



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✘ *In Worship Today* ✘

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector and Intercessor	Barb Bash

This service of worship can also be listened to online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children..

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 15, 2020

“Word Out” audio transcript



Prelude

Chorale prelude on SOMOS DEL SEÑOR
Emma Lou Diemer (b. 1927)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, however you may be struggling, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God. Our readings during November speak of the end times. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather in Spirit around signs of hope – word, water, bread, and wine – eager to welcome the good news of Christ’s coming among us.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
G: And also with you.

Gospel Acclamation

John 15:4,5

G: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

P: *Repeat alleluia*

Abide in me as I abide
in you;
those who abide in me bear much fruit

G: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 25:14-30

A: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

A: [Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁴“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same

way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then 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.' ²¹His 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.' ²²And 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.' ²³His 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.'

²⁴Then 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; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But 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? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

My mom tells me this story: when I was a kid and I missed the bus to school, she would have to drive me there and drop me off. This typically meant I would be late.

Now as some of you know, I have an *occasional* problem with punctuality. These days, I have gotten better at arriving, if not exactly on time, no more than a minute or two after the hour. But I still struggle with it, even when my commute over the course of the pandemic has been reduced from a whopping *seven blocks* to the distance between two rooms at the parsonage.

It's tough, believe me.

What you may not know is how much I actually hate being late. My mom says that on those days when she would drive me to school because I missed the bus, she would watch from the car as I laboriously placed one foot in front of the other on my way to the big blue door of my first-grade classroom. The journey was an agonizing one.

I hate being late.

I have the same feeling sometimes when it comes to preparing sermons, especially when it comes to this cycle of readings in our common lectionary. Every three years, preachers across our denomination must contend with what one commentary labels the "woes and eschatological discourse" of Jesus in Matthew 23-25. Eschatological is a fancy word for "end times." Jesus and some of his contemporaries believed the end of the age in which they lived was near, that a new age – one where God's kingdom would be fully realized, fully manifest – was near. In fact, the belief was that Jesus himself initiated this new era, that it had already begun to dawn, and that his teachings, as well as the restorative miracles of healing he performed, were evidence of that.

By the time Matthew's Gospel was written, some 50 years after Jesus walked the earth, the end, it would seem, had been delayed. And so the question for his second and now third-generation followers became, What do we do in the interim? How shall we live until the Lord returns?

Our Gospel reading for today, the story of the ten talents, marks the third in a series of parables exhorting the community of faith, now decades removed from the life and teachings of Jesus, to stay prepared and (as we heard last week) not to lose hope. Like the young Pastor Dan, Jesus was running late. He missed the bus, and his followers were beginning to wonder what to do.

This parallel, however intriguing, is not why I shared what I did at the beginning of the sermon. What I wanted to convey was the agonizing reluctance I have when it comes to preaching on this material! Like the boy who resisted every step on his way from the car to the classroom door, I have done whatever I can to avoid engaging this parable. I have procrastinated every step of the way, and you can probably guess why: open the big blue door of this Gospel passage and you will immediately discover judgment, confusion, and sayings that sound completely antithetical to the compassionate and merciful Jesus we find elsewhere in the Gospels.

It's a nightmare.

No wonder some people call our Gospel reading for today the "parable of the hard master." This guy comes off as a jerk, and the news he shares is anything but good!

Some of it we've heard already. The punishment of being cast into the "outer darkness" for wrongdoing "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" appeared also in the parable of the wedding banquet which we examined several weeks ago (Matthew 22:1-14). Its only other appearance in the whole New Testament occurs in Matthew 8:12 where gnashing of teeth "indicates anger or frustration," as the *Jewish Annotated New Testament* explains, presumably as an expression of being separated from the presence of God.

But it's not just the merciless threat of punishment from the "hard master" that makes me hesitant to open the big blue door of this parable. It's the fact that the master is Jesus. "In many parables," writes Dirk Lange in a commentary on today's reading, "an allegorical temptation is to equate the master with God. Here, an allegorical twist happens in that Matthew equated the master with Jesus. The master is the one who is present with the servants and then the one who departs only to come back again."

You know Jesus, right? He's the one in Luke 6:20 who says, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." In today's reading, however, he shows the poor nothing but contempt. "For to all who have," he says, "more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

The problem, in short, revolves around the way Jesus treats the third slave. Sure, the slave clearly misunderstood the character of his master (see Matthew 15:26). But can you blame him for hiding the single talent he had been given? After all, in those days a talent was equivalent to several *years* of income. People, moreover, "buried money to keep it safe from thieves" (*Jewish Annotated New Testament*). No wonder, as Lange points out, that preachers are often "disturbed by the harshness of the judgment against the third slave. Is this the type of God we worship – a God who rewards the rich and makes them richer and condemns the poor, only making them poorer?"

Who among any of us would want to open this big blue door?

It would be tempting for me, now back in the first grade, to turn around at this point and run back to the car! The easiest way to do this with regard to our parable for today would be to dismiss it as something the historical Jesus, who lived roughly half a century before the Gospel of Matthew was written, would have never said. But this would be difficult. The same story, with minor variations, appears in the Gospel of Luke (see 19:11-27). Most New Testament scholars believe that the material Luke and Matthew share comes from an earlier document we no longer have called "Q" which simply means "source" in German. Q contains what would have probably been the original teachings of Jesus since it appeared shortly after his lifetime.

Next to Q, scholars also think Matthew and Luke were reliant on Mark, the oldest of the Gospels. Mark, it turns out, contains the same harsh saying of Jesus regarding the poor and rich appearing in the parable of the talents (4:24). It also contains reference to the story itself, albeit in the span of a single verse (13:34). My point is this: it's possible the parable, minus Matthew's embellishments, including the reference the hard master makes to the "outer darkness," may have come from Jesus himself!

So I can't turn back. I have to open the big blue door and walk through it.

Here is what happens when I do: Jesus, I discover, is speaking *figuratively*. He isn't offering a lesson in small-venture capitalism. He's not giving advice on how to invest your money or on how to become materially rich. Jesus is teaching you and me how to become *rich in righteousness*. Don't hide your talents, your gifts, or your aptitudes out of fear, as if someone is going to deplete you of them! Instead, share what you have. Give your talents away. Let your light shine by doing what you're good at to build up others for the sake of the kingdom. This is how you live a truly "purpose-driven life." Use your God-given talents to help others.

The Christian tradition has a name for this. We call it fulfilling your vocation, your calling from God.

Be rich, therefore, in righteousness, in good deeds that spring from what you enjoy and what you are good at for the sake of others. Such is the gospel of our Lord, the call to life, the "joy of the master," as v. 21 puts it, the success of those who trade their talents instead of burying them. And this is what I discovered by opening our parable's big blue door, even though I fought it the whole way, which returns me to my mother's story, now told from my perspective.

You can imagine my trepidation as I crossed through the swings on my way from the car to the classroom. I can still see the walkway lining the north side of the building. To my right, a large, empty field, one that would later that day be trampled underfoot by scores of screaming kids at recess. To my left, door after door, the last of which – now just a few paces away – was mine. I arrived, terrified that the moment was about to arrive when, after opening the door, all eyes would be upon me; the shame, the potential embarrassment felt overwhelming.

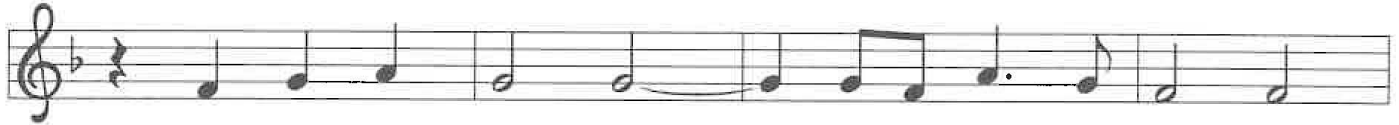
I reach for the doorknob and clasp it, turning it slowly as I cautiously push open the door. The hinges squeak. My class, I discover as I look in, is engrossed in a game of "Heads Up, 7-Up." Everyone has their heads down on their desks, thumbs up, waiting to be picked. The teacher sees me and quietly points me to my seat. She smiles as if we are sharing a secret, and in a few moments I return to a world of ease and with it the absolute joy of childhood.

I'm so glad I walked through that big blue door. Amen.

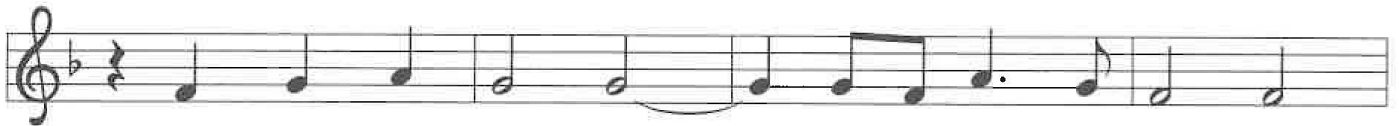
Hymn of the Day

When We Are Living

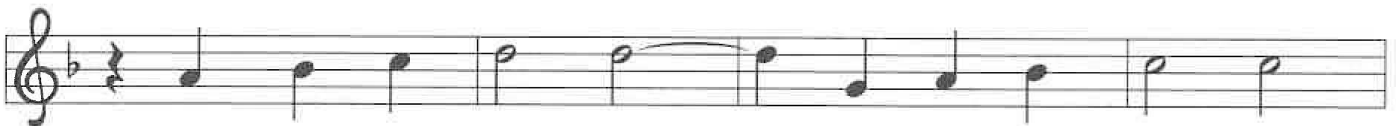
ELW 639



1 *Pues si vi - vi - mos, pa - ra él vi - vi - mos,*
 1 When we are liv - ing, it is in Christ Je - sus,
 2 'Mid times of sor - row and in times of pain, . . .
 3 A - cross this wide world, we shall al - ways find



y si mo - ri - mos pa - ra él mo - ri - mos.
 and when we're dy - ing, it is in the Lord. . . .
 when sens - ing beau - ty or in love's em - brace, . . .
 those who are cry - ing with no peace of mind; . . .



Sea que vi - va - mos o que mu - ra - mos,
 Both in our liv - ing and in our dy - ing,
 wheth - er we suf - fer, or sing re - joic - ing,
 and when we help them, or when we feed them,



so - mos del Se - ñor, so - mos del Se - ñor.
 we be - long to God, we be - long to God.
 we be - long to God, we be - long to God.
 we be - long to God, we be - long to God.

2 *En la tristeza y en el dolor,
 en la belleza y en el amor,
 sea que suframos o que gocemos,
 somos del Señor, somos del Señor.*

3 *En este mundo por doquier habrá
 gente que llora y sin consolar.
 Sea que ayudemos o que alimentemos,
 somos del Señor, somos del Señor.*

Prayers of the Church

A: Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

A: Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Lord of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature. Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Lord of the nations, sound forth your justice in the ears of all leaders. Increase concern for those who are most vulnerable, especially as international leaders forge trade agreements and cooperate to end human rights abuses. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant light. Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors. Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **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 forever.

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Prelude in C major
Gustav Wilhelm Teschner (1800–1883)

About Today's Music

“When We Are Living” is likely a new hymn to QALC. The words to the first stanza were transcribed in 1980 after a visitor from Mexico shared them at a church in Los Angeles, and then two additional stanzas were added; the tune (somos del señor) is a traditional Spanish melody. Perhaps when juxtaposed with today's Gospel reading the hymn's text reminds us that as God's baptized people, we are called to invest the resources and skills with which we are entrusted for God's purposes in the world: “We belong to God.” Today's prelude on the hymn's tune is by Emma Lou Diemer, who is among the most prominent composers of contemporary composers of organ music.