

15th November 2020 6pm and Self Controlled? Use your Talents

Sermon by Anthony Manning

Bible readings by Hanne Manning and Gill Heath

This transcript is only of the readings and the sermon

1st Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, **2** for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety’, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **6** So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. **9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

2nd Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30 [NIVUK 1984]

The parable of the talents

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. **15** To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. **17** So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. **18** But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

21 “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!’

22 “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “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!’

24 “Then the man who had received the one talent 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.

25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 “‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

[Anthony:]

Let's pray.

Father God, please help us to be alert and self-controlled, reaching out for you in these bewildering times. Amen.

So, what can we make from these words of Jesus about talents? Hmm. Basically, he's saying, "Use whatever talents God has given you." Yes. Don't feel that your contribution is too small to be worth doing something. So look around in these bewildering times, don't hide away. Think about other people's situations. What do you notice? Do whatever God leads you to do to help. And before that, Hanne was reading from Paul's first letter to the church he planted a year before in Thessaloniki. New Christians there felt they were in bewildering times. So Paul tells them, "You are all children of the light."

Are you children of the light? I don't know all of you out there. So do think, have you responded to Jesus? Have you accepted His love, His sacrifice to bring us back to God's love? If not, that's important to explore. If yes, then indeed, you are children of the light. As Paul says a little later, Jesus Christ died for us, so that we may live together with Him. So, as children of the light, Paul says, be alert and self-controlled, not asleep and drifting.

What being alert and not closed in on yourself means in practice will vary a lot from one person to another, and from one time to another. While you have to stay at home so much, it may just be noticing the people walking past your house, praying for them. Or yesterday, it was 80 years since the bombing of Coventry that destroyed the cathedral and so much more of the city centre. Next Saturday, it will be 80 years since the bomb that fell near Kenilworth clock, killing refugees from Coventry. Can that help us remember people in similar dangers today? In this month of lockdown, our Archbishops have asked us to pray for our country each day. So let's try to do that. Let's be open to other people, their skills and experiences, the pressures on them. For example, someone will be reluctant to contact others that they know when they can't think of anything positive to tell. I'm very pleased that St. John's is one of the churches behind the Foodbank, which is there to help people who may be struggling in Leamington, Warwick or Kenilworth. This year there are many other groups trying to help people who are struggling in various ways. This month, the Church of England has launched a project called *Living in Love and Faith*¹. As perspectives on gender, identity, and sexuality are involving in our society, this project wants Christians to explore together how relationships, marriage and sexuality fit within the bigger picture of a humanity that is liberated by Jesus Christ, and infused by the Spirit, to reflect the image of God in which we are all created.

1 <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

So, if you have a friend for whom these issues are important, please stay by them if you can.

Whatever situations and issues we focus on, Paul tells us to be alert. Put on faith and love for protection. Your faith in God and the love for other people that he's developing in you will keep you strong to reach out for Him. So it comes back to where we started with talents. Use whatever talents God has given you. Don't be ashamed if they feel rather small. Just follow where God leads you to use them. Be alert to his guidance.

Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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