The readings for Sunday, November 15, 2026:
First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
First Reading (Semi-cont.): Judges 4:1-7
Psalm: Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12
Psalm (Semi-cont.): Psalm 123
Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

This week's Gospel gives us the parable of the talents. One servant turns his 5 talents into 10, one turns his 2 talents into 4, and the servant who buries his one talent in the yard doesn't create any new capital. It's easy when reading this Gospel to focus on the word "talent." It's natural to think of our own talents, to wonder how we're investing them, and how we're wasting them by burying them in the yard.

The parable makes it clear what will happen to people who bury their talents. Now, I know that many of us are blessed with a multitude of talents. We do have to make judicious choices about which talents are worth cultivating. I hope that we won't be the servant cast into worthless darkness because we pay attention to one set of skills over another.

But let's look at that parable again. Let's look at that word, "talent," again. Read the parable substituting the word gold blocks for talent.

It's worth noting that a quantity of 5 talents, according to my Bible footnote (and my Bible is published by Oxford University Press, so I trust the footnote), is worth 15 years of wages of this laborer. In an article from *The Christian Century*, James Howell, a Methodist minister, points out that the servant who got just one talent would be receiving more money than most of us get in a lifetime of work: "This amount would stagger any recipient and send him into utterly uncharted territory. A Mediterranean laborer wouldn't have any more of a clue about how to invest five talent than the guy who bags my groceries would about $74 million (even if I and all my friends tried to advise him)."

As I read this week's Gospel again, I forced myself to think about the fact that this parable really is about money. It's not instructing me to return to the piano keyboard at the expense of the computer keyboard. And it's an unusually Capitalist message from Christ. I'm used to the Jesus who tells us to give our money away. I'm not used to the savior who encourages us to make wise investments of our money.

I'm not used to thinking of money management as a talent. But this parable makes clear that it is. Jesus makes clear that money is one of the gifts we're given, and the

verses that follow (31-46, ones that aren't part of this week's Gospel) show that Christ is not straying from his essential message. The verses that follow talk about treating the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner as if those people are Christ incarnate. God has a vision for how we'll use that gift of money.

The servant who was cast into out darkness was cast out because the talent went to waste buried in the ground. How would he have been treated if he had given the money away to the poor, the sick, the stranger? I suspect he would NOT have been cast into outer darkness.

Our collapsing Capitalist paradigm often doesn't take community into account. Not making enough money in America, where workers have unreasonable demands like a living wage and safe working conditions? Just move your industry to a country that has less oversight. Sure, you rip apart the social fabric, but at least you're making money.

God calls us to a different vision. Our God is always obsessed with the poor and dispossessed. And we're called to be part of that obsession.

Unfortunately, tough economic times mean that we'll find many opportunities for this aspect of Kingdom Living. With the holidays approaching, we might think about our customs. Maybe, instead of giving people who have lots of stuff even more stuff, we could donate to a charity in their name. In my family, the adults decided that instead of exchanging presents with each other, we would choose a different charity each year and donate to that charity. Maybe, instead of an endless whirl of parties, we might give some time to our local food pantries or soup kitchens. As we buy a book or two for our favorite children, we could buy a book or two for local reading programs or donate to RIF (Reading is Fundamental, the nation's largest child literacy organization).

The ways to help heal the world are endless, and God invites us to join in the creation project. We can donate money, time, skills, prayers, optimism, hope. Doing so is one of our most basic Christian tasks.