

Sermon 19 November 2017  
Judges 4:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

As we move into the most festive season of the year, Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve—it is important that we remember not everyone is celebrating. Some of our neighbors, even some of us, are in dark places. God blesses us during these days, but Jesus also sends us out as sentinels, to watch and listen for signs and sounds of desperation and need. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; he commissions and equips us to do the same.

Our satchel of equipment is simple—concern, attentiveness (the willingness to *see* and *hear*), compassion (the commitment to *care*). The *peace* we carry with us is a gift from God, and it shows itself in a *gentle pace*, a refusal to be hurried or too busy to stop and give time to another. We go slowly, gently, un-hurried through these hectic days at the end of November and through December—looking for signs of darkness, willing to share our light.

We are on the threshold of a season of gratitude, and we show our thanksgiving in our willingness to use the gifts God has given us. We do not bury them.

We enjoy these gifts every day. They are the gifts of hope and faith, gifts of the love we receive and the love we share. Look around you this morning; think of the people who care about you—they are treasures of God's generosity. And you are a treasure for them—and for each of us. We are God's gifts of gold to one another. In Paul's words, we continue to *encourage one another and build each other up*.

We don't take any of God's gifts for granted. We make time to thank God for them—and we stay ready to give them away, to friends and strangers.

We do not bury our gifts by underestimating their value. Some of us may not think we have much to give—but we are wrong. A smile, a touch, a moment of selfless time for another—a hand *out* or a hand *up* can make all the difference for a person in crisis. Each of us has received kindness and each of us has kindness to *share*. We have kindness to *spare* for a weary or wounded soul. Our commitment to

kindness should be available every day, but especially *ready* in these weeks meant for joy.

We do not take our gifts for granted and we do not *bury* our gifts because we are *too busy*. While others around us rush breathlessly through the holidays, we find another pace, a sacred, holy rhythm of grace. We walk in the light and we look for anyone languishing or suffering in the dark. We carry our gifts in our hearts, and we are ready to give them away. A little time, a little attention, a word of encouragement, a word of hope, a word of faith, an act of love—we give thanks for all the good gifts of our God—especially *when* we let the gifts become real and alive for others.

Happy Thanks-*giving*. This season, more than ever before, let us be sentinels of grace, looking for the lonely, eager to give away the gift of the life we have in Jesus.