SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2026
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
JUDGES 4:1-7 *"POSITION YOURSELF"*

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**Please stand if comfortably able.*
Respond with words in bold print.
Bible translation – CEB Common English Bible

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:
THE BELL IS RUNG:
PRELUDE: "Take My Life, and Let it Be Consecrated" Mark Hayes
PENNIES FOR MISSION:
Open and Affirming Coalition

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**
(inspired by Psalms 123 and 90)
One: Lift up our spirits to the God enthroned in the heavens!
Many: The Holy One is our dwelling place from generation to generation.
One: LIft up our hearts to the God who shapes us and guides us.
Many: The Holy One is God, forming the earth, the world, and the universe.
One: Lift up our worship before the Holy One who is God.
Many: The Holy One teaches us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. Praise God!

***INVOCATION:**
Present God, we worship you and honor your name. Open our hearts with thanksgiving, awe, and possibility. Make your word be written on our hearts and your purpose ignite a fire within our souls. As we gather as a community, may our faith be renewed, our trust strengthened, and our courage increased. Be glorified in our midst, O God. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 420 "We Praise You, O God"**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Righteous God, too often, we seek positions of privilege and power for our own benefit. We accept the ways of the world in order to receive validation, acceptance, and temporary satisfaction. Transform our hearts and our ways to reflect your kingdom. Grant us courage to live as you demonstrate and empower us for your glory and honor. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Christ-follower, God is with you. Receive wisdom and power to continue in the way of Jesus through trials and struggle. Find your validation and affirmation in the unconditional and boundless love of God. Embrace the guidance of the Spirit and the companionship of Jesus as you choose justice and righteousness as your position and purpose. Amen.

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

OLD TESTAMENT: Judges 4:1-7
Deborah, Barak, and Jael

4 After Ehud had died, the Israelites again did things that
the Lord saw as evil. 2 So the Lord gave them over to King
Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander
of his army was Sisera, and he was stationed in
Harosheth-ha-goiim. 3 The Israelites cried out to the Lord
because Sisera[a] had nine hundred iron chariots and had
oppressed the Israelites cruelly for twenty years.
4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was a
leader of Israel at that time. 5 She would sit under
Deborah's palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the
Ephraim highlands, and the Israelites would come to her
to settle disputes. 6 She sent word to Barak, Abinoam's
son, from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "Hasn't
the Lord, Israel's God, issued you a command? 'Go and
assemble at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand men from
the people of Naphtali and Zebulun with you. 7 I'll lure
Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to assemble with
his chariots and troops against you at the Kishon River,
and then I'll help you overpower him.'"

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 123 Page 705 - 706

EPISTLE: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 The words of Paul

The Lord's coming

5 We don't need to write to you about the timing and
dates, brothers and sisters. [2] You know very well that the
day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night.
[3] When they are saying, "There is peace and security," at
that time sudden destruction will attack them, like labor
pains start with a pregnant woman, and they definitely
won't escape. [4] But you aren't in darkness, brothers and
sisters, so the day won't catch you by surprise like a
thief. [5] All of you are children of light and children of the
day. We don't belong to night or darkness. [6] So then, let's
not sleep like the others, but let's stay awake and stay
sober. [7] People who sleep sleep at night, and people who
get drunk get drunk at night. [8] Since we belong to the
day, let's stay sober, wearing faithfulness and love as a
piece of armor that protects our body[a] and the hope of
salvation as a helmet. [9] God didn't intend for us to suffer
his wrath but rather to possess salvation through our
Lord Jesus Christ. [10] Jesus died for us so that, whether we
are awake or asleep, we will live together with him. [11] So
continue encouraging each other and building each
other up, just like you are doing already.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 25:14-30**

Parable of the valuable coins

[14] "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving
on a trip. He called his servants and handed his
possessions over to them. [15] To one he gave five valuable
coins, and to another he gave two, and to another he
gave one. He gave to each servant according to that
servant's ability. Then he left on his journey.
[16] "After the man left, the servant who had five valuable
coins took them and went to work doing business with
them. He gained five more. [17] In the same way, the one
who had two valuable coins gained two more. [18] But the
servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a
hole in the ground and buried his master's money.
[19] "Now after a long time the master of those servants
returned and settled accounts with them. [20] The one
who had received five valuable coins came forward with
five additional coins. He said, 'Master, you gave me five
valuable coins. Look, I've gained five more.'
[21] "His master replied, 'Excellent! You are a good and
faithful servant! You've been faithful over a little. I'll put
you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'
[22] "The second servant also came forward and said,
'Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I've
gained two more.'
[23] "His master replied, 'Well done! You are a good and
faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I'll put
you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'

[24] "Now the one who had received one valuable coin
came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man.

You harvest grain where you haven't sown. You gather crops where you haven't spread seed. [25] So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what's yours.'

[26] "His master replied, 'You evil and lazy servant! You knew that I harvest grain where I haven't sown and that I gather crops where I haven't spread seed? [27] In that case, you should have turned my money over to the bankers so that when I returned, you could give me what belonged to me with interest. [28] Therefore, take from him the valuable coin and give it to the one who has ten coins. [29] Those who have much will receive more, and they will have more than they need. But as for those who don't have much, even the little bit they have will be taken away from them. [30] Now take the worthless servant and throw him out into the farthest darkness.' "People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

MESSAGE: "What Does this Parable Mean?"

I know the Bible says that Jesus always taught in Parables because the people who followed Jesus would understand them. I guess I was born in the wrong century because, most of the time, I don't understand them. But maybe that's what Jesus had in mind for our time; we need to search for what Jesus was trying to express. I had to read several commentaries several times to finally "get it." I hope you "get it" after my explanation.

First of all, my commentaries explained that a talent was not a coin. Maybe the editors of our pew Bibles thought it would help us if we used common terms. Rev. William Barclay wrote, "the talent was not a coin, it was a weight, and therefore its value obviously depended on whether the coinage involved was copper, gold or silver. The most common metal involved was silver; and the value of a talent of silver was worth about fifteen Years' wages for a working man."

Rev. N. T. Wright described a talent as a unit of money, worth roughly what a laborer could ear in 15 years. Our Modern word talent, in the sense of the gifts or skills than an individual possesses, is derived from this, precisely because of this parable. Interesting. Then Rev. Wright, in his commentary, asks us a question to "chew on". "In what sense had the slaves been given something that corresponds to the gift of the talent? Hmmm.

Now that we have defined what a talent is, let's go back for a few minutes. Rev. Wright begins his commentary by talking about our modern school and final exams. Evidently, when he wrote this his children were in the middle of their exams and Rev. Wright talked about how important in was to do well on this exams;

the entire future of each of these students depends on how they do on these exams.

I didn't realize that using school and exams are not good metaphors for Christians. Rev Wright writes, "there is always a danger that people will regard Christianity , and for that matter Judaism, as a kind of heavenly examination system. God, so people think, has given us a syllabus to study, things to learn and do, rules to keep. One day he'll come and set the final examination, and see who passes and who fails. Maybe there will be specially good things in store for people who get specially good marks, and likewise specially bad things for people with bad marks. And at first sight a parable like this one simply reinforces that impression.

Rev. Wright continues, "But of course the whole of Jesus' ministry should make us protest against such a view of Christianity of the gospel, of God and Godself. Jesus declared that he had come to call, not the righteous, but sinners. He had come, he said, to seek and to save the lost."

In this gospel of Matthew, the author spent an entire chapter (23) telling the self-appointed leaders of the Jewish people how dangerous it was simply to think of things in terms of al the rules they had to try to keep. In this parable the Pharisees and the scribes are represented by the wicked servant who had hid his master's wealth.

The scribes and Pharisees had been given the law of Moses. They had been given the temple, the sign of God's presence among them. They had been given wonderful promises about how God would bless not only Israel but, through Israel, the whole world. AND THEY HAD BURIED ALL THIS IN THE GROUND. They had turned the command to be the light of the world into an encouragement to keep the light for themselves. They had been the worthless slaves.

What about the other two slaves? They are, it seems, those who hear the call of Jesus and, on that basis, develop what Israel has already been given so that it now becomes something new. They are like the mustard seed that starts out small but grows very large. They are the signs that God's kingdom is starting to bud and blossom. And now, when Jesus had come to Jerusalem to force the final confrontation between God's kingdom and the system that had resisted and opposed it – then those who are loyal to him will be like those who have made wise use of the money that had been entrusted to them.

I say again, those who are loyal to Jesus will be like those slaves who made wise use of the money that had been entrusted to them. It's all about what you do with the talents and blessings each of us has been given. Hide them or use them to help others?

This parable was given to the people very soon to the climax of the entire story. The son of man gives his life as a ransom for many. When Jesus speaks of someone being thrown into the darkness outside, where people weep and grind their teeth, we must never forget that he was himself on the way into the darkness, where even he would sense himself abandoned by God. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "We Will Serve Him" Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:
Bountiful God, we begin by voicing our gratitude through prayer and song and offering of ourselves in dedication to your church. You are saving us from our sins as we trust in Jesus Christ our Savior and worship in the Spirit.

We know that in any age there are temptations and challenges. We want to be our best for you, Jesus, but sometimes we slip up. We forget to check on our neighbor who just had surgery. We forget to offer to pick up groceries for those who are unable or have run out of money to pay for food this time of the month. There are so many ways we slip up. We ask the Holy Spirit to lift us up out of the mire of selfishness and to remember others more than ourselves. May we strengthen our loyalties and our love for God who cares for us no matter what.

Even if it didn't directly affect our family, we pray for all those whose homes, farms, and possessions have been impacted by the recent storms and tornadoes in our state. We pray for those who are ill, lonely, in pain, those recovering in hospitals or in their homes.

We remember all people who live differently than we do, those who have different ideas than we do, those who dress differently, those who spend their money differently. Different doesn't mean we should turn our backs on them. They are children of the same creator we are. Help us love them and stop using the word "different". We pray all these things. . .

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:
PRAER RESPONSE: 775
And od will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of God's hand.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY
Let us position ourselves for the generous life and demonstrate that commitment through our resources of time, talent, and treasure for the glory of God.

OFFERTORY: "I'm Gonna Live So" Wendall Whalum

***DOXOLOGY:**
Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**
Generous God, please receive these gifts from the position of love to elevate the position of our neighbor, our witness, and our faith community. Magnify them and bless us as we give. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 329 "Jesus, the Joy of Loving Hearts"**
First four verses

***BENEDICTION:**
May love position you for service.
May trust position you for faithfulness.
May hope position you for the kindom.
And, may peace position you to rest in the covenant of God.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571
O God of Love, O God of Peace
Make wars throughout the world to cease.
The wrath of human wrong restrain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "I Will Serve Thee" William J. Gaither

PRAYER LIST: Cindy Jablonski**,** Jim Warning**,** Kim Holmes, Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Wayne Huss, Liv. C., Nate Hbich, **our Beloved Country.**