St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

http://standrewspres-tbay.ca - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

25th Sunday after Pentecost - November 15, 2026

Call to Worship

Come, people of God!
Come as one, united in purpose and desire to do God's work faithfully… together.
Let's worship God as one people…with joy and in spirit and in truth.

Our United Outreach Sunday – Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Hymn *God, whose giving knows no ending* 663

1. God, whose giving knows no ending,
   from your rich and endless store,
   nature's wonder, Jesus' wisdom,
   costly cross, grave's shattered door:
   gifted by you, we turn to you,
   offering up ourselves in praise;
   thankful song shall rise forever,
   gracious donor of our days.
2. Skills and time are ours for pressing
   towards the goals of Christ, your Son:
   all at peace in health and freedom,
   races joined, the Church made one.
   Now direct our daily labour,
   lest we strive for self alone;
   born with talents, make us servants
   fit to answer at your throne.
3. Treasure too you have entrusted,
   gain through powers your grace conferred.
   Ours to use for home and kindred,
   and to spread the gospel word.
   Open wide our hands in sharing,
   as we heed Christ's ageless call,
   healing, teaching, and reclaiming,
   serving you by loving all.

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Transforming God,

you take the night and give us day.
You take our strife and give us peace.
You take our sadness and give us joy.
You take our fear and give us courage.
You take death and give us new life.
O God, you give and you give and you give.
So we come to praise you
and offer our love and loyalty as your willing servants:
in the name of Christ who enriches our lives with grace
and in the power of the Spirit who prays within us
when we cannot find the right words to honour you,
God most kind and generous. Amen.

God of loving kindness, hear us as we confess to you our sins:

Trusting God,
you placed your mission in our hands
and gave us gifts to accomplish amazing things in Jesus' name.
We confess sometimes we've taken credit for what your love has done.
Sometimes we've called our own desires your will.
Sometimes we've stepped back and let others carry responsibilities.
Forgive us when we've failed to honour your trust in us.
Redeem us with your generous love and grace.
We ask this through Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 25th Sunday after Pentecost. November 15, 2026. Legacy Giving Sunday. Year A

Assurance of Forgiveness

You are loved by God and given so many gifts to be used to help others.
Do not fear to use these gifts, for God is with you,
continually blessing you and the gifts in your service. Amen. Worship Connection: November 19, 2023

Prayer for Understanding

God of the generations, the Scriptures are a legacy to us from your faithful people over many centuries. Just as your Spirit inspired poets and prophets, evangelists and epistle writers, and guided their translators again and again, send your same Spirit to inspire our understanding of your Word and our response to live by its wisdom, for the sake of Christ, your Living Word.

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Scripture Reading Matthew 25:14-30

14-18 "It's also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master's investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money.

19-21 "After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.'

22-23 "The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master's investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.'

24-25 "The servant given one thousand said, 'Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.'

26-27 "The master was furious. 'That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest.

28-30 "'Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this "play-it-safe" who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.'

The Message ***(MSG)*** *Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson*

Message Risking it all

I am so confused. All my life I thought I knew what this parable of the talents was about. I had heard it preached numerous times in ways that told me I should work hard for the kingdom of God. Invest all of myself in it and the return would be no less than the kingdom of heaven. How could it not be about that when the two servants who get the biggest jackpot of their lives go and make it worth double its original value and they are rewarded with the words, "From now on be my partner"[1] or as you may have learned it, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

This particular parable has been used over and over again when churches have had stewardship drives. In other words, a time when churches are looking for people to

[1] ***The Message*** ***(MSG)*** *Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson*

pledge money over the next year for the work of the congregation. And don't get me wrong, those reminders each year to consider what you are giving to the work of the church so that we can participate more fully in what God is doing in the world, are really important reminders. Each of us should be considering how our money can impact and support the work of this congregation because our systems for how we interact with the world is done through money. This has always been the case in some form or another. The money itself is not the problem, being able to have enough resources to fund a ministry is challenging. So please do think about those things.

However, I said that I am confused. As it turns out there are numerous scholars and theologians who are questioning that understanding of this particular parable. Actually, as this parable is one of a string of them that are difficult for us to get our minds around, they are all being considered differently. We started this conversation with the parable of the ten bridesmaids last week. It always seems to turn out with this particular string of parables that the outcome is punishment if you don't get it right or at the very least you miss out. But maybe that punished is being thought of as coming from the wrong source.

Let me propose to you that we may have to do some rethinking about these parables, particularly because they just don't seem to line up with Jesus' message as read in the Beatitudes. You know the ones that Jesus started out with in his ministry. Blessed are the poor in sprit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Or, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. How about, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

This is the kingdom of heaven that we hope for and Jesus tells us we can expect. So, then why would he tell these terrible parables of judgement? We have long been taught that Jesus or God was the bridegroom from the parable that came just before this one, who leaves some of the bridesmaid out of the party, and now we have this man who has left the servants with large sums of money and we are led to believe that the man in charge, who owns everything, is also God or Jesus. But what if we have that wrong?

What if the man who goes off on an extended trip actually represents the rulers of the day, or the rulers of today? What one may not understand, especially given the one in the reading taken from *The Message*, which speaks about money in terms that seems reasonable to us, five thousand, two thousand, and one thousand, that this is not equal to what was being proposed in the original Greek text. For most of us our paycheck is in those ranges, even if it is our old age pension. What is missed is that one talent…which by the way is money, not what you are good at…one talent was worth anywhere from 15-20 years' worth of work in that time. So, the one who got the five talents could never have even imagined having that amount of money in their life time.

This is likely why this parable has been preached as, take all of what you are and have, invest it in the kingdom of heaven and your reward will be heaven.

Well, that and the words, well done, good and faithful servant, making it seem like the two guys who doubled their investment got it right. The guy who buried it, which in that time was a perfectly normal thing to do, was being punished for what many people in fact did. To have trusted investment likely meant someone else was being exploited and that was frowned upon in Jewish texts.

So what if the man who had the money and left it for others to work with was actually not the good guy, but representative of those with power and money, the establishment? Think of that one being like an Elon Musk who continues to amass money, recently being named the first trillionaire in the world. Now no analogy is ever perfect but let's consider that it is power and wealth that is being questioned here not the one who buried the treasure. That the reason for being punished is because the third servant whose impression of the man with the money was that he had high standards, hated careless ways, and demanded the best…it just maybe that man was one who exploited others. The only way in those days to make money was on the back of others, at their expense and loss, often the loss of their own land, making land owners slaves because they couldn't pay interest rates. Maybe the one who buried the treasurer was actually more like an activist calling out the corruption of his own time.

Consider that the risk was not with the money but in calling out what was wrong with the system. It especially seems that we need to rethink this parable as the master turns on the third servant and sends him out into utter darkness, claiming that the servant had played it safe. But isn't that what happens when we risk caring for people rather than money, when we are compassionate, and call out those who are making money on the back of those who cannot change the system.

Now, I don't expect you to agree with me. I am still working out the ramifications of the interpretations that I have just offered, and the many other impressions that have been given over the eons, and in recent new thoughts about how to reconcile this parable with the life we see in Jesus. Jesus, the man who always was there for the ones who were the most vulnerable. Jesus who healed the sick, raised the dead, and taught about a kingdom of God that people could not fathom in his own time, and that we still have a hard time getting our minds wrapped around. A kingdom where power is the power to change the world with love, compassion, justice for the oppressed, and grace.

I am quite sure that you will walk away from this sermon thinking that I did not really give you anything to take away in order to live out your life this week. I have left you with more questions. But that was the purpose of the parables, to make us think for ourselves. To consider Jesus' words on the surface of what they meant and to study, consider, question, and learn about what it means to be a follower of Christ. Alway, always, examining it through the lens of the light and life of Jesus.

These parables come just before the stories in the Bible of Jesus' crucifixion. The moment that Jesus gave up his life for us so that we would live in the abundance of God's love and grace. These parables also come in the church calendar year just before Advent, the time we celebrate that God came into the world in the flesh to live as God with us – Emanuel – and this was all because of love. God's love for humanity and all of creation.

If this parable speaks to us, maybe it can be in a way that makes us consider the cost of exploitation of people and the earth itself. Don't be disappointed if you don't walk away with a clear answer. You are in good company. But for a moment consider the cost of wealth and the cost of calling out how wealth is amassed and used to oppress people, including yourself, but certainly how wealth and power hurts those with no voice.

Maybe that is the take away. Pay attention. Pay attention to how money is used. Risk calling out how money, power, wealth, and position, lead the world into chaos or compassion. Maybe that is what we are called to, to be a little more like the third servant who called out the master for who he was and faced the consequences. That is courage. He faced anger and retaliation, rather than approval from the one with power.

Something to think about, even if it leaves us a little confused and very uneasy. It is challenging when our thinking gets turned upside down. But that is the way of God. The kingdom of heaven is not about power and wealth that oppresses it is about power that overturns all that we thought we understood about the world. This power is about love, compassion, and care.

May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear, as we bring our learning and understanding or questions and concerns to the one we know as the crucified and risen Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of all life and each life:
we thank you that you are with us every day,
in each challenge and opportunity.
In our weakness, you are strength.
In our confusion, you light the path ahead.
In our questions, you offer wisdom for our choices.
Stay with us in these days when so much seems uncertain,
and help us to serve you faithfully, when and as we are able.

God of loving kindness:
Thank you for each moment of joy and celebration in our lives:
for love given and received,

for friendships that bring meaning and happiness,
and for family members who show us glimpses of unconditional love.
In all our relationships and interactions,
keep us mindful of your call to see you in one another.

God of the nations:
we worry for the world filled with conflict and division,
when the earth itself is put at risk by destructive human actions.
Guide diplomats and politicians to look beyond short-term interests,
and keep the well-being of vulnerable people and the planet in focus.
Open our leaders' minds and hearts with wisdom
to develop more equitable ways of ordering our common life.

God of healing:
we pray for those who are suffering in these days when winter is closing in.
Draw close to all who fear the future.
Comfort those who experience pain or problems that seem overwhelming.
Shine the light of your love into our sadness and sorrows
and show us how to comfort and support each other.

God of life:
We thank you for your saints of every age who continue to inspire us,
and for all who have meant the world to us and now live with you.
Keep us in communion with them
and, at the last, bring us all to dwell together in your light.
And now we pray with them in the words that Jesus taught us, saying:

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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 forever. Amen

Invitation to the Offering

With gratitude, we offer to God a portion of all that God have given to us. We do so, trusting that God will take them, and in abundant generosity, multiply theses gifts, so all might be blessed by God's love, peace, and hope.

Adapted from ©2026 Thom M. Shuman. http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com November 15.

As you come to the end of this service may you be encouraged to visit our website at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches and give a financial gift to support the work of this ministry.

Hymn *God, who stretched* **305**

1. God, who stretched the spangled heavens
infinite in time and place,
flung the suns in burning radiance
through the silent fields of space.
We, your children in your likeness,
share inventive powers with you:
great Creator, still creating,
show us what we yet may do.

2. Proudly rise our modern cities,
stately buildings row on row;
yet their windows, blank, unfeeling,
stare on canyoned streets below,
where the lonely drift unnoticed
in the city's ebb and flow,
lost to purpose and to meaning,
scarcely caring where they go.

3. We have ventured worlds undreamed of
since the childhood of our race:
known the ecstasy of winging
through untraveled realms of space;
probed the secrets of the atom,
yielding unimagined power,
facing us with life's destruction
or our most triumphant hour.

4. As each far horizon beckons,
may it challenge us anew:
children of creative purpose,
serving others, honouring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise,
each endeavour well begun;
great Creator, give us guidance,
till our goals and yours are one.

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Benediction

As a child of God,
Go from this place filled with the Holy Spirit
and be mindful of God's movement in your life.
Be all that you were created to be
and may the light of Christ shine through you
in all that you do, say and think each and every day. Amen.

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