Sermon: Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 28, Year A
Matthew 25:14–30
By The Rev. Canon Ivar Hillsland
St. Luke's ~ San Lucas Episcopal Church
Date: November 15, 2026

It is such an immense joy for me to be here with you today on behalf of the diocese of Olympia.
One of the best parts of my role in the bishop's office is the opportunity to visit the many different churches all across Western Washington and see the richness of our congregations
Each place is like a different facet on the gemstone that is the body of Christ.
To be with this beautiful San Lucas community is a particular joy for me.
As you can tell, I don't really speak Spanish
So thank you for your graciousness and understanding.
Maybe someone can tell me all of the embarrassing things I have actually said to you after the service.

I have to say, these readings are not the ones I would choose for my wedding day.
They are hard to hear.
But they come from a community that is suffering and trying to make sense of it.
The prophet Zephaniah is naming his anger and frustration.

We are rapidly approaching the end of the church year and that means our scripture readings have begun to focus more on the fulfillment of God's dream for the world.
In church language, we often use the Greek word Eschatology, which literally means "last things."
The readings become full of lots of vivid imagery as we seek the return of Christ with longing for a new creation.

Our Thessalonian passage says Christ's coming will be like "a thief in the night"
We do not know the day nor the hour.
And yet, we are told to keep awake and have oil for our lamps.

On nights that I couldn't sleep, I used to watch late night preachers yelling about end-times, blood moons, dragons and raptures.
I was fascinated by the way they would warp our scripture readings into such fantastical predictions, most of which have no basis in our actual bible.
Many preachers devote almost their entire message to pretending they can figure it all out.
Often, they use end-times language as a way to cast judgment on or exclude others.

But, the Revelation of John is a genre that tells a story with images about the present reality, not a future one.
It was written about the Roman Empire.
It was meant to assure the community of believers that despite their current suffering and oppression,
God still reigns supreme.
We are called to stand firm in Christ in the face of trials.

One of the common mottos of the Roman Empire was "peace and security."
In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he quotes this motto, naming the falseness of it.
Just like today in this country, unspeakable atrocities have been committed in the name of "peace and security."
It is a false and dangerous allure.
A spell that is cast by people who want to protect their power at all cost.
But we know that all things come from God.
We know that we are called to love God, love neighbor.
We know we are sent into our communities to be living words of life, to be salt, light and leaven, inspired by the spirt, for the sake of this world.
We have been given the gift of hope from the God of promises to carry as our torch.

But, what should we do with this gift we have been given?
What are we to do with the good news of Jesus Christ?
The Gospel today can be a confusing reading.
Part of the confusion is because, in the last few hundred years,
the word "talent" has become associated with gifts of skill.
We often think of talented artists or athletes - people who seem particularly blessed with an ability of some sort.
With this understanding, the passage would seem to say that if you use your talents God will reward you.
But this does not ultimately make any sense in this reading.
Is God going to make a talented person more talented, and then take what little talent another person has away from them to give to someone else?
That doesn't even make sense.

The word "talent" originally referred to a weight in trading.
Eventually, it became a set amount of silver or gold by weight equal to about fifteen years of workers wages.
Which, in Vancouver would be about one point two million dollars.
When I was child I imagined it as one giant gold coin, but it is more literally a bag of gold.
But understanding this passage as being literally about money also does not make any sense.

Is God shaming us for not taking the risk to invest our money and then, when we don't invest it, takes money from the poorest to give to the rich?
While it does feel like the absolute richest are hoarding more and more of our money these days, this certainly does not sound like the God we know.

So how should we understand this scripture?
Ultimately, this is a scripture about the Gospel itself.
It is about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.
and that is how the church understood it for most of its history.
A "talent" was interpreted as the Gospel itself as well as our responsibility for communicating it.
A "talent" was interpreted as the Gospel itself as well as our responsibility for communicating it.

Just think about it.
Jesus is speaking to the disciples just before going to his death.
What will the disciples be entrusted with in his absence?
Spreading the Word of God.
To plant it like a seed in the world and in their communities.
The disciples might be inclined to deny Jesus and hide in a locked room as they did after Jesus' death.

We too are often tempted to hold too tightly to the Gospel.
To protect the church, like the false "peace and security" of the Roman Empire, hold tight to what we have and not let the Holy Spirit turn us outwards.
But, the only way we can truly do wrong to Christ,
is by limiting our faith and burying the word of the god for no one else to hear.
There is a world that is starving for words of life right now.
Starving for community, for spiritual connection, meaning and purpose - and especially hope.

Like the faithful servants,
we should be trading the Word of God and investing it in the people around us
because we know that through the work of the Holy Spirit
it will increase
Life will beget life, love will beget love, peace will give rise to more peace, forgivess to more forgiveness

Like the master in the story,
Jesus is on a long journey, and we don't know when he will return.
But like the first two slaves, who didn't waste a second to begin investing what they had been given,
We are called to the work of proclamation - to share the Gospel.

The word “gospel” literally means “good news”
and the thing about news is that it ceases to be “news” if it isn’t shared.
It exists and grows by its very sharing.

You all are a beautiful community, faithful disciples of Christ, and you have this precious gift of life here.
I am blessed to be with you today.
May God bless you and empower you through the Holy Spirit
So that you may be a well, a table, and a voice in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.