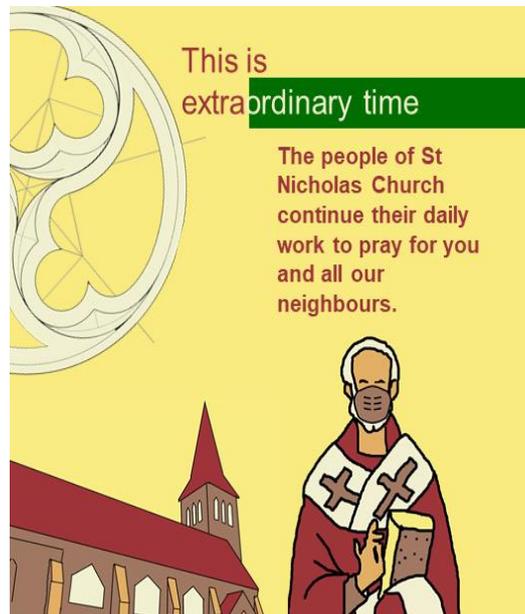


**Worship at St. Nicholas, Sutton  
for 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Advent, 15 November 2020  
Collect, hymns, readings & sermon**



Please join me for our service at 10.30am today (or at another convenient time) by following the Order of Service and singing in your own home.

I will be thinking of you all and praying for you at The Rectory at the same time and longing for our future reunion in Church.

*Frances*

Revd Frances Arnold, Priest-in-Charge

**Collect** (prayer of the week)

Heavenly Father,  
whose blessed Son was revealed  
to destroy the works of the devil  
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:  
grant that we, having this hope,  
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;  
that when he shall appear in power and great glory  
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;  
where he is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Hymns**

Opening *O God our help in ages past*

Gradual *Jesus lives! thy terrors now*

## Readings

**Zephaniah 1.7, 12-end** *The Coming Judgement on Judah, The Great Day of the LORD*

<sup>7</sup> Be silent before the Lord GOD!

For the day of the LORD is at hand;  
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,  
he has consecrated his guests.

<sup>12</sup> At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the people  
who rest complacently\* on their dregs,  
those who say in their hearts,  
'The LORD will not do good,  
nor will he do harm.'

<sup>13</sup> Their wealth shall be plundered,  
and their houses laid waste.  
Though they build houses,  
they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they shall not drink wine from them.

<sup>14</sup> The great day of the LORD is near,  
near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter,  
the warrior cries aloud there.

<sup>15</sup> That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
<sup>16</sup> a day of trumpet blast and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

<sup>17</sup> I will bring such distress upon people  
that they shall walk like the blind;  
because they have sinned against the LORD,  
their blood shall be poured out like dust,  
and their flesh like dung.

<sup>18</sup> Neither their silver nor their gold  
will be able to save them  
on the day of the LORD's wrath;  
in the fire of his passion  
the whole earth shall be consumed;  
for a full, a terrible end  
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

### **1 Thessalonians 5.1-11**

#### *The Coming of the Lord*

<sup>5</sup>Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,\* 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 labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! <sup>4</sup>But you, beloved,\* 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**

#### *The Parable of the Talents*

<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,\* 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**

Jesus continues to tell parables about the kingdom of heaven. This one is set in the realm of finance. The slave who receives one talent is afraid to invest his master's money and hides it in a hole in the ground to protect it. A 'talent' was a large sum of money worth roughly what a labourer could earn in fifteen years. What the slave did is perhaps equivalent to withdrawing life savings from the bank and hiding them under the bed. But the parable isn't about the financial wisdom of the slave's actions. It is telling us about the kingdom.

The basic story emphasises the generosity of the master (God). He trusts all three of his slaves to invest his capital while he is away. His relationship with the first two slaves is one of mutual trust and they are rewarded for their conscientiousness by being given additional responsibility.

Jesus' audience would have understood the parable to be addressed to those entrusted with the word of God. The scribes had received the promises about how Israel would be blessed and through Israel the whole world. They were expected to develop God's gift like the first two slaves. We also, in the present day, should be good stewards of God's gifts and promises and not bury them in the ground as the third slave did.

As Matthew writes it, the parable has also become an urgent warning to the disciples and to early Christians who believed that the end of the world was coming. They needed to be ready for the last judgement. What can we learn from this parable about judgement? The first part of the parable, which

emphasises the generosity of the master, takes us some of the way. God rewards generously as well as judging. The bleak ending helps us to take this understanding further. In Matthew's gospel the parable of the talents comes at a point where the story of Jesus is about to reach its great climax: Jesus 'gives his life as a ransom for many' (Mark). When Jesus speaks of someone being thrown into the darkness, we should remember that he was himself on the way into the darkness. And we are reminded in our reading from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians that:

God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us...so that we may live through him. Therefore let us encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.'

The parable is at the same time both a reminder of the love and generosity of God (who created and loves the world and who sent Jesus as a personal expression of his love) and a warning not to neglect the gift we've been given. We need in our own generation to keep the promises of God alive. **Amen.**