twelvebaskets

FREE TO DUPLICATE AND DISTRIBUTE



ORDINARY 33A

15th November 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

A Free resource funded by donations from Individuals, churches and **twelve**baskets.

If you would like to help fund this resources click here.

For more information https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource

Opening Prayers

To help you centre yourself, and enter a space of worship, you might like to sit for a few moments, with your hands open in front of you.

As you hold the stillness, you might like to imagine yourself letting go of the things that worry you or weigh you down, and offering this time of worship to God.

When you are ready, you might like to say these words:

God who is love,
Help me to receive your love for me, unconditional, eternal, gracious.
God who is hope,
Help me to share that message of love with those around me, today and every day,
by your grace. Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30 – Click for reading

Responding to the reading

Today's reading from Matthew 25 tells a story about a wealthy man who entrusts his property to three servants before going away. One receives five talents, another two, and another one. The first two put what they have been given to work and double their money. The third digs a hole and buries his talent.

When the master returns, the first two are praised, but the third is condemned. It is a story that can make us uncomfortable. We might hear it as a straightforward lesson about using our gifts: God has given us abilities, opportunities and resources, and we should make the most of them and perhaps there is truth in that. But I wonder whether the most interesting word in this story is not *talent*, but *fear*.

The third servant explains his actions quite plainly: "I was afraid." He has seen the master as a harsh man, someone who reaps where he has not sown and gathers where he has not scattered. And so, rather than risk losing what he has been given, he hides it away.

He chooses safety over possibility. Do you recognise something of yourself in that? Do you sometimes bury things because you are afraid? Do you bury an idea because you might look foolish if it fails, keep quiet because speaking up might make life uncomfortable, avoid a difficult conversation because you cannot control how the other person will respond? Do you hold back our generosity because you worry there will not be enough for yourself or your family? Do you postpone doing something good because you are waiting until you feel more confident, more qualified or more ready.

Sometimes, of course, caution is wise. Not every risk is worth taking, and not every opportunity is ours to pursue. We are human beings, not endlessly productive machines. But there is a difference between wisdom and fear becoming the thing that governs our lives.

What might become possible if fear were no longer making all our decisions?

- Perhaps we would be more willing to offer our gifts, even when they feel small.
- Perhaps we would speak up for somebody who is being treated unjustly.
- Perhaps we would begin the project we have been thinking about for years.
- Perhaps we would offer friendship to someone who seems lonely, even if we are unsure what to say.
- Perhaps we would dare to imagine that the world could be different, and then do something, however small, to help make it so.

The kingdom of God, as Jesus describes it throughout the Gospels, is not built by people who wait until everything is certain. It grows through people who dare to act in love.

There is also another side to this parable that deserves our attention.

The master is not an entirely comfortable figure. The third servant describes him as harsh and exploitative, and the master does not deny that description. We should be careful about turning this story into a simple endorsement of a system in which the wealthy accumulate more while those with less are punished for failing to produce. Jesus has spent much of his ministry challenging the powerful, lifting up the poor and questioning the assumptions of those who believe wealth is proof of virtue.

So, perhaps we should resist the temptation to read this parable as though God were simply a demanding employer, measuring our worth by our output. Our value is not determined by our productivity. A person who is exhausted, unwell, grieving or struggling to survive is not failing God because they cannot produce more.

Someone whose opportunities have been limited by poverty, discrimination or circumstances beyond their control is not less worthy than someone who has been given much. The first two servants receive different amounts, yet both are welcomed with the same words of praise. That detail matters: the story does not demand that everyone achieve the same result. Perhaps the question is not how much we produce, but what we do with what has been entrusted to us.

And perhaps we should ask a further question: what kind of God do we believe we are serving?

If we imagine God as harsh, impossible to please and waiting for us to fail, we may find ourselves burying our gifts in the hope of avoiding punishment. But if we encounter God in Jesus, in the one who welcomes outsiders, restores the fallen, feeds the hungry and calls ordinary people into extraordinary possibilities, then perhaps discipleship begins to look different.

We are not trying to earn God's love, we are responding to love that has already found us. We do not need to prove that we are worthy before we begin. We are invited to participate, with all our imperfections, in the work of making God's love visible.

Is that where this parable meets us today, not with a demand to achieve more, compete harder or make ourselves indispensable, but with an invitation to consider what we have been given, what we are doing with it, and what fear might be preventing us from offering?

We cannot do everything. We will not always get things right. Some risks will not pay off in the way we hoped, but we can choose not to let fear have the final word. We can choose to live generously, to act courageously, to use whatever influence, compassion, wisdom and resources we have for the good of others.

Because the question is not whether we have been given as much as somebody else, it is whether we are willing to participate in the work of love.

- What have I been entrusted with that I am currently holding back?
- Where is fear stopping me from doing something I believe is right?
- Am I measuring my worth, or other people's worth, by achievement, wealth or visible success?
- What is one small, courageous thing I could do this week with what I have been given?

May we have the courage to use our gifts without needing to be perfect.
May we have the wisdom to recognise the difference between faithfulness and relentless striving.
May we never mistake somebody else's greater privilege for greater worth.
And may we trust that even the smallest act of love, offered freely and courageously, can become part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Hymn / Song:
545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart – YouTube

Blessing

As you go from this time of connection,
May you remember that you are part of something bigger.
As you go from this time of worship,
May you hold onto the truth that your whole life is for God’s glory.
As you go from this time of reflection,
May you live each and every moment as if it provides opportunities to hear from God.

Go in peace, always

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 16th November

- Calm me Lord, calm my thoughts, that I might hear your voice, calm my actions that I might follow your call, calm my anxiety that I might know myself loved and accepted.
  Calm me, O God, like the waves and the wind at Christ's command,
  Amen.

Tuesday 17th November

- On this day in 1558, the Elizabethan era began, with the ascension of Queen Elizabeth I to the throne. We live in tumultuous times and don't yet know what this 'era' might be called by historians in 500 years.
- Today you might like to pray for all who are involved in leadership and politics, whether local or national. If that's you, take some time out today to pray for yourself, to ground yourself in God's unchanging, infallible, unconditional love for you.

Wednesday 18th November

- As we head into the winter months, and the evenings get darker, and colder, and wetter, we pray for all who feel isolated at this time. All who are forced to withdraw indoors when they don't find that comfortable or know it brings with it a loneliness and isolation.
- If that's you, spend some time praying for yourself today, and reflecting on ways you can seek connection, maintain relationship, stay grounded in the natural world and God's beautiful creation.

Thursday 19th November

- Take a moment to look at your hands. Reflect on the things you have used them for already this week: to do housework, to write emails, to make phone calls, perhaps some digging in the garden or some manual labour tasks.
- Thank you God, for these hands. Help me to use them as your hands in the world – to use my body, my mind, my whole life, for the building of your Kingdom here on earth.
  Amen.

Friday 20th November

- Gracious God, thank you for the many ways you have blessed me, and for the nutrition in the meals I am eating this day. Thank you for the strength that comes from my food to keep me going. Thank you for the tastes I can enjoy and the refreshment I can feel. Amen

Saturday 21st November

- Holy God, you have called me here, in this moment, this day, this weekend.
- Lord of life, I see you at work in the world around me.
  Open my eyes, and open my heart,
  That I may be ready to receive your Spirit into my life.
  Amen.