

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

**Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
November 13, 2011**

**Judges 4:1-7 or Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
Psalm 123 or 90:1-8 [9-11] 12
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Matthew 25:14-30**

The Parable of the Talents as a Call to Creation Care

This week's Gospel text is a story known as "The Parable of the Talents." A master puts his servants in charge of all he owns, giving them each some money to keep while he is away. Two servants invest and grow the money, while the third hides it in the ground, not helping it to grow at all. The master praises the first two servants, and banishes the third.

The master/servant relationship described is reminiscent of another master/servant relationship with which Jesus' hearers would have been familiar: the relationship between God and humans. In the first job descriptions given to humans through the creation stories of Genesis, they are told to rule the creation (Gen 1:28), and to take care of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). To rule the creation is to be a wise and benevolent ruler, looking out for the welfare of all parts of the creation. To take care of the garden is to help it flourish and ensure its sustainability.

In today's parable, the master represents God and the servants represent humanity. Talents, a denomination of currency in Roman times, represent God's resources—the gifts of creation. Through this story, Jesus suggests that humans are called to do more than simply conserve God's resources—rather, they are to help them flourish and increase.

This is an important story for reflecting on our current environmental crisis. We are exploiting God's resources without regard for the future, destroying their abilities to replenish themselves. We are called instead to live sustainably, meeting for the needs of the present while ensuring there will be resources available for future generations to meet their needs. For when we have God's resources of seed and soil, water and sun, indeed more will be given to us through care and cultivation. But when we pollute the waters and land, and destroy plants' ability to reproduce, we end up with nothing.

In today's Epistle reading, Paul notes the importance of preparing for the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:2). People of faith must help all of creation to flourish until the master returns.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. Jenny Phillips, founder and executive director of Creation Change, a United Methodist non-profit organization that equips people of faith for dynamic response to our changing environment.

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This week we remember to pray for Bible work in: Australia – with thanks to God that after functioning as six independently incorporated State Bible Societies linked in a loose federal structure, the Bible Society in Australia is transitioning into an integrated national body; and with prayers for a smooth transition in all aspects of ministry, as the Society works as a unified entity; also pray for the ongoing work of producing audio versions of the Scriptures that have been translated into indigenous Aboriginal languages; **East Timor** – with thanks to God for Bible work in this region; and with prayers for the young nation of East Timor as it continues to establish itself; also pray for stability and economic progress; for further development of Bible work; for help to meet the challenges of building good working relationships with local churches, despite the absence of a Bible Society in the country; and for God’s blessings on current Bible translation work in the Fataluku and Tetun languages.

Activity Corner: “Caring for Creation” Montage

Supplies needed: Bible; large sheet of newsprint; old magazines; markers; scissors; glue or paste.

Read together Psalm 90 and discuss what it means for the Lord to be our home or dwelling place. Then read Genesis 1:1—2:15 and discuss the “home” God has created for us. In what ways are we to take care of our “home?” Plan some action items you and your household (or class) can take in response to caring for creation. Across the top of a sheet of newsprint, copy Psalm 90:1. Look through old magazines and find pictures that depict caring for creation and mount them on newsprint to form a montage. Conclude by planning some action items you and your household (or class) can take to demonstrate caring for creation.