Preview for Service of Word and Sacrament, November 15, 2026
Ordinary Time
Liturgical Color: Green
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Tiburon, California

Visit the church website: www.wpctiburon.org, 415-383-5272
240 Tiburon Boulevard, Tiburon, California 94920

This weekly study guide seeks to help members, friends, and visitors prepare for the upcoming Sunday service and teaching.



Opening Blessing (10:00)
You are called into the presence of God, not to be judged or shamed, but to be reminded that you have been given gifts by one who loves you and trusts you. Receive these gifts in joy. Learn to share them with confidence and humility.

Community Prayer
Generous God, trusting God, forgiving and loving God, free us from deep-seeded doubts we have of your goodness or your good intentions for us. Liberate us from the fears that may have scarred us in the past. Lift us into the kind of leaders who likewise give generously, who empower people with trust, who lead with accountability but not fear. Amen.

Sermon Focus & Title Toxic God Syndrome Robert McClellan
We have just finished a series on ways of talking about God, with the underlying presumption that our perception of God affects our behavior in the world. There could be fewer better examples of that concept playing out than in the parable of the talents in which the servant assumes the master is harsh and cheating. Matthew's gospel is particularly concerned with dispelling this sense of God. How would it shape our lives if we jettisoned the notion of a God we're supposed to be afraid of, one who threatens? How would our own leadership, our own power play out differently if we likewise emulated the generous master in the parable?

Scripture(s)

Matthew 25:14-30

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.’ 22And 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.’ 23His 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.’ 24Then 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; 25so I was
afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But 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? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the
bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the
talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For 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. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness,
where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Hymns

God Whose Giving Knows No Ending 716
Trust in God 848

Quotes, Questions & Prompts for Reflection, Discussion, and Prayer

“For I saw no wrath in God.”
-Julian of Norwich

1. Were you ever given images of God that frightened you? If so, what were they?
2. What are your main images for God?
3. How do you think your images of God affect the way you move through the world?
4. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us about God in this passage?
5. What has God entrusted to you?