

- After the Sermon Hymn: *Stepping down to the congregation:*

Matt 25: 31-46                      **“Reign of Christ”**                      (11/20/2011)

- by Rev. Peter Dennebaum -

Needs:            1 Flip Chart, 3 markers (different colors), 1 TV with DVD  
player and the DVD “Poseidon Adventure”

God’s peace to you!

As talked about last week we go on today with the third and last parable in Matthews chapter 25. Afterwards Jesus gets betrayed, arrested, and crucified. All three parables keep an essential part of Jesus’ heritage. The Parable of the Bridesmaids holds the message of staying alert. The Parable of the Talents encourages us to reach out for creative ways. Today we read the third parable, the Parable of the Judgment. Let us read from page 29 in the New Testament section, the gospel of Matthews, chapter 25, the verses 31-46 (**The Judgement of the Nations**):

*31 ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put*

the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was **hungry** and you gave me food, I was **thirsty** and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was **naked** and you gave me clothing, I was **sick** and you took care of me, I was in **prison** and you visited me." <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, **"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."** <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." <sup>46</sup>**And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'** AMEN

Do you have an own approach to this parable? What is for you this parable about? What could be the lesson? A short brainstorming ...

Last week Liz did something very spectacular. She argued that the third slave was right to hide the talent in the ground and that the master was wrong to put so much pressure on him. What Liz did was not to accept the setting of the story. She thought out of the box and opened therewith the chance for new ways of thinking and acting. She did what we do in this Interim Time and she proofed her qualities as change manager; congratulations, Liz and thank you again for sharing!

#### Example

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Change is everywhere. In the last decades our world has changed more radically than in all the thousands years before. Everything has become so fast that we are often challenged to react. We barely have time to breath, to rest, to think, to find the way to our inner peace.

When the world around us changes a lot it is normal, trying to balance it out: If everything changes, then at least the church should stay stable, we wish. If I am threatened by unemployment I want that my family system stays stable. But new situations demand new decisions. We orient ourselves anew; we develop a new dream, a

new vision, a new goal. Regarding to our personal live as well our church.

One of the best examples of change management, of the success AND failing of people reacting to change we can see in the 1972 movie “Poseidon Adventure” with Gene Hackman. There the story gets told how the luxury [lák-scheri] liner Poseidon flips over in a big storm, floating up-side-down.

I want to show you today 3 parts of this movie. The first one shows the two ministers on board of the Poseidon. Both represent two different kind of ministries. Both are good and both are needed. But depending of the goal you have you might judge one or the other as the successful one. The scene we will see now lays out the reaction both will show later in the later scenes according to change. But first here the theological foundation for their different acting later; Gene Hackman plays Rev. Scott. The other minister is John. The scene is 1min and 33 seconds long.

I. Chapter 5, 7:45 – 9:18 (1:33min)

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Somehow I have the feeling that also you are not going to sleep through this sermon ...

**“Get down on our knees and pray God for our help? And then maybe everything will work out fine? ... Garbage!**

**If you are freezing, then you burn your furniture, you set fire in**

**your building, but you get off your knees! You got to use your church for something more positive than prayer!”**

And then describes Rev. Scott, alias Gene Hackman, himself as **“angry, rebellious, critical. A renegade.”** Does he describe only himself or also the character of the church, he is fighting for? Maybe both? What he wants and seeks in the church is **‘Elbow room. Freedom! Real freedom. Freedom to dump all the rules and all the bonds. The freedom to discover God in my own way.’**, he says.

This is Rev. Scotts dream. Please decide for yourself how your own dream looks like, what you are looking for in church, what you seek as Christian and what you expect from your faith fellows.

Let us now go direct to the next scene. A huge wave has turned the ship up-side-down. It is like 9/11 – nothing is anymore like before. It is like the introduction of the Internet – our whole work life, our communication, our way of life has changed. In the film everybody has experienced the sliding and falling along the walls during the catastrophe. Now the ceiling is the new floor and the old floor the new ceiling. The situation has changed dramatically. Let us now observe, how people react to this change.

(1) Please watch out how in the first scene the purser reacts. He is the only present officer and therewith called to lead. How would you have reacted in his case? He asks everybody to stay where they are.

Please be aware that he is obviously wounded. When we are under pain we are not willing to change much, aren't we? When people in church loved their last minister and feel hurt, because he is now gone, wouldn't it be not understandable, if they first would be hesitant to leave what they are used to?

(2) You also will be introduced to Acres. He belongs obviously to the crew and managed somehow stay during the flip-over in the upper floor. I think it is interesting that he approaches Rev. Scott, alias Gene Hackman. not the other minister nor the purser. Rev. Scott has become obviously in the meanwhile something like an informal leader. In the sermon, he has given meanwhile, the reason for this trust? In the following conversation the family system realizes the changed situation. The family system is built up in this case of the present passengers and crewmembers. In church terms it would be worshipping members and friends of the church. You will see how the first people realize that the only way out to new life is through the hull – the opposite direction of what it usually would be.

(3) In the 2 min and 39 seconds clip we'll see now, you will also see a scene, which seems to be modern version of Jesus story with the children, where the disciples didn't take the children serious and Jesus had to overrule them saying "Let the children come to me!" Here it is Mr. Rogo, played by Ernest Borgnine [Borgnein], taken the boy not serious. He is also the one representing the insisting into the old, so well-known order. Who knows this movie knows that he will

keeps on protesting, but will take on more and more a constructive role, ending even as leader in this change process, bringing even the rescue action to a successful end. [from 9:18 to ...]

**33:38 (chapter 11; Christmas Tree falls)**

**– 36:17 (Christmas Tree gets erected) - [2:39min]**

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**“Pray for us, but don’t do this! Climbing to another deck will kill you all!” (Purser, 35:55)** Yes, some people might want us church people just praying. But Gene Hackman gives us good reasons, why we cannot sit only watching climate change, social injustice and the concrete suffering of people: **“Sitting on our butts will not help us either! Maybe by climbing up we can save ourselves!”** We don’t have the guarantee for our success, but we have faith!

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The next to last scene we will watch today together happens only shortly later and is the longest of all scenes.

You will see Mr. Martin, how he tries to convince the family system and how the old regime, in person of the purser goes on with his resistance.

But then you will see the very touching scene how the married couple Belle and Manny Rosen fights through this change. It is also because of them why I picked this scene for you. Both are older - like many of us. First she wants to give up. Turned to Rev. Scott she says: **“I wait**

**here with the others. Is there something different up there, than there is from down here?”** He answers: **“Yes. Life. Life is up there. Life always matters very much, doesn’t it?”** She: **“Yes. Alright, so I’ll climb.”** She is open enough to get convinced. Belle Rosen proves that age is not a reason for resignation. And whoever knows the movie knows, that she will sacrifice herself later for the hope for life and the next generations. Please observe, how the couple helps each other afterwards climbing up the tree. As we need to help each other in our partnerships – at home or while being church. If you want you can see me as Rev. Scott helping in this process very unconventionally.

Key scene is also the conversation between the both ministers. Facing the catastrophe they find respect for each other. Both are put by God’s call for different roles: One to stay with the weak with the destiny to die with them. The other one to lead a small group back to light and life. But like Moses also the last one will not see the Promised Land. We will stop where both ministers bless each other for their different ministers, saying therewith good-bye to each other. Afterwards Rev. Scott will climb up as last person the Christmas Tree. Again: What a strong symbol – to climb up a Christ – tree, symbol for life and daylight. [36:17 to 39:48 = 3:31min]

III. 3:48 – 41:31 [1:43min] & 43:19 - 46:54 [3:35min] = [5:18min]

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IV. No volume, 4x fast-forward until 49:49

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- **As last person Rev Scott climbs up the Christ-tree of hope.**
- **A last time he appeals to the traumatized people below him.  
But again he only hears: “We stay with the purser.”**
- **The catastrophe.**
- **The water breaks in.**
- **Panic.**
- **Everyone wants now to climb up. Too many at the same time.  
Too late.**
- **A last look.**
- **The door closes.**
- **“Which way to the kitchen, Acres?”**

We don't like judgment. We want that everybody get saved. But what happens, if we are not flexible enough to react to the fast changing social and technological environment? What happens, if our prayers don't turn into action, if we don't find the way into new life?

75% of all local churches will not survive the next generation. Because they don't move to where the light is, where the people are. It is the tradition, which keeps them tied up to the past, the traditional hymns and pews. Churches with groovy Christian Pop Music boom, churches focused on mission and spirituality grow, churches, in which people can break up during the sermon into bible study groups because they sit on chairs instead of pews, attract young people.

How could we understand the last sentence of our sermon text?

<sup>46</sup>*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*' I don't believe that God will push anybody into eternal punishment. But the 50's with full churches will not come back. We only can serve people when we go there, where the people are. We only can find new relationships, when we accept the different setting, moving through the hull towards sun and light. Are you maybe Manny and Belle Rosen, who would help us move into this direction? ...

Rev. Scotts last sentence was a question: "**Which way to the kitchen, Acres?**" Even this last sentence occurs now as a symbol: The kitchen is the place, where we get fed. And when we start next week into the Advent season we should not forget that it can be still a Christmas Tree, which can lead us into new life under changed circumstances.

AMEN.