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**Worship Sheet for Sunday 15th November 2020**

**Prepared by Mrs Pauline Zähner, Hilton Methodist Church**

**Theme: Engage, explain, encourage, enforce**

**Call to worship** (from Roots)

God of all time,
you made time and you entered time to be with us.
We move from ordinary time to extraordinary time,
and in all this, we wait for you.
Keep our hearts aflame with the things that please you:
mercy, humility, justice.
And as we worship you,
we worship you in time, in spirit and in truth.
**Amen.**

**I surrender all** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW8EA7DEQ2M>

**Prayers** (adapted from Roots)

Gracious God, we praise you for your love for us, your wisdom and your generosity. You remain faithful to us and constant in your desire to save us. We marvel at your steadfast patience and forgiveness.

Heavenly father, we thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your only Son to earth.

Jesus, we thank you that you were prepared to die on a cross for us so that we could be forgiven, that you overcame death and rose on the third day.

Holy Spirit, we thank you that you support us, urge us on and enable us.

Lord God, forgive us when we fail to take up your calling to a life of wisdom, justice and peace.

Forgive us when we try to do things in our own strength and do not rely on your strength.

Forgive us when we hide your investment in us and ignore the work you have in mind for us. Forgive and help us to know that those who are truly sorry can be assured of forgiveness.

Amen

**There’s a wideness in God’s mercy** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJwfT3SY_PU>

**Read Psalm 90** and reflect on verse 12:

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

**Read** **Matthew 25 verses 14 – 30**

**Reflection: Engage, explain, encourage, enforce**

During the recent lockdown, the police have made it clear that where people infringe or break the rules, they will try to engage, explain, encourage and, if necessary, enforce the rules. Some people respond to simple reminder to put on a mask or socially distance whilst others need the threat of enforcement or penalty to goad them into following the rules.

Photo by Etienne Godiard

In Matthew’s gospel, we have a similar approach, judgement is used as an incentive to good works, to matching up words with actions. In our parable this week, the stress on judgment related to God’s justice and mercy is helpful for some but troubling for others. How can it be, they ask, that the master in the story whom they take as our loving God can be judgemental?

Those challenged by the parable will point out that God gave everything to humanity when he gave his only Son to be our Saviour. Jesus, in turn, gave everything and sacrificed his own life on a cross so that we could be forgiven and have a right relationship with God.

We see this same commitment and generosity in the master of the parable. He shares his life and wealth with his slaves who are bound to him. He trusted them with his property over a long period of time and all knew that when he returned he would call his slaves to account.

Two of the slaves in the story respond to the master’s trust and take up his challenge to be good stewards whilst he is away. These two work with what they have been given and when the master returns, they give back not just the wealth entrusted to them but the interest as well. They give all and keep nothing back. As a reward, they are allowed to share in the master’s happiness.

The third is criticised because he does not take up the invitation to respond in a faithful way to his calling but instead hides the investment in him. An invitation to him was not enough. He needed enforcement to make him act. The other slaves are proactive and sacrificial. He is not.

At the time of a lockdown, which of the messages of this parable are going to speak to us? Is it the reassurance that God and Jesus are sacrificially generous in their love for us? Is it the invitation to

to accept our calling and to respond in a wise way: not hiding the treasure, the grace and blessings invested in us; and not failing to seek opportunities to be proactive (within the rules and restrictions we currently have) to develop our faith, do missional work and share the treasure we have with others in whatever ways we can, be it by ‘phone or email, on zoom or Facebook. Finally, will we respond to God’s invitation because the engagement we feel when we have a developed relationship with God, the explanations we read in the Bible, or the encouragement we receive from God through the words of fellow Christians or will we require enforcement or the threat of judgement to urge us into action ?

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| **Prayers for others** (from Roots)I give thanks for those whose gifts and talents bring joy to others;for those whose talents inspire others;for those who use their gifts to meet the needs of others.Gracious God, **hear my prayer.**I pray for those who have made poor investments and  | decisions, and have lost everything;for those who have invested that which did not belong to them;for those whose decisions have serious consequences for the lives of others.Gracious God, **hear my prayer.**Help me to use your gifts generously, lovingly and to your glory.Gracious God, hear my prayer,Amen |

**Go forth and tell** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNyDd9qtuk0>

**Sending out prayer**

May I respond to God’s investment in me and share I my master’s joy and may I work to share the good news with all whom I meet this week and beyond. Amen.