, and renewed, to go and change this world.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CHRISTOPHER DECATUR



The Rev. Christopher Decatur is the Deacon in Charge at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Ohio. He is a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary, Chris served at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH as the Associate Minister for Children, Youth, Family, Young Adult and Campus Ministries. Chris also has served as "The Chair of The Subcommittee for Racial Reconciliation and Justice for The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music." Chris has an undergraduate degree in Comparative Religion from Cleveland State University and years of studies and practicing of Early Childhood Education at both CSU and as a student at The Catholic University of America.

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