

Psalm 123

- ¹ To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
- ² 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.
- ³ Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us,
for we have had more than enough of contempt.
- ⁴ Our soul has had more than its fill
of the scorn of those who are at ease,
of the contempt of the proud.

Prayer

Loving Lord,

We come before you at this time of uncertainty and unease. We lift up our eyes to see your majesty and strength. We lift up our eyes to see your glory and grace. We lift up our eyes to see you as our refuge and calm. We thank you for the unconditional love you have for us. We know that in troubled times you are our hope. All around us may be turbulent but you calm our storms and bring us peace. No matter where we are you are with us. We thank you, Lord and praise your glorious name.

We are guilty of not trusting in you. We think we know how to cope and ignore the fact that you are here to help us, to guide us safely to the shore. We think we can weather these storms ourselves, or we despair and wonder if you are there at all. Forgive us Lord for our waywardness, our doubting and supposed self-sufficiency. Lead us to the safety of your love through Jesus Christ our Saviour who died that we may have a close relationship with you.

Amen.

Read or sing:

Hymn StF 545

Be thou my vision O Lord of my heart
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art
be thou my best thought in the day and the night
both walking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be
Be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise
be thou mine inheritance now and always
be thou and thou only the first in my heart
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun
O grant me its joys after victory is won
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Reading:

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,¹⁴ 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.'

Read or sing:

Hymn StF 513

Take this moment, sign and space
take my friends around
here among us make the place
where your love is found.

Take the time to call my name
take the time to mend
who I am and what I've been
All I've failed to tend.

Take the tiredness of my days
take my past regret
letting your forgiveness touch
all I can't forget.

Take the little child in me
scared of getting old
help me here to find my worth
Made in Christ's own mould.

Take my talents, take my skills
take what's yet to be
let my life be yours, and yet
let it still be me.

John L Bell (b 1949) and Graham Maule (b1958)

Reflection

In the last week we have commemorated those who have fallen in conflict and particularly to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the internment of the Unknown Warrior. When we think of those who had their lives cut short, many before their 30th birthdays, we recognise the potential unrealised in work, family life, a life of service in various areas. The talent that lay on battlefields or those civilians bombed in what they thought was the safety of home, remained untapped. Part of what we owe them is to live the fullness of our lives where they could not.

God has given to us many gifts, including the gift of using what we have to his will and purpose. If we think of the parable of three men as a parable of one person at different times in their life, we can take a different perspective. When we are young with the whole of our life ahead of us, the world is open, inviting, sometimes exciting and we are eager to give of ourselves in the expectation of what our future has to offer. We bring ourselves to the table as to a feast and eager to please and 'get on in life.'

When I was young, life seemed to be so much easier than today. I had the pick of jobs I could go into when I left college, hone my skills and learn new ones. I became widely employable and enjoyed a variety of roles in offices, leisure, retail and the arts. These were practical talents that enabled me to work and enjoy life. When I recognised that God was in my life (and always had been, though I didn't know it), my talents increased with the empathy and love for others I now experienced, and the work I was able to do now included following Jesus and realising the potential of God's purpose. Using the gifts God gave me stretched me, encouraged me, helped me in my faith. I became the 'me' God always meant me to be.

I am sure you all have similar stories. Stories of how God has enriched your lives where you have used your 'God-given' talents. Whether it is service in the local community, ordained calling, teaching, bringing up a family, to name a few. There are so many ways we have increased our talents through experience and development. And, through this, we grow in God's kingdom. Our relationship with God is deepened, our faith strengthened as we follow Jesus in our lives. The more we do in faith, the greater God's kingdom is realised. We add to the deposit in God's bank. God is pleased with us. All is good.

But then we come to the man who buried his talent because he feared God. This is where we have to take a good look at ourselves. If we are honest, we have probably all buried a talent or talents that God has given us. We all have had excuses to not do as God wants us to do. We confess our sins before God and lay them at the cross for forgiveness. And yet, we are continually guilty of burying that one talent. For each of us that talent is different, and it may change as God changes us to engage with him. Burying our talent means doubting God as well as ourselves. We are also in danger of forgetting about it. If it is buried, it's out of sight, we can ignore it. It 'goes away', becomes redundant. The phrase 'Use it, or lose it' is quite apt here. That talent, unused by us will be given to someone who will use it. God needs *us* to work for his Kingdom and we, His servants who are willing will be given the ability to do it. Do we truly listen to God? Are we recipient to his will, or do we just pay 'lip service' and get on with our lives? Are we afraid that we will be asked to do something we either think we have no talent for, or don't want to do? The talent remains buried. As we get older, the unused buried talent rusts and loses its shine. Using our talents for God's purpose increases our abilities, not only for God's glory, but to help us in our faith and our trust in God. If we bury the gift God has given us, we are saying we don't trust him. We are afraid. We must ask the question of ourselves: What are we afraid of? God's anger? We are taught that He is a loving God, slow to anger. God's disappointment in us? That makes us feel guilty, an emotion God is quick to forgive when we repent. That buried talent is a hidden treasure ready to be unearthed and used to God's glory. Dig it up now, polish it and know that it is a gift from God, shiny and new ready to be increased.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord,

We pray for all who are afraid today. Those who are wrongly imprisoned in places where they have no voice in their defence. We pray for those who are afraid of the circumstances we face today, afraid to leave their homes, afraid of illness and death. Those who are afraid of what their future may be, either for themselves, their families, their countries. Those who are in abusive relationships, going through immense hardship, afraid of what may, or may not happen. We pray for hope and encouragement. For justice and peace. For a positive future.

We pray for all who are in pain today. We pray for relief and comfort. We pray for those who care for them and thank you for their loving service whether at home or in hospital.

We pray for our fellowship, especially for those living on their own. Help us to keep in contact with them and not leave anyone feeling alone or abandoned. We pray for the Revd Pauline Crispin as she works, not only for us, but also our circuit. We pray for strength and encouragement. Help us to help her where we are needed. Keep us all in your love and grace as we care for each other.

We bring our prayers together in The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Blessing:

May the God who created us, who by his grace loves us, go with us as we journey together in His service, joyfully and faithfully. Through our Saviour, Jesus Christ and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit may we be beloved and blessed always.

Amen.

Caroline Churcher

15th November 2020