

PENTECOST

Pentecost - worshipping with joy; inviting the Spirit to be poured out on you.

Devotionals for 10 October – 16 October 2021

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth. During Jesus's last days on earth, He promised His followers that "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things" (John 14:26)

SAVE ALL YOU CAN - Parable of the Talents

Why Parables? In Definition the word parable comes the Greek word 'parabole,' which means "a placing beside" and therefore is a comparison or an illustration. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain about 30 of these stories while John's gospel contains no parables but does use figures of speech. A parable is a story taken from real life (or real-life situation) from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn. They are not fables, (talking animals/walking trees). They are not allegories where every detail has hidden meaning. They are basically an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.



Read Matthew 25:14-30. The parable of the talents is part of a series of three parables that have themes of waiting for the arrival of someone special—a master or whoever it might be—and also a picture of what the appropriate behavior of the characters while they wait looks like, and all three finishes with a strong depiction of judgment.

Prayer: Dear Lord, today, our hearts are tender for you to speak to us. Thank you for your Holy Scriptures. Heavenly Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit, will speak through your Scriptures to us that we might continue to live in the way of Jesus – being the light and salt to the world. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Talk about a time in your life where you know that God used your unique gifts and abilities to make a difference in someone else's life

God looks at every person not just at who they are today, but for the potential He created in them to have. The bottom line is that God's Kingdom is expanding and at work, and He invites all of us to partner with Him in this, and expects us to leverage who we are for his good work.

Because we're human, it's pretty easy to look at someone else and the things they've been entrusted with, and to compare. He has better hair than me. She sings better than me. He makes more money; she has more stuff than I do. Or this sentence: I wish I were more like....fill in the blank. We can get so caught up in the comparison game that we focus more on what we don't have than being faithful with what God has given to us.

The other thing I think is really interesting is that the master gave them portions of wealth, entrusting it to them according to their own ability, and then he told them exactly what to do with it, didn't he? No, he didn't. I've never really thought about that before. He didn't give them money and then give them a checklist and a lengthy, "Do this, do that" with it, did he? No, he simply gave them the money, and then he got out of town. Why? I believe it's because he trusted that the servants knew him. They knew his heart. They knew how he operated in the world and that they would use the money accordingly to continue his good work. I don't know about you, but God doesn't always give me an explicit list of what He wants me to do with the resources He's entrusted me with. Sometimes God does say do this, but a lot of times, God entrusts us with everything that we have. That's why when we give back we say, "Every good gift comes from the Father." God gifts us everything and that's why we return a portion of that back as a symbol that everything we have is God's. But God doesn't always say exactly, explicitly what to do with it. But, I will say, the Scriptures are pretty clear about the basics, aren't they? Feed the hungry—We should do that. We should clothe the poor. We should take care of the widow and the orphan. We should meet the needs of one another.

But what if we aren't exactly clear how to manage all that God has entrusted us? I was struck by this provocative statement by Dallas Willard: **"In many cases, our need to wonder about or be told what God wants in a certain situation is nothing short of a clear indication of how little we are engaged in His work."** Wow, that's a painful indictment. But beyond that, think about it this way: We should know the way and heart of Jesus so deeply that managing His resources well is second nature.

If you're not sure what to do with what God has given you for God's work, press in to Jesus, His way, and His heart. Get to know the master and you'll discover exactly what to do with what God entrusts you with.

Prayer: Wise and Patient God, we know what you want us to do, but we are far too often hesitant to follow through for you. You give us multiple blessings and ask that we develop these gifts and use them to help others. In times of great crisis, we come through, we mobilize. But in the intermediate times, we hold back. We develop a "let someone else do it" attitude. We often think of our gifts, our talents as things that are less than worthy.

Now let's see what each person did with their money (v16): The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. I have to admit that, as a kid when I read this, I thought, "That third guy has the right idea." Why? Because it was safe. I've read about people who lived through the Great Depression, who hid their money as a surefire way to keep it safe...unless the house burned down, of course.

Has anyone heard of stories of people who buy a house and do some renovation and find a bunch of money in the walls? The reason they did that is because it was safer than banks. Does it seem kind of risky for the first two guys to take the money and do something with it? You might even say it seemed a little bit frivolous. Somehow, they put the money to work. First century listeners would probably have responded exactly like I did, thinking the guy that buried the money was the wise one and played it safe.

But remember, parables were designed to challenge conventional wisdom. Verse 19: After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The master returned and asked for an account of what they had done with his money. At first, we see the one with five bags and the one with two bags of gold report out.

Look at verse 20: The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more." His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" The man with two bags of gold also came. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more." His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

Verse 24: Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So, I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

Wow. It's really interesting, if you pull back a little bit, to see the perspective of this third person and how different his perspective of the master is from the first two. Did you catch that? He believed the master to be a hard man who harvested where he didn't sow and gathered where he didn't scatter seed. His perspective of the master was completely different than the others. You'd sure think the other two, if they saw the master the same way, would have been far more careful with the money they were entrusted with. Does that make sense? It's like they viewed the master in a way that gave them the freedom to invest his resources. Maybe they felt safe with him. Or maybe they felt like he really trusted them. Or maybe they felt like he really wanted the best for them. Maybe they felt like they knew his heart so well that they knew exactly what to do with the resources given to them. It's clear from the Scriptures that this third man viewed the master to be harsh, dishonorable, and cruel, so his experience of the master was birthed out of the way he saw the master.

The person who's hard at work when the master comes, who put in the effort, is the one who is rewarded. I firmly believe that the economy of the kingdom is one that seeks to leverage God's resources for maximum impact, and to put our faith into action. So, Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, if God's blessed you with a little, then use the little you have for God's glory and for his kingdom. If God's blessed you with a LOT, then use the lot that you have for God's glory and His kingdom. It's not enough to just know a lot about the Bible. It's not enough to just say all the things about God, or to just attend church. Following Jesus, living in His way with His heart—requires that we put our faith into action. That we love one another, that we serve one another, that we put others before ourselves, that we stand up for one another, that we're a voice for people who don't have a voice, that we are generous and kind with one another, and that we seek to bring God's shalom into every facet of creation for God's glory and the benefit of every single person. That is us on mission with God.

For those reading this devotional who say it sounds a lot like “works,” yes, it is. Grace is not opposed to effort. Effort is an action. Our effort doesn’t earn favor with God; it’s not about because we did all this stuff salvation is now earned. It is simply the outworking of our faith and it shows that we are choosing to partner with God’s mission in the earth. We should consistently be growing in becoming like Jesus.

One of the hard things about this parable is this idea that when the master returns, his subjects are asked to give an account of what they did with what they’ve been given, and they will be judged accordingly. And I think if we’re honest, some of us have squandered our opportunity to be used by God, because we were afraid, or because we weren’t willing to take a risk, or because we didn’t invest the time to get to know Jesus and His heart, and to partner with it. Or we simply don’t believe God can use us or that we can make any kind of impact.

So, I want to say to you, children of a gracious God, you’re going to hear from me and from others inviting you to bring your best self to your church, and to this city, and to this world. And I’m going continue to ask you to align who you are, and what God has blessed you with, for the good of God’s beautiful kingdom—to leverage those things for the shalom, we have the joy of partnering with Jesus, to bring to a hurting, broken, world.

Imagine, if we were the kind of church that took seriously the call to get to know Jesus so intimately, to get to know who God’s made us to be so intimately, and to pay attention to a hurting, broken world around us so intimately that we leverage everything we had to be used by God and to let His kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. What if it wasn’t just the Lord’s Prayer that we say, what if we lived it as a church? I feel, that is a beautiful picture of a healthy church on mission with God, and I believe that’s the kind of church God has been forming here and will continue to form.

What’s one thing I can do this week to leverage what God has entrusted me with for His glory, for His name, for the good of others? Maybe it’s spending some time reading the gospels and teaching of Jesus and/or reorienting yourself to who God really is. Maybe it visiting a spiritual director and doing some discovery of who you are and how God’s wired you and how God wants to use you. Maybe it’s taking steps to put your faith into practice. Maybe, for some of us, as scary as this might sound, it might be taking a risk. **Be the Church that leaves the building.** In Jesus name. Amen.

Talking to Our Heavenly Father - *If we have faith, our prayers will be answered.*

You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You

- Mrs. Marilyn Liepert has relocated into her new home at Cedar Bay West. Dear God, I pray for your presence to invade and fill every corner of Ms. Marilyn’s new home. I thank you that you are always with her and care for her. I pray that Ms. Marilyn will be able to feel that throughout Cedar Bay community. I pray her home will be a place of rest, enjoyment and peace because of your holy presence and that she will continue to grow closer to you, in Jesus name. Amen. Mrs. Marilyn Liepert, Cedar Bay West Rm 2126, 5555 Cedar Bay Dr., West Bend WI 53095 Her phone number is: 262-353-7749; she would love to hear your voice.
- Ms. Bev Hartman ask for our miraculous healing prayers for her great-grandson, Emmit Omernick. This little disciple is 5 years old and suffered a stroke. He will have brain surgery the week of Oct. 10 at Children’s Hospital. Cards of hope and prayer of healing can be mailed to: Emmit Omernick, c/o Ms. Bev Hartman, 3627 Jansen Drive, West Bend WI 53090
- Prayers of incredible healing for Ms. Ashley Barnett. Ms. Ashley will undergo extremely critical heart surgery to replace her heart defibrillator/heart pump. She also has a bacterial infection. Ms. Ashley is the daughter of Mr. Brett and Ms. Mary Barnett and mom to Brenna and Joshua. Let us shower her with our love and care! Cards and notes can be mailed to 932 Hillcrest Street, West Bend WI 53095
- Thank you for your prayers of encouragement and faithfulness for Ms. Jennifer Cechvala, as she began her Spiritual Guidance ministry ~ a place to ...breathe, be still, become. 5th Ave. UMC (lower level of the church in the former children’s library area). At its core, spiritual guidance is the process and experience of receiving wisdom from the divine. The practice of establishing contact with a higher power has been with humankind throughout the ages and can be found in nearly every belief system. God has blessed her with her first “spiritual seeker.” You are invited to come and experience a spiritual awakening to transform your life.
- Mrs. Betty Felt has been placed into palliative care. “Merciful God, thank you for being with us right now. We confess that we don't understand why things happen the way they do. We don't understand why illness comes into our lives, but we do know that you walk every path of life with us. Help Ms. Betty to enjoy sweet time with family and friends as beautiful and

precious memories are made. Amen.” Cards and notes of love can be mailed to: Mrs. Betty Felt, New Perspective Senior Living, 22130 Continental Drive, #211, West Bend, WI 53095

- Prayers of healing for Stanton Schmidt, great-grandson of Ms. Maureen Hornung and son of Brady and Payton Schmidt and little brother to Benton and Hudson. Stanton is in Children’s Hospital with pneumonia. Cards for miraculous healing can be sent to: Ms. Maureen Hornung, N168 W21920 Main Street, #110, Jackson WI 53037
- Our loving condolences and sincerest sympathies are extended to Mr. Tom Calenberg on the passing of his wife, Ms. Christine A. Calenberg. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Monday, September 20, 2021 at St. Frances Cabrini (1025 S. 7th Ave. West Bend, WI 53095). Cards and notes of comfort can be mailed to: Mr. Tom Calenberg, 617 South 16th Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. Ethan Schnell, Ms. Dot Edison’s daughter-in-law’s nephew. Ethan has gone through his last chemotherapy. He is doing well and hopes future tests will reveal he has been cured. Continue to keep him in your prayers. We give God thanks and praise for miraculous healing. Ethan’s wife is doing well. Cards and notes of continued prayer and encouragement can be mailed to: Ethan Schnell, 500 Melrose Street, Morgan Town West Virginia 26505
- Fifth Avenue UMC, thank you for your unceasing prayers for Ms. Irina Johnson, daughter (in-law) of Ms. Barb Johnson. Ms. Irina had surgery on 16 September 2021. The procedure as of this date went well. We will continue our journey with her and her family as God see her through healing and restoration. Cards and notes (which are needed and welcomed) of healing, strength and comfort can be mailed C/O Ms. Barb Johnson, Ms. Irina Johnson, 190 Mayer Street, West Bend, WI 53090
- Mr. Ted Meilahn, return of his strength and courage as he continues to have medical concerns. I had a delightful pastoral visit with Mr. Ted. He expressed his sincerest appreciation for all the card and prayers that have been given and said on his behalf. He is truly humbled by your care and support. Cards and notes of care and prayer can be mailed to: 1085 Fondu du Lac Ave., Box 23, Kewaskum, WI 53040
- Ms. Trisha Funke, daughter of Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel. Ms. Trisha has returned home and is discerning her return to her vocation as a teacher. Ms. Trishia is still awaiting further diagnosis. Cards of encouragement and prayers for continued healing and diagnosis can be sent to her parents: Mr. Ralph & Ms. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend WI 53095
- Mr. Roger Sacia, is requesting prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing. Mr. Roger and Ms. Nobi have permanently relocated to Madison with their daughter. Their new address is: 1626 Jefferson Street, Madison WI 53711
- Mr. William (Bill) & Mrs. Ginger Hornung would love to hear from you! Cards or notes of encouragement or “just thinking of you” can be mailed to: W194N16744 Eagle Dr. Room 3, Jackson, WI 53037
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, continued healing; alankempf33@gmail.com; 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Fifth Avenue UMC’s Laity, Accountable Leadership Board, Pastor & Bro. Martin – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
- Bro. Bob Krell, continued prayer for healing; 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. Phil Heimerl, son-in-law of Mike & Fay Lewis. He was just diagnosed with ALS.

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul." 3 John 1:2

STEWARDSHIP CONFESSION PRAYER - Too often we sow sparingly, because we want to be the ones who reap. We don’t want to share the reward of our work. We question the motives of people who ask for our help. Open us, God, to the joy of seeing others share in your abundance, knowing it is you who has sown every good gift. Too often we sow sparingly, because we fear we will not have enough. Empower us, God, to make the world a place where generosity does not feel risky. Encourage us to sow more love; and risk caring for each other. Too often we sow sparingly, because we lose confidence that our offerings make a difference. Help us, God, to know that in the very act of giving, we are praying for a healed world and pledging ourselves to help birth it. Remind us that our gifts are seeds that multiply into a great harvest. We confess that we sow sparingly, because we forget to see the world you are calling into being, emerging in the very midst of the world as we know it. We confess that we think this work is all up to us, instead of trusting your providence. Open our hearts and hands and minds, Generous One, to new vision and new trust. In the name of our generous Savior, Jesus we humbly pray. Amen.

Your humble Pastor & Servant Leaders, Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin