

Call to worship

This is the Lord's Day, the day of wonder and grace. This is the day to worship the One who calls us here. This is the Lord's Day, the day we are given joy and peace. This is the day promised to us, the day of healing and renewal. This is the Lord's Day, and it has come just in time! This is the day we gather with hope, with faith, with love! Amen

Hymn: STF 513 – Take this moment sign, and space

1 Take this moment, sign, and space;  
take my friends around;  
here among us make the place  
where your love is found.

2 Take the time to call my name,  
take the time to mend  
who I am and what I've been,  
all I've failed to tend.

3 Take the tiredness of my days,  
take my past regret,  
letting your forgiveness touch  
all I can't forget.

4 Take the little child in me,  
scared of growing old;  
help me here to find my worth  
made in Christ's own mould.

5 Take my talents, take my skills,  
take what's yet to be;  
let my life be yours, and yet,  
let it still be me.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)  
and Graham Maule (b. 1958)  
Words and Music: From Love From Below © 1989

Prayers

Almighty and everlasting God, We are here to worship you. Meet with us afresh this day. We come to reflect on your greatness, Your otherness. Your righteousness, And your holiness. Meet with us afresh this day. We come to praise you for your faithfulness, Your goodness, Your kindness, And your forgiveness. Meet with us afresh this day. We come through the grace of Christ, And in the power of your Holy Spirit, Recognising you as our God, Our father, And our creator. Meet with us afresh this day. Meet with us afresh this day, Filling us with the knowledge of your presence, And so help us to walk each day In the light of your love, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father of Mercy and grace, we lift to you now our struggles to be faithful disciples. Entrusted with all your gifts, We are aware of all the times we have misused the gifts freely given to us, and so often we have missed the chance to be a blessing to others, through the gifts you have given us. Invited to dance in the light of your great love, we choose to stand against the wall, propped up by the darkness of our world and our own thoughts. **Have mercy, Journeying God, have mercy on us.** Once again, open our eyes to your kingdom in our midst, so we might discover that your day of hope and grace has already come in Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Silence is kept.**

This is the good news: God intends for us to find life, to embrace hope, to receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Servant King. The end of our journey is not rejection and emptiness, but the fullness of grace and hope in our God. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven. Amen.

Readings:

1 Thessalonians 5: 1 – 11:-

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> you do not need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! <sup>4</sup>But you, beloved,<sup>[b]</sup> are not in

darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; <sup>5</sup> for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; <sup>7</sup> for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Matthew 25: 14 – 30:-

<sup>14</sup> “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup> to one he gave five talents, <sup>16</sup> to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup> The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup> But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> Then 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.’ <sup>21</sup> His 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.’ <sup>22</sup> And 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.’ <sup>23</sup> His 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.’ <sup>24</sup> Then 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; <sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup> But 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? <sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For 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. <sup>30</sup> As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

### Sermon

A Croatian immigrant living in California who was a superb furniture maker, it was amazing what he could make with pieces of wood and the gift of his hands. But he didn’t feel he was very good, and not wanting to risk failure or being without an income, he took a regular job in an office as a Practice Manager in a Doctors surgery. Sadly his furniture making never became more than a hobby. You might say that he buried his real gift and real talent, because stepping out and doing it full time was too scary. Our reading from Matthew challenges us about first recognising the talents or gifts or Skills that we have been given by God. But beyond recognising them, we are challenged to use them wisely, to take risks, because God does expect a return on his investment, he expects fruit for the kingdom.

So let’s dive into our readings and see where the spirit takes us. The artist Henri Matisse once famously said of Jazz: “There are wonderful things in real jazz, the talent for improvisation, the liveliness, the being at one with the audience.” Matthew this morning requires us to step out and use wisely the talents we are given by God. And Like Jazz that stepping out requires improvisation – because the score of our lives has not yet been written – it is ours to dance and play, to be Gods spiritual entrepreneurs. No one has yet fully played the tune of life, that is uniquely ours to play, that is given to us by God. So what are you going to do with your Jazz Tune of Life? What are you going to do with Talent God has given you?

In today's story a rich man is about to go on a long journey. Before departing he entrusts his money to three slaves. He gives five talents to one, two to another, and one to the third slave. Upon the master's return we learn that the first two slaves doubled the amount they received. However, the third slave was fearful so he buried his one talent so as not to lose it. But, there was no increase. And although the Master was well pleased with the first two servants, he rebukes and strips away the talents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Servant who failed to use his talents to increase the kingdom. This parable may seem a little odd in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but it was have been very normal in Jesus' context. Often the master, before he went away, would entrust his most trustworthy servant with these large sums, and to try and make a handsome profit. Wine, oil, grain, textiles, pottery, land, shipping, or whatever. He took the big risk and allowed them to make their own decisions.

What was the value of a talent? In silver it would be substantial the equivalent of 15 years wages for a labourer. In gold it would be a small fortune. The point I wish to make is that it stood for a large sum of money. He expected them to take a similar risk. They were to put what was entrusted to them to good use. That is, what you do with what you have been given is never, ever, for your benefit alone, but for the sake of the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. At the end of the day, judgment in this parable means an acute awareness of God. An awareness of God's presence. An awareness of God's promise to God's creation. An awareness of God's justice. An awareness of God's insistence that a commitment to being the salt of the earth and the light of the world really, really matters. It means believing that God meant it when God called you and your unique set of talents. I want to say you – God Trusts us with his Kingdom – and he was very serious that it was for us to grow the kingdom. It is now up to us whether we succeed or fail. It's a high risk strategy from God, but one he knows we have within us to fulfil, because he created us, as unique as we are, to build the kingdom. And he is with us, until the end of the age.

The ongoing nature of building the kingdom, being trustworthy and faithful servants of God, is a sobering and focusing thought for us all. Even when we might be feeling tired, overworked, ready to take a rest – Christ calls us to continue his work, to build the kingdom, to build each other up.

This is an invitation to enter into a different world. Jesus clearly wants us to understand, that those servants who risked what they had, and made more, were in fact rewarded, and given even more. Wise risk-taking opens us to a world of possibilities. When we open ourselves to divine possibility and energy, we may initially feel insecure, but the frontiers of uncertainty and insecurity are full of promise for visionary risk-takers. What prudent risks do we need to take as individuals and as a community of faith, here in our Circuit? What are we missing in our current plans for mission and outreach in our community here? Do we need to take more risks – that God might graciously reward us? God wants us to have life in all its abundance, but we must reach out for it and grab the torch of light and love, and claim it for ourselves.

Improvise, Grow the Kingdom, and Build each other up . . . So how does this all resonate for us here, in the Dorset South and West Circuit, this morning? There is no room for Fear, we mustn't bury the treasures of the Kingdom, we must take prudent risks, that grow the kingdom, that grow our love for God and for all our neighbours. The God who is love is a risk taker. We are called to be like him. For loving is always a risk. Trusting the love of God in Christ Jesus, He calls us to Live dangerously. So do you fancy doing some improvisation, Exploring that Jazzy Freedom, of seeing where the music, and rhythms take us? We must be Bold. We must share our faith, We must seek ways to grow the Kingdom And to find ways to Love God and Love our neighbours. Amen

Prayers of intercession

God, most gracious and most holy,  
grant us the help of your Spirit  
as we pray for the Church and the world.

We pray for the Church in every land . . .  
for this church and for other local churches . . .  
that we may worship and serve you  
with reverence and joy.

**Lord Hear Us . . . Lord Graciously Hear Us**

We pray for the peoples of the world . . .  
and for the leaders of the nations . . .  
that all may work together for justice and peace.

**Lord Hear Us . . . Lord Graciously Hear Us**

We pray for those who are ill or distressed . . .  
for the lonely and the bereaved . . .  
and for those in any other need or trouble . . .  
that they may be comforted and sustained.

**Lord Hear Us . . . Lord Graciously Hear Us**

Father, we remember before you  
all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ . . .

We pray that we too may lead faithful and godly lives in this world, and finally share with all the  
saints in everlasting joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

#### The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done;  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And Lead us not into temptation;  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.**

#### Blessing

Our Worship is not over, It has just begun, For God is with us, every moment of every day.

We are called afresh today, to live and work, Using our God given Talents, To build and renew Kingdom,  
In this place and far beyond. So the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Be With you,  
With those you Love, And those you are called to Love, Now, in the Name of Christ.  
Amen.