

November 19, 2014
 Sermon for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Zephaniah 1:7–16 (ESV)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Zephaniah 1:7–16 (ESV)

⁷ Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. ⁸ And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. ⁹ On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. ¹⁰ "On that day," declares the LORD, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. ¹¹ Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. ¹² At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' ¹³ Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them." ¹⁴ The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. ¹⁵ A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

Matthew 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 sown 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.'

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Last Saturday, I officiated at the wedding of my best friend from High School. The wedding was in Henkel Square in Round Top, Texas.

It was a beautiful place for a wedding. Cyndi and I met with several old friends, and had had a great visit with the father and mother of the groom. The father of the groom was the man who got a bunch of us together in High School and told us it would be a shame if we put our instruments down after graduation and never picked them up again, so he transposed music for us and we played several times a month in church, which is why I still play today.

He also talked me into joining our congregation's men's choir when I didn't think I had enough courage to sing in public.

It was nice to visit with him and to have the opportunity to thank him for doing that for me all those years ago. After the service, the mother of the groom told me that they were very happy that their son had asked me to perform the ceremony because they knew it would be done right.

I thanked them for their kind words but those words have been sticking with me since.

What if I would have settled with things the way they were so long ago? Much of my involvement in the church in my younger days centered around choir and trumpet. If I had not been encouraged, I might just have settled into "life". But because of being encouraged to use my gifts, I was around my pastors much more. I talked with them and was encouraged to use all of my talents.

This was the beginning of God calling me into the ministry. If I had buried my talents because I didn't think it was cool or because there were other things I could be doing with my time, would that have been being a good steward if I had just settled for what I knew I could do without taking any risk or giving any added effort?

It comes down to just settling. Whether it's wrong or right, here is where we are at and we'll put up with what we have to in order to make it work.

Ummm, no.

Think about the parable of the talents in our Gospel this morning. According to the parable, the difference between the one who enters into his master's joy and the one who is cast out is this:

One has pleased His Master, been a good and faithful servant, and the other has done nothing good in God's eyes. He is judged worthless and cast out.

The one that was deemed worthless was cast out because he did worse than nothing. Not only did he do nothing with his talents, but he hid what the Master had given him.

He settled, for nothing, rather than risk doing something and being unsuccessful.

What about you? Have you settled?

The day of the Master's return is fast approaching. Have you pleased your Master? Have you been about His work? What have you done with the things that He has given you?

What have you done with the talents He gave you in your hands?

He has given you a voice, what message have the words of your mouth given to your neighbor? Have you diligently witnessed with your hands or voice...or have you been slothful?

If He has blessed you with children, how have you raised them? God has given you friends and family. How have you treated them? Do they know you are a Christian?

If God has blessed you with wealth, are you using it responsibly? Before you answer that one, compared to many in this world who live on a few dollars a month, we are all blessed greatly; so what are you doing with it?

If you experience hard times, do you curse God or do you continue to praise His holy name?

Remember, you are a servant, you own nothing. Everything you have, you have as a gift from God. Whether you have five talents, two talents or one. Have you used it in the way that God expects you too?

Have you been a good and faithful servant...or have you just settled?

When the Lord comes looking, when He examines your account on judgment day, what will He see?

Will you be facing the day described in Zephaniah? That day of weeping and gnashing of teeth?

The truth is, we are all sinners. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. Any accounting of our lives will show that we have NOT been good and faithful servants.

Even when we want to do well, we settle. We misuse the gifts given to us by God. We misuse our hands doing selfish things. We misuse our voices telling lies and half truths, criticizing our neighbors and using words not pleasing to God.

We trust our money and our abilities long before we trust in the Lord.

Our lives are tainted with sin and on that day of accounting, we must face the fact that we have been a wicked, slothful and worthless servant.

And when the Master returns, there are only two reactions. One is joy and the other is fear.

If you are only looking at your life and your accomplishments then you might as well face it , you should be afraid, very afraid. Your Master is not pleased.

But still, as fearful as we all should be, there is Good News.

Yes, the day is drawing near, but you have nothing to fear.

You are not worthless, lazy nor evil in God's sight, despite what your accounting ledger should show.

When the day comes, your Master will be pleased and He will say: "Well done, My good and faithful servant. Enter into My joy."

But...why? We might ask: "What have I done to be worthy?"

Nothing, however, this is your Good News. On the cross, your account has been settled, on the cross, Jesus faced the wrath that should have been yours.

For you, on the cross, Jesus faced the day of God's wrath so that on your last day, all who call upon the name of Christ as their Savior have nothing to fear.

On the cross, on that awful day of pain, torment, gnashing of teeth, where God poured out His wrath on your Savior in your place.

The baptism that marked you as one of His own is where Jesus did this for you so that He would exchange His cup of righteousness for your cup of sin.

His name, His place, His works are now yours. The Good News of the Gospel says that because of Jesus, you have nothing to fear in the coming judgment because your sins are forgiven. Your judgment has already been carried out on the cross.

Jesus did not settle to just be righteous for His own sake, but for the sake of the whole world, so that all who call upon His name might be righteous.

So when the Master comes on that day of reckoning, he sees not His worthless servants, but He sees His Son, who died for your sins.

Because of this, He will say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.*"

Rather than being a parable of fear and strife, let this parable be a comforting reminder of your joy and salvation in Christ as your Savior.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

“What are we setting for?”
Matthew 24:14–30

1. What are some of the opportunities for service that you have had.
2. Are you using or ignoring your God given talents?.
3. Even though we may have hidden or wasted our talents, Jesus didn't.