**November 19, 2017**

Any given day we can have a variety of experiences and feelings. At times we may be rather satisfied and thankful. At other times we may feel that we are waiting for more. **Times of waiting** can be ambivalent and difficult.

Today’s scripture readings – Paul’s *First Letter to the Thessalonians* and Jesus’ *Parable of the Talents* – address **the early disciples’ experience of waiting** for the final coming and judgment of Jesus Christ.

Paul affectionately affirms the faith of **the Thessalonian brothers and sisters** addressing them as “*beloved*” who *“do not need to have anything written to you.”* And yet, he immediately adds, *“You know yourselves very well that* ***the day of the Lord*** [described as a day of judgment in the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 3:1)] *will come like a thief in the night.”*

Paul addresses the preparation needed for the day of the Lord. *“Let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.”* This is no simple passive or even patient time waiting for Christ’s return. The exhortation to *“put on the breastplate of faith and love [with] a helmet of hope for salvation”* is a call to active discipleship. *“Therefore”* Paul says, *“encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing”* (1 Thess. 5:11).

Jesus’ ***Parable of the Talents*** (Matthew 25:14-30) describes a man about to go away *“on a journey”* who will return *“after a long period of time.”* The final coming of Jesus may not be imminent.

The man *“entrusts his property”* to three servants: one receiving five talents, another two talents and the third receiving one. The Greek word *‘talanton’* refers to a rather large monetary amount.

Now in the time of Jesus wealth was limited for most people. To increase one’s wealth in the communal setting was to take limited wealth away from another and to be greedy.

The servants who received five and two talents respectively went off *“at once”* and *“traded with them”* – for additional wealth. When the master returned to *“settle accounts”* – for judgment – they were praised as *“good and trustworthy servants*” who entered *“into the joy”* of the master.

**The third servant** dug a hole and hid the talent in the soil, and so is condemned by the master for gaining nothing. The main point of the parable is that the disciples face a reckoning, and that the gifts and responsibilities they have received will only grow when used.

What are we disciples called to do as we wait for Jesus’ final return? We “invest” the talents we have been given when we care for others, when we grow in virtue, and above all, when we love. There is still time. The final return of Jesus has not occurred.

This Sunday, November 19, is the beginning of ***Restorative Justice Week*** *(RJW).* The national *Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC)* encourages faith communities to pray for and respond to the needs of all who have been hurt by crime or injustice.[[1]](#footnote-1)

When affected by crime individuals, families and communities often feel voiceless and abandoned. They feel caught in a painful and indeterminate “time of waiting.” RJW encourages **living a “culture of restorative justice”** in the family, the neighbourhood, faith communities and social institutions. As people of faith, we await and prepare for Christ’s final return and judgment, by walking along side those who are hurting and abandoned wherever they may be. *“For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thess. 5:9). In love and justice may we “invest” in restoring and healing relationships.

1. Perhaps mention here that your faith community or denomination is a member of the *CCJC.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)