

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost Track 1, November 19, 2017

The Collect: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Old Testament: Judges 4:1-7 read from the New Century Version Bible

After Ehud died, the Israelites again did what the Lord said was wrong. So he let Jabin, a king of Canaan who ruled in the city of Hazor, defeat Israel. Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim, was the commander of Jabin's army. Because he had nine hundred iron chariots and was very cruel to the people of Israel for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.

A prophetess named Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was judge of Israel at that time. Deborah would sit under the Palm Tree of Deborah, which was between the cities of Ramah and Bethel, in the mountains of Ephraim. And the people of Israel would come to her to settle their arguments.

Deborah sent a message to Barak son of Abinoam. Barak lived in the city of Kedesh, which is in the area of Naphtali. Deborah said to Barak, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go and gather ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them to Mount Tabor. I will make Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, and his chariots, and his army meet you at the Kishon River. I will hand Sisera over to you.'"

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 123 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 To you I lift up my eyes, * to you enthroned in the heavens.

2 As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, * and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

3 So our eyes look to the Lord our God, * until he show us his mercy.

4 Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy, * for we have had more than enough of contempt,

5 Too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, * and of the derision of the proud.

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 read from the New International Version Bible

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30 read from the New Living Translation Bible

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

“The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the

servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.

"After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.'

"The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

"The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'

"The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

"Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.'

"But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.'

"Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing prayer: on November 22nd we remember C S Lewis, Apologist and Spiritual writer. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

“You must make a choice,” C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*. “Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up as a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.”

Lewis did not always believe this. Born in Belfast on November 29th, 1898, Lewis was raised as an Anglican but rejected Christianity during his adolescent years. After serving in World War I, he started a long academic career as a scholar in medieval and renaissance literature at both Oxford and Cambridge. He also began an inner journey that led him from atheism to agnosticism to theism and finally to faith in Jesus Christ.

“Really, a young Atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully,” he later wrote of his conversion to theism in *Surprised by Joy*. “Dangers lie in wait for him on every side...Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about 'man's search for God.' To me, as I then was, they must picture me all alone in that room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.” Two years later, his conversion was completed: “I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade on Sunday morning. When we set out, I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo, I did.”

Lewis's conversion inaugurated a wonderful outpouring of Christian apologetics in media as varied as popular theology, children's literature, fantasy and science fiction, and correspondence on spiritual matters with friends and strangers alike.

In 1956 Lewis married Joy Davidman, a recent convert to Christianity. Her death four years later led him to a transforming encounter with the Mystery of which he had written so

eloquently before. Lewis died at his home in Oxford on November 22nd, 1963. The inscription on his grave reads: "Men must endure their going hence."

Let us pray: O God of searing truth and surpassing beauty, we give you thanks for Clive Staples Lewis whose sanctified imagination lights fires of faith in young and old alike; Surprise us also with your joy and draw us into that new and abundant life which is ours in Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**