



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 15 November
The Second Sunday Before Advent*

During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family.

We very much regret that we have once again had to suspend congregational worship here at the Cathedral but our Sunday and daily services will continue to be live-streamed via the Cathedral's Facebook page.

However, Durham Cathedral is open for private prayer and quiet reflection between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. on weekdays and between 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. on Sundays.

Gospel

Matthew 25. 14-30

Jesus said, 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a

harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Michael Everitt

The parable of the Talents is a familiar story. Many school assemblies have used it to encourage children to utilise their "God given talents" and not hide them away. Woe betide any smart child who discovers that the talent was a large sum of money and requests such an investment by the Headteacher. Talent within the English language nowadays means your innate skills and dispositions which the child must work on, seek to improve and they will flourish and all will benefit. I am almost tempted to encourage you to sing the school hymn and let the day begin.

Hidden within the parable is the response of the one who buried his talent. The one normally viewed as being lazy or churlish, "Such talent, but sadly unrealised." However, that servant's words chill me.

"Master I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed: so, I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

This servant's risk averse nature and seeming knowledge of the wider context of his Master's behaviour is given by the servant as the rationale for this action. In many circumstances this servant's application of due diligence might well be rewarded. However, in the parable it ends up with the servant being cast "into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The treatment of the final servant disturbs me. If this parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven, does this mean that the Master is to be seen as God? If so does God really

“reap where he does not sow and gather where he did not scatter?” Is God’s moral compass somehow faulty?

This is where the third servant has it wrong. Their belief that they have done their research leads them not to a position of truth and understanding, but to one where “hearsay and false information” has in fact caused them to totally misjudge the situation and the reality.

For if the Master is to be understood as God, then we know that the whole world is his and that therefore accusation of being harsh and of theft is false. The fault of this third servant was rather than seek to utilise the given talent in a way that could be of use, time was spent obscuring it because a false image of the master dominated the view.

Whilst certain people utilise the term “Fake News” for political purposes and possibly even in an attempt to challenge true news in doing so. True Fake news, if one can cope with the dissonance of the term, is in fact, simply a lie. The servant’s “fake news” about the Master’s behaviour was just that, a deceit. And in terms of God, a false image of God, is fundamentally an idol.

The view shared of the Master was a creation by the servant and by those the servant mixed with. The Master has shown what he is like. Significant investment has been given to the three servants, major trust has been shared, full understanding of their abilities to respond shown. These are not the actions of a “Harsh and deceitful” individual. Thus, the artifice that the third servant colludes with shows that the third servant is disconnected from the reality of who the master really is. (The master also shows the inconsistency in the third servant’s actions, for if that view was true then it would have required a certain response.)

We often think of idolatry as being connected to beautiful and desirable items, crafted to entice and deceive. However too often the idols we create are ones of falsehood, lies and fear that restrict us and others from being who and what God, who created us desires of us to be. We dress up our being seduced by them as “good sense” or “rational” however all too often they are the cry of this third servant and cause us and those who listen to us to bury talent rather than enable it to flourish. Let us turn from these false views of who God is and properly care for what he has entrusted to us.

A Form of Intercession

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

You sent your Son to bring good news to the poor,
sight to the blind,
freedom to captives and salvation to your people:
anoint us with your Spirit;
rouse us to work in his name.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to bring help to the poor
and freedom to the oppressed.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world
the good news of your healing love.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn,
to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to proclaim that the time is here
for you to save your people.
Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

God of mercy,
you know us and love us
and hear our prayer:
keep us in the eternal fellowship of
Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Calendar of Holy Days

Monday 16 November

Margaret, queen, philanthropist, 1093

God, the ruler of all,
who called your servant Margaret to an earthly throne
and gave her zeal for your Church and love for your people
that she might advance your heavenly kingdom:
mercifully grant that we who commemorate her example
may be fruitful in good works
and attain to the glorious crown of your saints;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday 17 November

Hild, abbess, 680

Eternal God,
who made the abbess Hild to shine like a jewel in our land
and through her holiness and leadership
blessed your Church with new life and unity:
help us, like her, to yearn for the gospel of Christ
and to reconcile those who are divided;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever; Amen.

Wednesday 18 November

Elizabeth, princess, philanthropist

Thursday 19 November

Hugh, bishop, 1200 (transferred from 17 November)

Friday 20 November

Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, 1437

Saturday 21 November

Edmund, king, martyr, 870 (transferred from 20
November)

On Sunday 22 November at 3.30 p.m., we commemorate the Founders and Benefactors of Durham—Cathedral, City, University and Region. Outgoing Vice Chancellor, Professor Stuart Corbridge, gives the address and the Bishop and Dean lead a pilgrimage with the Lord Lieutenant, Mayor and Vice Chancellor to the Shrine of St Cuthbert. We hope you will join us online for this very special occasion. There is no public service in church at this time—only live-streamed online.

Hymn *sung at the Procession to the Chapels of St Margaret and St Hild*

Christ is our corner-stone,
On him alone we build;
With his true saints alone
The courts of heaven are filled:
On his great love
Our hopes we place
Of present grace
And joys above.

Oh, then with hymns of praise
These hallowed courts shall ring;
Our voices we will raise
The Three in One to sing;
And thus proclaim
In joyful song,
Both loud and long,
That glorious Name.

Here gracious God, do thou
For evermore draw nigh;
Accept each faithful vow,
And mark each suppliant sigh;
In copious shower
On all who pray
Each holy day
Thy blessings pour.

Here may we gain from heaven
The grace which we implore;
And may that grace, once given,
Be with us evermore,
Until that day
When all the blest
To endless rest
Are called away.

Latin, c 7th century,

*Samuel Sebastian Wesley
translated by John Chandler*

Margaret was born around 1045 in Hungary, lived at the court of Edward the Confessor, but in 1068 fled from the Norman court. After being shipwrecked off the Scottish coast, she was taken in by King Malcolm III whom she married, abandoning her intended monastic vocation. A deeply pious woman, she frequently gave her husband's money to beggars. Eventually she won him over and he joined her in caring for the poor; sometimes they served hundreds of needy citizens in their great hall in Dunfermline. Margaret built monasteries and churches, including a new Benedictine abbey at Dunfermline. Margaret may have been present with her husband when the foundations of Durham Cathedral were laid in August 1093, but her confessor, Prior Turgot of Durham, records that she was so ill that she could scarcely get out of her bed. Three months later, Malcolm and their oldest son, Edward, were killed in battle at Alnwick. Margaret heard the news on 16th November 1093. She died while reciting the communion prayer, supposedly of a broken heart. Malcolm, Margaret and eight of their children appear in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, the book of donors to the Cathedral. She was canonised in 1249. An altar was dedicated to Margaret in the Chapel of the Nine Altars in 2005. The design of the frontal represents her most precious possessions, an illuminated gospel book with a jewelled cover and a relic of the true cross. The three kneelers at the altar represent rivers that were important in her life and history – the Wear, the Danube and the Forth.

Hild was born into the royal family, probably in 614, and was baptised with other members of the court in 627. At the age of 33 she abandoned the court for the monastic life, planning to join her sister in a monastery in France. Aidan, however, asked her to return to the North East, initially on the north bank of the River Wear. A year later he put her in charge of a double monastery of monks and nuns in Hartlepool. Later she founded the double abbey of monks and nuns at Whitby in which Bede records she ensured that the ideals of monasticism were strictly maintained, Christian virtues were exercised, especially peace and charity, and everyone had to study the bible and do good works. Hild was known for her prudence and good sense and kings and other leaders sought her advice. The Synod of Whitby was held at her monastery in 664 when divisive issues in English Christianity were resolved in favour of the Roman tradition. Although this decision was hard for Hild, she accepted it. Many of Hild's monks became bishops or scholars of Scripture. She is remembered for encouraging a shy shepherd boy at her monastery, Caedmon, to sing in praise of God and become the first English-language poet. Hild, who Bede tells us was universally known as 'mother' because of her devotion and grace, is remembered as one of the most significant women in the English church, which welcomed the ministry of women. She died on 17th November 680. An altar in the Chapel of the Nine Altars was dedicated to Hild in 1999. The altar frontal represents the sea and seabirds, both associated with her years as abbess at Hartlepool and at Whitby, which are sited on promontories overlooking the sea. The kneelers represent the coastline from South Shields, through Hartlepool to Whitby. The Icon of St Hild is unusual in showing thirteen scenes from the life of a western saint in the art of the eastern church.

A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

A Prayer for Thomas Langley

Lord God, the eternal wisdom,
who gave grace to your servant Thomas Langley
to beautify and sustain Durham Cathedral,
to found schools of grammar and song,
and to serve faithfully as a bishop in your Church;
mercifully grant that we may delight
in the worship of your name,
grow in the knowledge of your truth,
and follow in the steps of the Shepherd and Guardian
of our souls,
even Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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The next issue of *Praying Together*
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