

15/11/20 2nd Sunday before Advent - Readings and Commentaries

Prayers

Collect

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Heavenly Father

We pray for your blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:
For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:
May your church and faithful people share your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Preliminary Comments:

From the start of November, the Church Lectionary for Morning Prayer has been moving through the books of Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament. Both books fall into the category of 'Apocalyptic' writings, that simply means a class of Jewish or Christian writings that are assumed to make revelations of the ultimate divine purpose.

In the book of the Revelation to John, Christ gives a vision to John. In chapters two and three, seven churches in the area of today's Turkey, are given a message from Jesus. They are partly commended, and partly

'Peace be with you'

I hope you are well.

These commentaries are not meant to be a sermon but hopefully a way to expand our engagement with the word of God.

I hope that as we navigate through the current restrictions on worship, we as a congregation will be able to open our hearts and minds to the message and truth contained in God's word.

Please continue to love your neighbour and pray for all those who are suffering at this testing time. Prayer cannot be quarantined. Our hope is in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Regards Revd M Orr

criticized in the messages. Five of the churches are warned to repent from their ways or face the consequences that will follow. Although these messages were given to churches that existed two thousand years ago, it has traditionally been accepted that the messages continue to apply to churches throughout the ages. The first church mentioned is in Ephesus. The church is commended for its patient endurance and its hard work however it is also told 'But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.' (Rev 2:1-7).

All churches should see this as a warning about losing its desire to love and serve Christ. It is possible to be patient, kind and generous without faith. There are many good people doing good things who have no faith in Jesus. Christians believe Christ is the source of all love, compassion, truth and justice. That faith leads them to do what is righteous in the sight of God. James reminds us about Jesus when he says, 'You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.' (James 2:22). However, a church that does nice things without its heart desiring Christ, will not fulfil its primary function of leading the lost to salvation, actions without faith are barren in that case.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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

Commentary:

In the gospel reading today we find the parable of the talents. In that story the master is leaving his servants to go far away for an unspecified period. This parable is often seen as a metaphor for Christ leaving his earthly ministry and entering heaven.

In this passage Paul is giving the Christians in Thessalonica encouragement concerning the return of Christ. The faithful need to be patient and persevere, trusting in the promise of Christ's return. No one knows when the

Lord will return, it is likely to be at an unexpected time, but as good and faithful servants they will be ready when that time comes. On that glorious day they will be rewarded with salvation, and like the servants in Matthew 25, Christ will say “Well done good and trustworthy servant”. There is no greater reward for a Christian than to hear those words.

Matthew 25:14-30

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

Commentary:

The parable of the talents is a well-known story from the gospel of Matthew it is also mentioned in two other gospels, Mark 13, and Luke 19, although with less detail than Matthew. There are many topics and lessons that can be drawn from this parable. Like all the parables it has many facets, it is not only a story giving moral guidance but also has theological, eschatological, Christological, and metaphorical aspects. This commentary will only be able to draw attention to some of these.

Jesus delivers this parable close to the end of his earthly ministry, he has warned his disciples that he does not have much time left with them. The story is indicating to the followers of Jesus that he will be leaving them and that he has intrusted them with something of immeasurable value. A Talent of gold at that time was roughly the equivalent of 15-20 years wages for an average person. The master is placing an extremely high

level of trust in his servants and the responsibility the servants take on is immense. The master gives to his servants according to their ability. Two of the servants work diligently and increase the wealth of their master, they are rewarded. The other does nothing with the treasure he was given and was punished.

There is often a 'sting' in a parable which causes us to ask ourselves questions. For example, was the wicked lazy servant punished because he did not make a profit or because he didn't even try to use the treasure he was given. He knew that his master always succeeds in his plans, reaping where he does not sow. The master had a plan for each of his servants according to their ability and the wicked servant did not believe in the trust his master put in him.

Christians are intrusted with the great treasure of the message of salvation. Do we trust in that salvation enough to use it for God's purposes?

AMAZING GRACE!

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!
Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;

'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there a thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807)