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24<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Pentecost 24

November 15, 2020  
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

## PENTECOST 24

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Israel did what was evil “in the eyes of the LORD.” Our sins harm both ourselves and others, but all sin is ultimately against GOD because it disregards His commands and His authority over us. When confessing his sin, David prayed in Psalm 51: <sup>4</sup> **Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.** When we recognise the seriousness of sin, we take the first step toward removing it from our lives.

The Israelites had chariots – the tanks of the ancient world. Made of iron or wood, they were pulled along by 1 or 2 horses – and were the most feared and powerful weapons of the day. The Canaanite army had 900 iron chariots – and Israel was not powerful enough to defeat

such an invincible army. Therefore, Jabin and Sisera had no trouble oppressing the people – until a faithful woman called Deborah called upon GOD.

After 20 years of unbearable circumstances, the Israelites finally cried to the LORD for help. But GOD should be the first place we turn when we are facing struggles or dilemmas. The Israelites chose to go their own way and got into a mess. We often do the same. Trying to control our own lives without GOD's help leads to struggle and confusion. By contrast, when we stay in daily contact with the LORD, we are less likely to create painful circumstances for ourselves. This is a lesson the Israelites never fully learned. When struggles come our way, GOD wants us to come to Him first – seeking His strength and guidance.

Deborah was an exceptional woman. She was the best person for the job and GOD chose her to lead Israel. GOD can choose anyone to lead His people – young or old, man or woman – and we mustn't let our prejudices get in the way of those GOD has chosen to lead us.

Barak wanted Deborah to go with Him into battle – showing that he trusted in human strength rather than GOD’s promise. A person of real faith steps out at GOD’s command – even if he or she must do so alone. You may be wondering how Deborah commanded so much respect? She was responsible for leading the people into battle – but more than that, she influenced them to live for GOD after the battle was over. Her personality drew people together and commanded the respect of even Barak, a military general. She was also a prophet; whose main role was to encourage the people to obey GOD. Those who lead must not forget about the spiritual condition of those being led. A true leader is concerned for persons, not just success.

Psalm 123 is another of the songs of ascent – where we are encouraged to be attentive to GOD’s leading.

Paul tells us in his first letter to the Thessalonians that efforts to determine the date of CHRIST’s return are foolish. Don’t be misled by anyone who claims to know. We are told here that no-one knows and that even

believers will be surprised. The LORD will return suddenly and unexpectedly, warns Paul, so we need to be ready. Because no one knows when JESUS will come back to earth, we should be prepared at all times. Suppose He were to return today. How would He find us living? Are we ready to meet Him? We need to live each day prepared to welcome CHRIST.

The “day of the LORD” is a future time when GOD will intervene directly and dramatically in world affairs. Predicted and discussed by the Old Testament Prophets, the day of the LORD will include both punishment and blessing. CHRIST will judge sin and set up His eternal kingdom.

It is good that we don't know exactly when CHRIST will return. If we knew the precise date, we might be tempted to be lazy in our work for CHRIST. Worse yet, we might plan to keep on sinning and then turn to GOD right at the end. Heaven is not our only goal; we have work to do here. Christians must keep on doing GOD's work until

death or until we see the unmistakable return of our Saviour.

I think we are all aware that encouragement from others at the right time is always beneficial. As Christians, we should encourage one another regularly. A word of encouragement offered at the right time can be the difference between finishing well or collapsing along the way. We need to be sensitive to other's need for encouragement and offer supportive words or actions.

A couple of days ago I watched a short video online where a son decided to take his father's red Mercedes Benz – which hadn't been driven for many years – and clean it up. Apparently, the man had driven it into a shed near their house and never driven it again for approximately 10 years. It was coated with dust, hardened dirt on the steering wheel and window sills on the doors, dead mice and their nests in the engine bay, caked on mud in the wheel arches – I think you get the message. The son and his mate washed, scrubbed, buffed, and polished. The original paintwork on the car

was in remarkably good condition. The car came up a treat and the father was shocked and pleasantly surprised at the end result. All it needed now was a new battery and a tune-up and the car could be used for its original purpose once again.

I also read the following by Amy Welborn in her book “2020 – A Book of Grace Filled Days” which says:

“My neighbour has a vintage red and white caravan parked in her driveway, a few feet from my kitchen window. We have lived here for over 6 years, and it’s never been moved, no one has ever used it or even cracked a door open on it. The years pass, the colours fade, the dirt collects and there it sits. I try not to be “that neighbour,” but yes, I get irritated. Why does she have it sit there if she’s not going to use it? But then I listen to what I am saying, and I accept that perhaps I’d be better off – as usual – turning that question around. What has the LORD given me? What am I doing with it? Is it just sitting there, deep within, gathering dust?”

At first glance, our gospel passage for today makes it sound as though JESUS is giving us a lesson in investment banking! The master in the story cares only about how much money his servants had made for him. A “talent” was a unit of money in JESUS’ time. What JESUS really wants us to pay attention to is the master’s words of congratulation to the industrious servant: **Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities.** The responsibilities JESUS has in mind are all those ways we can build up the Church and the world by using the gifts GOD has bestowed on us. For example, if I was to have the gift of patience, then I would be able to listen well to what another person is saying – even if that person was angry – without yelling back. When I let the other person speak without cutting him or her off, I allow that person to express feelings clearly. When I show patience and understanding, we might be able to work out our differences or become closer friends. The master gave talents to his servants, expecting them to put those talents to work. The



industrious servant doubled the money that his master gave him. So, in the same way, we are expected to use the gifts and talents GOD give us and “double” them. When we share them with others, they will expand because we all benefit. When we share our gifts and talents with others, we are building up the Kingdom of GOD in the world. We “share the master’s joy” because we make the most of our gifts. GOD is very happy. We will also find great joy ourselves in loving others in this way.



Our passage from Judges teaches us that when we do things our own way, we muck it up. It is not until we come to our senses – as David did in Psalm 51: <sup>4</sup> **Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement** – that we realise that we should have gone to GOD first, and NOT as a last resort.

Psalm 123 encourages us to be attentive to GOD's leading always.

Paul, in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Thessalonians, teaches us that to determine the date of CHRIST's return is foolish and that we must not be misled by anyone who claims to know. The LORD will return suddenly and unexpectedly, so we need to be ready.

And our Gospel passage today encourages us to share our gifts and talents with others so that more people can benefit from them. Sister Kym Harris, a Benedictine nun puts it this way:

“The principle of ‘use it or lose it’ is demonstrated clearly in today's Gospel. A basic principle of human existence is that we improve by actually doing – not by wishing, wanting, or reading – but by actually having a go in our real and practical world. The way we accept a gift of GOD is to work at making ourselves more proficient in its use and the way to glory in our giftedness is to use our gifts in the loving service of others. The image we have of GOD can hamper or hinder how we go about this. If

we view GOD as a tough Master waiting to pounce on our every failing, we will be like the third slave, whinging and ineffective – blaming others (or GOD) for our failure. But if we view GOD as a generous, creative Master, who has lavishly bestowed on us differing abilities and who daily offers us opportunities to show living kindness and mercy to all, we will find ourselves not only desiring to be like GOD, but acting like Him as well. Then we will find that our lives are rich in love and that we have entered into the joy of our Master.”



May we pray:

Gracious GOD, Your care for us is beyond all measure and never ceases to strengthen our desire to serve you. Grant that we show our gratitude by living justly, always mindful of the needs of our brothers and sisters. This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

GOD's Word 2020

Daily Prayer 2020

Celebrating the Lectionary Year A – Garratt Publishing – p238