Good morning, Holy Faith!



Before we go any further this morning
I want to go back to today's Collect.
That opening prayer at the beginning of each Eucharist
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…

Grant us so to hear them… read… mark… learn…
and inwardly digest them"
Read… mark… learn… and inwardly digest

Thomas Cranmer wrote that prayer about five hundred years ago
He gives us ***four verbs… Call to action words***
Read… mark… learn…
and then the one that gets me every time… **Inwardly digest…**

Psalm One… written 2000 years earlier…
Psalm One… in the book of common prayer… reads…
Their delight is in the law of the LORD, *
and they meditate on his law day and night.

Psalm One in 21st century American English… reads…
Fall in love with what the LORD says.
Chew on it morning and night. Let it live in you.

It's **Food**… ***for our souls***

I'd like you all to try something new this week.
Take the readings home. Read them again.
Grab a pen… circle a word or two… underline a phrase…
Read… Mark…
And If you're not familiar with a word, look it up. ***Learn…***

Then… ***Inwardly Digest… digest it…***

Fall in love with what the LORD says.
Chew on it morning and night.
Let it live in you.

That's how my week began…
When I read today's readings back on Monday
Four Words… jumped off the page…



The first word was… ***"Entrusted"***

Jesus said… a man… going on a journey…
<u>Entrusted…</u> **HIS *property… to them…***
His property… ***Not*** theirs… ***His… Talents…***

In those days…
There wasn't a TV Show called ***Jerusalem's Got Talent…***

Back then… a ***talent*** wasn't a ***skill***…
it was a ***weight measurement…*** about ***75 pounds…***
of gold… or silver… or 6,000 denarii…
it was ***twenty years of a working man's wages…***
Convert that to 2026 dollars… One talent is worth…
one point three million dollars

Even the servant who got one talent… *was given* ***a fortune***

And what does the master do?

"He went away"

No clipboard. No supervisor. No cameras recording every movement

He **entrusted** them ***with everything***

And then, just walked out the door

Five talents… Two talents… One talent…

"to each according to his ability"

Everyone got… ***a lot!***

Here's why I marked Entrusted…

Everything we hold… was handed to us

The money… the resources… the tools…

But also… ***the time***

and the hands… the garden…

We didn't make the sun that ripened what surrounds the altar

We didn't make the rain

We ***are not*** the ***owners*** of any of it.

We ***are entrusted*** with it.

And that… my friends… is a ***very*** different thing



My second word is ***"afraid"***

The servant with just one talent… just one point three million…
Listen to how he explains himself
"I knew that you were a harsh man…
so I was afraid
and I went and hid your talent in the ground"

The master called him ***lazy***
But look at what he said
He wasn't **lazy *first*…** He was **afraid *first***

He had a picture of the master in his head
and the picture ***was scary***
So he did ***the safest thing*** he could think of
He ***dug a hole***… and he ***buried it***

Now look at Zephaniah
And I'll be honest… Zephaniah ***doesn't do soft***
He's talking about people who are ***settled in***
those who say in their hearts…
'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm.'
A God who does nothing.

So we have the ***scary*** God in Matthew
and the ***do-nothing*** God in Zephaniah
Two different pictures… ***watch where they both lead***
A God who is **harsh**… ***so hide it***
A God who is **absent**… ***so why bother***
Either way… **the hole gets dug**

Now listen to Paul
He's writing to a church that is nervous
Nervous about the end… being caught off guard…
And he ***doesn't*** tell them to ***hide***
He says ***"you are all children of light"***
So ***"let us keep awake and be sober"***
And then he tells them to ***put something on***
"the breastplate of faith and love
and for a helmet the hope of salvation"

Nobody puts on a breastplate to ***stay home***
You put on a breastplate to ***go out!***

And right in the middle of it he says
"God has destined us not for wrath
but for obtaining salvation"
Paul isn't putting them *in a bunker*
He's outfitting them ***with armor***

I ***know*** that hole

Not long ago a pastor friend told me
he hadn't done much with artificial intelligence
He said it the way you'd admit you haven't cleaned out the garage
And underneath it… he was a little afraid

I know that tone… I've used it…
I was afraid of it too

For years I've carried around things I ***wanted*** to do…
Make Music… Videos… Photographic Art
But I didn't. Not because I didn't want to…
I didn't have the time… or the money… or the skill to actually ***do it***
And then this technology showed up
and I stood at the edge of that hole for a while

So I decided to approach it the same way we pray every Sunday
Love… wisdom… and courage

First… **Love**… How can this express love?
Then **Wisdom**… Don't be stupid. Pay attention. Look for God in it…
And finally… **Courage**… Click the button. Press send. Take a risk.
My first attempts were pretty rough…
But I stayed with it
And now I'm creating wonderful things… for people I love…
that I never thought possible

and just this week… I showed one of our members…
how she could turn her writing… her poetry… into music…

Last week we talked about wisdom
But wisdom without courage isn't wisdom
It's a very well-informed hole
This is courage… Listen…





The third word is “ground”

The servant “dug a hole in the ground”
And I marked it…
because I thought about every one of you who ***gardens***

Because you dig holes too!
You dig a hole… You put something in the ground…
You cover it up… Same shovel… Same dirt… Same hole…

What’s the difference between burying and planting?

Well, it ***isn’t*** the hole
It’s ***what you expect***

When you bury something… you’re trying to keep it
When you plant something… you’re trusting it to become more

And here's the cool part

To plant it… you have to let go of it
It looks like losing
But it's the only way it can grow

Look at what's around this altar
Every bit of it started in a hole
that somebody dug… expecting something

Even if it came from a store
it counts exactly the same
Somebody's hands grew it
Your hands picked it up and carried it here
God receives all of it

Now remember the psalm we heard
"Seventy years is what we're given
maybe eighty if we're strong"
I'm seventy-eight… and a half…
In the psalm today we heard…
"Teach us to count our days… ***really count them"***
And here's what I've learned about ***counting your days***
You can't do it by ***holding them***
You count them by ***spending them***

And you heard how that psalm ends
With a prayer about hands
"Establish the work of our hands"
"Make it last"
Not "keep our hands clean"
Not "keep our hands full"
Establish the work

Some of us… have been told… one way or another…
that the only real way to meet God is in silence

Some do. And it's beautiful. But not me.
When I sit in silence… I get sore knees and a to-do list

But I ***have*** met God editing video at four in the morning
getting a perfect shot… just right.
I ***have*** met God with a saxophone in my hands
I close my eyes, and listen as God sings through my horn

Not everyone meets God in silence
Some of us meet God in the making

And that's not a lesser road

The first person in the Bible… filled with the Spirit of God…
wasn't a prophet… ***wasn't*** a priest
It was Bezalel | be-tzal-**EL**… ***a craftsman***
The Chief artisan who made the Ark of the Covenant.
God filled him with the Spirit
to make beautiful things with his hands

So *whatever* your hands ***know how to do***
Plant a garden… Sew a hem… Make a pot of soup… Write a song…
That is not… a *leftover part of your faith*
It might be the very place God is waiting

The fourth word is "joy"

Here's what the master says to the first servant…
The one who ***doubled his 5 talents.***
"Well done, good and trustworthy…
you have been trustworthy in a few things
I will put you ***in charge of many things***
enter into the joy of your master"

Listen to what he said to ***the second*** *servant*
The one with the two talents
The exact same words!

"Well done, good and trustworthy…
you have been trustworthy in a few things
I will put you ***in charge of many things***
enter into the joy of your master"

Not *"pretty good"*
Not *"next time, try for another one"*
The Same. Exact. Words.

God ***doesn't compare*** our offerings…
Look again at who heard the harsh words in the story
It isn't the one who had less
It's the one who buried it

That's great news for churches like ours
We may not be *a five-talent church…*
We don't ***have to be…*** a five talent church
We just have to be a church… ***that plants***

And look at the reward. It isn't a bonus. It isn't a heavier bag.
It's joy
"Enter into the joy of your master"
Come in… Sit down… There's plenty good room…



Now… you've had your pledge card for a week
Let me remind you what that card ***is not***
It is ***not a bill***
It is ***not a tax***
It is ***not a test*** to reveal much you really love God

It's a seed
When you fill out a pledge card
you're saying… in your own handwriting…
"I am not going to bury this"
It's the opposite of "I was afraid"
It's courage… on a card

That card is ***not*** *just for paying the bills*
Bills matter…
We need electricity and water and air conditioning
But if all we ever do with our giving is cover our obligations
we have buried the talent
We've kept it safe… and we've kept it small

The master didn't hand over those bags of money
so they could be kept safe
He handed them over ***so they could be put to work***
And ***everything we have*** *is already his*
So the question isn't… ***How little can we cover?"***
The question is… ***"What could God do… with what is already his?"***

New ministries… vibrant ones
Building on work we're already doing
Mission… reaching people who haven't yet heard
how much God loves them
That's *what we're planting*
And if we ***stop at the bills***
We miss the best part of what God can do

So I want to ask *you* something…
I don't have the answer…
Only ***you do***

What is God saying… ***to you?***

What could we plant here?
A ministry that doesn't exist yet
Something we're already doing… that could grow
Someone out there… we haven't reached

I know… I'm the guy who says not everyone meets God in silence
But this… ***isn't silence***
This… ***is dreaming***
Let it be as big as it wants to be

And don't forget…
There is plenty good room for whatever you write.

If the number scares you
remember ***"according to his ability"***
Nobody in this parable… is asked… for what ***they don't*** have
So ***pray about it***
Ask ***what love says***
Ask ***what wisdom says***
Ask ***what courage says***
Then **write <u>that</u> down**

That's the whole idea of ***Plenty Good Room***
Gratitude… turning into generosity

Paul ends his letter this way
"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other as indeed you are doing"
As indeed you are doing
He doesn't scold them… He says… I can see you already doing it
And so can I… I see it in this room every Sunday

So here's what happens next
During the offering… your card goes into the plate
And the vegetables… the fruit…
they're already here
laid down around this altar
Not buried
Offered

And this week
take the readings home
Get a pen
Circle one word

Read… mark… learn… and inwardly digest
And remember how that prayer ends
"that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope"

Hold fast to the hope
and let go of the seed

Amen