**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**19th November 2023**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

**Gathering**

And in the financial news today

Interest rates are down

Sunak declares victory after CPI tumbles

Some economists fear we are on the precipice of a painful crash

Interest rates are higher than inflation rates

A shot in the arm for the economy

But whole business models are based on low interest rates

Economic strategies that underpin the economy

Will now come unstuck

Government bought every bond when rates were zero

Now Government deficits are outrageously high

And with interest rates at their highest for 15 years

All that debt is coming due

I have understood nothing of what I have just said

My investment strategy is to hide everything under my bed

Which is almost like a story Jesus once told

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and we find ourselves with a story about talents… the financial kind… and how you look after them when your boss leaves you… and lets you do as you like with his money… But not all is as it seems… Let us worship.

**Scripture Introduction**

The gospel of Matthew is shaped in a particular way to illustrate something about Jesus… There are five main sections… that mirror the first five book of the Old Testament… the Jewish Torah… Matthew’s point was to show that Jesus was the new Moses… However,… many feel that Matthew has shaped the last few chapters and stories… editing them to suit the community to which he was writing rather than simply repeating them as they were originally heard…

Gospel writers do that all the time… each gospel is written for a particular community and you can see the concerns and issues of that community in the way stories have been emphasised and edited… Some suggest that the stories this week and next… have been given a greater importance to Matthew’s community than they originally had when told by Jesus… because they address concerns that rose in the community after Jesus…

The first question… however… is how would the original hearers hear the story? … who would they identify with? … and the way the story is edited… they probably would have identified with no one… and they certainly wouldn’t have found God in the parable either…

**Reading Matthew 25:14-30**

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

**Prayer**

Holy God

Beyond markets and politics

Beyond theory and strategy

Beyond economy and finance

Great God

Who sits on your throne in the heavens

And watches

Playing some game of chess with us

Or

Holy God

Who knows the hunger of the poor

Who sits at empty tables in cold houses

Who sees the rich become richer

And who lives on the other side of the gap

Great God

Who is up to your neck in this world

And lives among us

In what is unjust

And imbalanced

We meet you here

In a holy place

Because your broken

Confused

Hungry people

Are here

Holy because we bring our questions

Our love

Our need for forgiveness

Our humanity

And seek you

In the midst

A God who is attached and ingrained and bound to this world

And its rollercoaster ride

Between wars and economy

Fear and joy

Uncertain future and broken past

In this place

This community

It all comes together

Comes near

And is found in you

Holy One

May we pause within that

Within you

With each other

Pause

So be it

Amen

**Reflection**

Talents… skills… gift… aptitude… An easy parable to interpret… if the word talent means talent… as in skill… but of course… it doesn’t…

Life could never be that simple… especially with a gospel parable… It is much bigger than that…

When you read a kingdom parable… and you hear there is a king involved… then usually you understand king as God… but… the issue here is… the king… or landowner… is hardly Godlike… In fact, he is everything but Godlike…

The third servant describes him well… You reap where you do not sow… He’s a land grabber… and those who first heard the story will have immediately been able to identify him… as one of those people who became rich off their backs… and all the clearer because the Torah was quite specific… When the twelve tribes entered the Promised Land… the "promise" was that every family would receive and hold a share of that land - FOREVER… Therefore… those who had grown rich way beyond others… did so by stealing what belonged to others…

And the whole business of what the servants do with the money they have been given… the first and the second servants double the wealthy landowner’s money… And we’ve built a whole model of church on that strategy…

All I can imagine is that Jesus is beelin’… because as someone said of this passage… this is **NOT** intended to be an introductory lesson on how the Kingdom of Heaven is like modern Western capitalism… using wealth to make even more wealth… and just to be open about this… I have a pension and I know it relies on exactly that principle… so this parable knocks hard on my door…

What is actually happening here is…

Well let’s reframe the characters… The king is a robber baron… He owns land that isn’t originally his… stealing it… and making sure those who live on the land become subservient and work for him… constantly in debt to him… The original hearer would have completely understood that…

The servants are his henchmen… Two of them take the money and invest it… To them more will be given… (small question, is that really a kingdom ethic: those who have, more will be given, those with less, what they have will be taken away… I’ll leave that with you) …

The third servant is the interesting one… He’s a whistleblower… He sees what is happening as a Ponzi scheme… and chooses not to participate… But more than that… he bears witness to… and draws attention to the injustice of what the landowner is doing…

The third servant doesn’t harm anyone except himself… It is non-violent resistance if you want… but he calls the king out… and publicly rejects him and refuses to participate in an unjust scheme… where the few acquire wealth by making the many poorer…

And so, the king vents his spleen… the usual response to an elite who has been publicly shamed by someone ‘beneath him'… We’ve seen that a few times recently…

But the third servant realises what is happening here… he knows the consequences… he is risking everything by not taking part in this scheme… There is no traditional good news… or happily ever after… This is known as a wisdom parable rather than a kingdom parable… that simply makes known… what the world does to all those who do not participate in the injustices of the world…

It is a social justice parable… not one about perfecting our talents… that’s for those who are less engaged with the world… calling out… bearing witness to what is unjust… is a bigger more costly calling… Where will our future church find itself?…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

The world hurts

And it hurts those who love it

Who care for its beauty

Long for its justice

It is a hard thing to do

To keep loving

Keep caring

Keep calling out the darkness

May we find that strength

For the sake of Gazans

Israelis

Ukrainians

Russians

Syrians

Too many

For the sake of the hungry

The poor

The folk unable to lift themselves out of poverty

For politics that are mean

Language that sows discord

May our prayers

Be a way of living

In a world that needs

More light

More hope

More justice

And we find ourselves

With the words

The acts

The intent

That gift the world

Your light

Your hope

And justice

And so, we bring

Our prayers

For those we share life with

Here among us: families and friends

Those who are ill both mentally or physically

Worried about cold, hunger, jobs

Those beyond us in our community

And in our world

Where conflict seems to be our natural position

And hunger never a priority

And climate not to worry about

Hear all our prayers

O God

Among us

Between us

Within us

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**