The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
November 15, 2026
Text: Matthew 25:14-30
"Who is Your Master?"

Today, we have heard another one of Jesus' parables of the End under God's reign. We may know it as the parable of the talents. It is a story of trust. Before embarking on a journey from home, a man entrusts his property into the care of his three servants. He knows them well enough to assign them each of them responsibility for his wealth in accordance with their ability. One servant is charged with the stewardship of nearly two-thirds of his property, the next, with one quarter, and the last with the remaining, modest portion.

Upon his departure, the man's servants get to work. The first two take what has been given to them and they use it to invest in others' work, doubling the wealth with their industry, while their master is away. The other slave takes a shovel, digs a hole, and carefully hides his master's wealth in the ground for safe keeping. That is quite different.

After the passage of a lot of time, the man returns home, and he calls for his servants to show him what they have done with the property that he had entrusted to them. The first two slaves gladly return their master's original endowment with the additional earnings that they accrued with it. The third returns the original sum to his master, safe and secure, if a little soiled from its time in hiding. At length, he also justifies his very conservative treatment of his master's property.

Why did he hide his portion of his master's wealth? He was afraid. Perhaps afraid lest it be stolen from him, but especially afraid of his master, for he knew him to be *"a hard man, reaping where [he] did not sow, and gathering where [he] scattered no seed."* He did not trust the one he served. He saw him as mean and unfair. He begrudged him the right of employing servants like himself to conduct his industry, making them do his sowing and reaping while he profited from their labours. He feared what his master might do to him if his attempts to invest his wealth like the other servants had resulted in loss instead of gain. It was too much for him to risk, so he played it safe. He hadn't lost anything entrusted to him. What could his master say?

He probably did not hope for anything like the praise his colleagues had received for their service: *"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."* But do you think he was ready to hear this:

"You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents… And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"?

What lay at the root of this servant's ruin? Why had he been afraid of his master? Somehow, he did not know him as did the other two servants. Where they trusted him and confidently went about doing business in his name, he feared the man, resented having to serve him, and attempted to discharge his responsibilities with as little trouble as possible. How sad that he has so completely misjudged his master.

Jesus' parable teaches us about His coming judgment. When He returns, to reveal the glory of His heavenly kingdom here on earth, Jesus will also call us, His servants, before Him to give an accounting of our service in life. Now that does sound a little scary, doesn't it? How well have you and I employed our Lord's gift of words to speak the truth in love for benefit the people around us? Have we worried that in our short lives there isn't enough time for us to do the things that we want to do, so we haven't shared our time with others to help them in their needs? Have we suffered painful, unwanted experiences that have left us unsure of the trustworthiness of our Master? Jesus is our True Master, and we are His servants, but none of us fully trust Him or serve Him as wholeheartedly as we ought. By nature, we are all wicked, slothful servants of our Master.

Yet none of us were called by Christ because we can serve Him so well. He knows our weakness and the bondage to sin in which we were all born. Jesus calls us by His pure grace, the same grace that led Him to descend from Heaven to be born of Mary, baptized with sinners by John, steadfastly obedient to the will of God His Father by keeping the commands of His Law and by offering Himself on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Christ lived and died to redeem us from slavery to sin, death and Satan, and He was raised from the dead to call us to His side as His forgiven, divinely adopted brothers and sisters. Having set us free from our old evil masters, Jesus has Himself become our Master, and He calls us His dear servants.

We belong to Christ, who gave Himself for us in love, and promises us eternal life. He is no hard, uncaring, or unjust Master. When we come to Him to confess our failures to serve Him as we ought, He intercedes before the Father on our behalf, and our Father forgives us

fully His promises of our redemption from sin and death, our freedom from the devil's condemnation, and of God's gracious will to work all things together for our good and eternal salvation all renew, strengthen, and increase our faith in our Gracious God. Through faith, we know God is our Dear and Kind Master, and we do not fear His judgment. Jesus suffered that for us. Led by that faith, we respond to God's call each day with joyful confidence, happy to use the lives He has entrusted to us for His glory, and ready to risk failure and persecution because we know and depend on our Master's mercy.

Learn from God's promises to know your Master as He truly is: your generous Creator, your self-giving Saviour, and your faith-renewing Sanctifier - God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is He who calls us His people, entrusts us with His gifts, and calls us to serve others with our everyday lives. Our Master is at work in us, both to will and to do His good pleasure, so we rest our faith in His promise to bring His work, in and through us, to completion of the Day of His return (Philippians 2:10; 1:6). Until then, we will serve Him with trust in His saving promise and hope of hearing His unmerited praise: *"'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"* Amen.