

**November 15 2020**  
**A liturgy for use at home**

**Notes:**

*A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Words in italics are instructions.*

*Words in **bold** are said by all.*

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**PREPARATION**

*Light a candle as you read these words*

‘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”  
(Mt 25:23).

**Call to Worship**

To you I lift up my eyes,  
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!  
As the eyes of servants  
look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a maid  
to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,  
until he has mercy upon us.  
(Ps 123:1–2)

*listen to or sing a song of praise*

**Prayer of Adoration**

Praise be to you, O God, the maker of the universe,  
by whose wisdom we are created and sustained.  
Praise be to you, O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by whose love we are redeemed and forgiven.  
Praise be to you, O God, the source of all holiness,  
by whose Spirit we are made whole and brought to perfection.

Praise be to you, O God,  
source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession**

Righteous God,  
you have crowned Jesus Christ as Lord of all.  
We confess, we are slow to bow before him  
and to acknowledge his rule.  
We give allegiance to the powers of this world  
and fail to be governed by justice and love.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
Raise us to acclaim him as ruler of all,  
that we may be loyal ambassadors,  
obeying the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Silence*

If we confess our sins,  
God is faithful and just  
and will forgive our sins,  
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  
**Amen. Thanks be to God**

*The Peace is shared*

**MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

**Scripture**

Matthew 25:14-30

**Collect**

Eternal God,  
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:  
kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in justice and peace your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Sermon

- A written reflection is appended to these notes. The Sunday Sermon is also online<sup>1</sup>.

### **THE RESPONSE**

- What is your inner narrative about God? Ask the Spirit to lead you into what is true?
- What can you risk or invest for God's glory?
- Is there someone you know who needs help changing their inner transcript? How can you speak words of kindness and truth to them?

### Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

*These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Blessèd are you, eternal God,  
**to be praised and glorified forever.**

Hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:  
**make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you:  
**that the life of Christ may be revealed in us.**

Strengthen all who minister in Christ's name:  
**give them courage to proclaim your Gospel.**

Inspire and lead those who hold authority in the nations of the world:  
**guide them and all people in the way of**

**justice and peace.**

Make us alive to the needs of our community:  
**help us to share each other's joys and burdens.**

Look with kindness on our homes and families:  
**grant that your love may grow in our hearts.**

Inspire us to have compassion on those who suffer from sickness, grief or trouble:  
**in your presence may they find their strength.**

We remember those who have died:  
**Father, into your hands we commend them.**

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:  
**bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

*Silence*

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the name of your Son:  
we pray you to accept and answer our prayers, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*listen to or sing a song or hymn*

### **Benediction**

**And now 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 forever more. Amen**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

### **This true story is pure gold...**

“What must I do? I wish God would just tell me what to do”. Heard that frustrated prayer? Maybe you have prayed it? Today we are told. Yes, we are given the answer! You’ve already guessed that the answer is not what we might expect at first. But, I promise, that the answer is richer, more generous, than we could have hoped or imagined! We see this richness in the parable. One talent was a weight of gold, probably around 30kg. Heavy. Worth around 15 to 20 years wages. The first servant was given 150kg. That’s what we get today – pure gold.

Now, I have a question for you: The parable has three servants. But, how many masters are there? How do you answer? I count two masters!

### **Joyful Master**

One master is the kind who readily says “Well done my good and faithful servant”. He says “come and share in your master’s joy”. That must mean he is joyful. Abundantly joyful, with joy to spare. Happy. Generous. Trusting –he left the slaves with great wealth to steward.

Serving this master leads one to living like that school friend you admire and envy slightly. She wasn’t top of the class, wasn’t head girl, didn’t excel at sport, wasn’t ever going to grace the cover of a magazine, but there was just something about her: A contagious joy. A generous spirit. And look at her now! Not quite on the cover of magazines a story about her inside one. Everything she touches turns to gold; many people are enriched by her life.

### **Harsh Master**

The third servant sees a different master. He is harsh. The sort who says “you lazy, wicked servant”. It’s a “lose, lose” situation with this master. Take a risk and lose what has been given and you fear his wrath. If you keep it safe but fail to double the investment - same result.

Which master do you serve? The Psalms say things like “my soul says to my soul”? What does your soul say to you? What does it say about you? My minister once gave me wise counsel during a time of struggle: “your inner tape recorder is playing the wrong tape. Change the tape”. I know, it is a dated analogy. You can digitise it, you understand what he meant. My inner narrative, the story I told about myself and to myself was not true. I needed to change it.

What song do you have on repeat? Is it the whisper that says “You are beloved... I delight in you...you are a good and faithful...come and share my joy”?

Or the harsh voice that says “you are lazy and wicked...you deserve weeping and gnashing of teeth”.

When we see the master as harsh then life is dualistic: it’s heaven or hell and you better not get it wrong. Follow the rules or else. Protect what you have. Don’t mess up.

We often celebrate John Wesley’s salvation moment. We don’t always notice how his inner narrative changed. He’d fled America as a failed missionary. He was worried about his sin – neurotically so. But while at a meeting he was initially reluctant to attend he says “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sin, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and

death. He no longer heard “lazy and wicked” but, rather, “good and faithful” was spoken over him.

He felt free to creatively take the initiative. A short while later he says he gave into “something more vile”: he preached outdoors. He had courage to invest that 150kg of gold. And he reaped amazing returns. Revival followed.

So, friends, what is the hidden transcript in your soul? Is it fear based? Let’s be honest, there is much that scares us. A pandemic, climate change, inequality, so many problems where do I start? If I’m ruled by fear I retreat into myself and my own little safe circle. My life is buried and I’m not yet dead.

But if love is at the centre, if the voice I hear is: “I am with you always to the very end of the age, my good and faithful servant”, then I live well.

Friends, Jesus shows us who God is. God is kind, merciful, joyful. Jesus says “do not worry”. He says “I am gentle and humble of heart, take my yoke upon you and you will find rest for your souls”, he says “behold I am with you always to the very end of the age”. None of our idols are like that – possessions, power, popularity, pleasure – those harsh task masters leaving us fearful and unsatisfied.

Think how differently things can work out in Brackenfell for those who feel safe in the service of the master who is generous, kind and joyful. People today are terrified of being labelled racist, especially in a world of mob justice by Social Media. If I am ruled by fear I am going to be defensive and, ironically, the more I deny my failings the more they will be exposed.

But if love rules, I will simply delight in how God created people so very different from me. I will enjoy them, learn from them, listen to them, be inspired by them, weep with them and celebrate with them. And this will be as natural as breathing.

I won’t need to be defensive. God defends me. After all, there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. When my blind spots and prejudices are revealed I rejoice because the Spirit is transforming me.

When I fearfully want to defend my turf, saying “don’t you dare desecrate this holy ground” whether that is church, culture, family or ideology then what I have buried in the ground is an idol. The God made known in Jesus cannot be buried. He is risen. He is joyful. He is unafraid. He is merciful and kind. These treasures double in those who serve him.

## **Secret**

A secret unburied in the parable. Both servants who risk everything for the Good Master double their investment. The master does indeed harvest where he has not sown. That’s the power of the kingdom. Everything risked in love for God yields good returns. So, what does God want you to do? Well, let’s change the tape, let’s think rightly about who God is. Then we see straight away what God wants: all of me – to invest my whole life in his Kingdom. Usually we invest a little at a time. Slowly growing in confidence. That’s ok. Like the Master in the parable, Jesus is patient, he gives us plenty of time to go all in before returning. Amen.