

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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IS TODAY THE DAY?

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Text of a Sermon preached on the 24th Sunday after Pentecost

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ZEPHENIAH 1:7, 12-18 | PSALM 90

I THESSALONIANS 5:1-11 | MATTHEW 25:14-30

Holy Scripture tells us plainly: the Lord will come when we least expect him. Did we wake up this morning thinking that today would be 'the Day of the Lord's coming'?

Depending upon our age, on how long we have been a Christian, each of us has a different sense of this truth. We might be just beginning our walk with Christ in seriousness, as dear Julio will today in his baptism, as some of us are today, having been baptized and confirmed, yet just now inviting God into the throne room of our hearts, to the center of our lives.

Or we may be old hands at saying our prayers, at waiting patiently for the Lord, wondering when he will come to sort out all this mess. We veterans have our own reasons for neglecting to consider that today might very well be the Day when the Lord appears.

In order to understand Jesus' words to us in this famous, yet very difficult, parable of the talents, we probably have to unlearn some things. We have to go to sleep and have an experience of waking up completely surprised that a thief has just come, in the dead of night, taken the car keys off the hook, and is driving away.

For one, we must face how vulnerable we are. This could really be it for us. Our story, the world's story, just might end. After this unprecedented election, we suddenly find ourselves in this strange in between time, in a slow motion transfer of power, where the outcome is certain but not certain. During this pandemic, it has sometimes been hard to recall what day it is. Our sense of time has been disrupted, our expectations upended.

Jesus' disciples are with him in the temple in the final days of his life, and they can sense the powers shifting in the heavens. They ask him, is the Day of Lord actually upon us, is it here?

In Jesus' presence, the answer is always yes. But Jesus has two stories, two parables, to tell them. The first is the one we wrestled with last week. Yes. The bridegroom is actually on his way. Be ready with your lamps trimmed. Don't get distracted with foolish errands. I'm coming.

But Jesus also knows we will need more tools in order to wrestle with our impending judgement and how we feel about it. So, he says, think of it in the opposite way. I am actually going to go away for a time. And while I'm gone, you will have in your possession all the gifts of the kingdom, all the faith, hope and love that I have given you, and the point again will be: what have you done with these pow-

ers of hope and encouragement, the relationships, the opportunities, the actual wealth I have given you? Will you invest it, grow it, share it... or turn inward, misjudge me, sit on it?

We cannot understand this story unless we draw near Jesus and join in the laughter with everyone else as he describes an absolutely ridiculous amount of money being given to these slaves. This is the thing. Right now, in your hands and heart, you have every imaginable good thing at your disposal. In the kingdom, Jesus has given us power to love and persevere, mend and heal broken hearts, invite strangers, orphans, and widows into our family, and be people of peace and blessing wherever we go, wherever we live.

What do you and I think of that? Do we trust the one who has given us our life – these particular gifts and powers, relationships and possibilities? Do we get up each day and risk using what he has given us to bless others, to change the atmosphere around us? Or do we misjudge him. Do we just go and bury it and play it safe. We can only get the answer to that question by taking a long hard look in the mirror.

But smile! The parable is comical. The crowd is laughing uncontrollably. Very few people have been given this kind of wealth. But you have. Fine. Consider Bill Gates. I have my reasons for not liking him like everyone else. But in the midst of all the conspiracy theories and all the noise, look at what he is doing. He says: I can't create that vaccine that we all need. But I'm going to use my wealth, my foundation, and purchase warehouses and systems of distribution, so that we get everyone who needs it the vaccine without charge, with speed and the maximum amount of fairness.

Jesus insists. Even if you are not Bill Gates, I have given you this kind of wealth, this kind of spirit, this kind of creativity, this kind of abundance. Here. Here it is. What are you going to do with it? How stupid – or how blessed – can you be?

The Lord is going to come when we least expect it. So my friends, live each moment as if he is right around the corner. If you don't, you will miss him. Again. You will miss the opportunity to grow the skills and relationships and opportunities that are in front of you. You will miss the opportunity to establish, grow and keep you loved ones, your family.

Because in the end, it takes an abundance of faith, hope and love, to greet the day of the Lord, to live faithfully in the in between times, when you are not sure which way things are going to go, just how bad it is going to get, or whether the Lord has a place for you, and a job to do.

But look, when we are invited into the joy of our master, we know all of it is true. With just that first step of faith, that first clearing away of our sin and cynicism, that first reaching out to love another because we are grateful that we are loved, we inherit the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven will be like the day of our baptism, the day when our journey with Christ began. On that day, for each one of us, for Julio, we wake up to discover that we have received unimaginable riches, a place to be, and a job to do.

On that day we become part of the eternal family of brothers and sisters throughout the world, who enter the joy of their master. In the presence of our Heavenly Father, we will show him what we have done, what we have made of ourselves, and our brother Jesus will laugh and invite us to sit down and feast with him.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Today, and every day we are protected by the shield of faith and love, and powered by the hope of his salvation, we work and wait, as one family. Whether we are awake or asleep we live for him. Simply and powerfully put, we encourage one another and build each other up.

Thank you for doing that for one another. For me. It is what will get us through this day. And to that Day of the Lord's appearing!