



November 8, 2020
The 23rd Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. Dr. Sandra T. Montes

Readings: Judges 4:1-7, Psalm 123, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:14-30

God of many names, grant us to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest your Scriptures. May we lift up our eyes to you, as we watch and wait, as children of light. May we keep awake and be sober as we put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. May we, as siblings, encourage one another and build each other up as we boldly use and multiply your gifts entrusted to us for the glory of your kin-dom. May we embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. Amen.

As usual, there is so much in the Scriptures. There is drama “The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” and I find this a little comical – so there’s comedy: Deborah, a prophetess, was judging Israel – how did she get that gig? There is hope: I look to you for help. There is suspense: the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night! And there is the gospel.

I love the parables and also I often don’t understand them. And, after days of praying and reading and re-reading and re-praying and seeking and wrestling with images and words like slave and master and feeling all sorts of ways when I read “For to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” and visions of a harsh man, that reaps where he did not sow, and gathers where he did not scatter seed, I feel God is telling me this: Stop digging holes.

The gospel tells us that this man entrusted his property to his slaves according to their abilities. And, I can’t help but be grateful that God has given us from God’s own property – what God owns, what God has, what belongs to God. And, not only has God given us from God’s own supply but God has added to our own abilities. I also can’t help but wonder – what have you been given? What have you done with it? What will you do with it?

What are you doing with your privilege – being born a man, being born white, being a US citizen, having a lot of money, being a cisgender straight person, being able to birth children, being able to read and write, having multiple degrees, the list can go on and on.

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What are you doing with what you have been given? What are you doing with your privilege? Are you digging a hole and placing it there? Or are you working it so that everyone around you can also benefit from this privilege? Are you showing up and speaking out against injustices? Or are you afraid of what others may think so you dig the hole and hide your “talents”? Are you showing up for those whose lives are worth less because of the color of their skin or their immigration status or who they love? Or are you digging the hole deeper because you don’t want to make waves with those nearest to you. Stop digging holes. Are you, as a cisgender person, showing up and writing to your local government to uphold or create laws that will benefit transgender people and the LGBTQI+ community? Or are you hiding your allyship because you’re afraid to be seen as one of them? Stop digging holes.

Maybe you’re thinking, like me, I have been trying to work what God has given me. But I’m exhausted. I am scared of not using it correctly. I am afraid that what I have to give is not enough. But notice that the reading is clear that the two people who used what the master had given them were successful, to their various degrees. Both doubled what was given to them. The only one who was not successful was the one who dug the hole. Stop digging holes.

Today, I have been given the task of preaching. God has given me this. What am I doing with what I have been given? It would be easy to bury this task, this talent, and then, when God asked me what I’ve done I could show God – look! I was afraid, so I kept it safe. I didn’t have to study, I didn’t have to read, I didn’t have to work it, I didn’t do anything with it. I dug a hole and I stuffed what you gave me in it.

I have also been given a voice. Not just a singing voice which is something I use to praise God, but a voice to speak up and speak out against injustice, prejudice, lack of diversity, racism. It is not something I asked God for. It is not something I enjoy. Trust me, I would much rather dig a hole and stuff my voice in it because speaking up and out is scary, it is hard, it is lonely, it is not something I asked for. There was a time when I was afraid to denounce racism in the episcopal church. There was a time when I was afraid to denounce white privilege in the church. But God saw me and decided to give me that task, that talent, that calling. And, even when I am shaking and my voice cracks, and my fingers tremble as I type, I work it. God equips me according to my ability. For the good of all, for the good of God’s kin-dom.

Each one of us has been given a calling. God has entrusted an opportunity with you. You have been given a chance to be influential right where you are. God is giving us an opportunity to take a risk, calling us into taking a leap of faith. You can choose to work it, build it up, increase it, double it or dig a hole, not take action, be passive, be inactive and surrender to fear. But, how is that helping? Is that what God calls us to do? The Bible is filled with passages about not being afraid. And, today’s Psalm

encourages us to lift our eyes to God and to look for help in God, even as we hold our breath. In the second reading, Paul reminds us that we are beloved children of the light and as such we have faith, love and hope.

My intention is not to shame you, my intention is not for you to dig a hole because you feel paralyzed by fear or anxiety at what's expected from you. I want to encourage you! I want to remind you that God loves you and God has already given you exactly what you need for you to walk into your calling, for you to boldly take what God has given you and work it, multiply it, double it. The choice is clear and the choice is yours.

What has God entrusted you? What is God calling you to do or be? It may be to use your voice (singing or speaking or protesting), to buy groceries for a person who cannot, to send a card to someone who is lonely or sick, to text a word of encouragement, to read a book that will expand your way of thinking, to befriend someone who you think may not have anything in common with you, to be a peacemaker, only you know what God is entrusting you.

And, for me I find hope in knowing that the master took a long time in returning. I have hope that even if I started late, even if I am still hesitant, even if I am still holding the shovel to help me dig that hole, there is still time to act, there is still time to work, there is still time to answer God's call.

Let's stop digging holes!