

THE SEASON OF EASTER

CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY!

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



The 5th Sunday of Easter

Prelude

As the Deer with Fairest Lord Jesus

Gathering— God calls us to use our gifts for the building of God’s kingdom. But we’re afraid. Christ urges us to find our courage and not look back. But our gifts seem so small. The Spirit offers us everything we need. But what if we fail? Trust the gifts you have been given. We will celebrate our gifts as we worship God this day.~

A Time of Prayer— God, you are a giver of good things. You have equipped each of us with gifts and talents to be used for your work in this world. Help us to recognize all that you have blessed us with. May the power of your Holy Spirit move among us, igniting in us creativity and courage to share your love in this world and do the work to which you have entrusted us.

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

We Hear God’s Word

Matthew 25:14-30 (NRSV)

14 ‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then 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.” ²¹His 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.”²² 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.”²³ 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.”²⁴ 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;²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”²⁶ 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?²⁷ 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.²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.²⁹ 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.³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Meditation

Head, Hand, and Heart: Using Our Talents

Hymn

Pass It On, 557

We Gather at the Table

Set Your Place at the Table—Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—At Christ’s table, we experience God’s abundant generosity. Here there is room for all those who hunger to know of God’s mercy and grace, resources that never run out. Come to the table to experience extravagant welcome and abundant blessing. Come just as you are with all that you are.

A Prayer for Transformation—Faithful Steward, you bless us with gifts that are uniquely our own. We long to use the talents you bestow upon us to build your kingdom. We yearn to live with gratitude for all that you have done for us and the opportunities you place before us. [Yet too often we see only what

we lack. We live into a scarcity mindset. We don't truly value what we already have.] Clear our vision, Holy One, and help us see the good we can do with the gifts and talents we have received. Amen.~

Assurance of Grace—Rejoice, sisters and brothers, for our gifts and talents. Hear these words of assurance: “Well done, good and trustworthy [servant]; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”~

The Words of Institution— On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” And so, we remember...we offer ourselves...we proclaim God's love...

Blessing Our Meal—God before us is a meal of blessing and abundance, a table that will nurture our bodies and our spirits. Grant the gift of our Savior's presence at this meal and the blessing of your Holy Spirit. Enliven this bread and this cup that it might strengthen us to do your work in this world. May it remind us of your generosity and your extravagant love. Amen.

We Share the Bread and the Cup – As you eat the bread, remember, “This is the body of Christ broken for you.” Take and eat. As you drink the cup, remember, “This is the blood of Christ shed for you and the forgiveness of sins.” Take and drink.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.`

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation— God has entrusted us with a variety of gifts; let us return to the Lord a generous measure of our bounty with thanksgiving and praise.+

May Benevolence—Our Church's Wider Mission

Doxology

We Give Thanks— Giver of gifts, you bestow us with talents that are far more precious than jewels. Open our eyes to the possibilities you hold for our world. Transform the gifts we offer this day into light and love for the world. Transform our talents into blessings for a world in need. Amen.~

Hymn

Blessed Assurance, 426

Benediction—Our work this day is not done. God has called us to share of our gifts and talents, to live into God's abundance. As you go forth, go into the world in peace. Serve the Lord God, love your neighbor, love the Lord God, and serve your neighbor. May Jesus Christ's grace, God's love, Holy Spirit's guidance be with you now and eternally. Amen.+

Postlude

All Hail, King Jesus