

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus said, “It is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five **talents**, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two **more talents**.

But the one who had received the one talent went off and **dug a hole** in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and **settled accounts** with them. Then 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.’ 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.’ 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.’ 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.’

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; so I was afraid, and **I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.**’ 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? 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. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

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. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

SERMON

Money.

How do you feel when you hear that word?

Sad? Happy? Stressed? Blessed?

We all have a story about money and how it affects our lives.

When my kids were young they wanted a t.v. in their bedrooms. We found one for \$99 and told them that they had to earn the \$99 so they could buy it. For each chore that they did around the house, they would be given \$1.00. When they had \$99 we would go to the store and buy their t.v.

They learned that to earn money there is some condition to be met. They enjoyed doing the chores like making rice, feeding the dog, and folding the laundry.

They laughed and did things together to make it fun.

They did work they normally did not do to be rewarded in end. It took them a while to reach \$99, but it was worth it when they could watch their t.v. in their bedroom!

There are four parables in Matthew that can be called an “advent parable” because they are about waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ. Last week we had another such parable, the one about the bridesmaids preparing for their bridegrooms, and this week we have the parable of the slaves who are waiting for their master’s return. They have been entrusted with large sums of money, known as talents, while their master is away on a journey.

Each man is given a different amount according to his ability. Somehow this doesn't seem fair, but this is the truth, God is not obligated to treat you like he treats everyone else. There are always people more or less talented than us, and we are not equal in terms of our skills, gifts, and opportunities, and every moment we spend worrying about how unfair that is is truly a wasted moment. We all have the same chance to do something with what we have been given.

When the master returns, we see that the first two servants have invested diligently and wisely, so the master praises and rewards them, “well done!” The third servant however does nothing, he is scared, he doesn't want to lose the fortune.

He is afraid of his master, doesn't trust him, and buries his talent. The master is not pleased.

All three men knew that their master would return, and knew that he would demand an accounting. But the first two men focused on the fact that their master, being a fair man, could be very generous. They knew if they did a good job, they would be rewarded at the end. The third man thought he knew his master but he really didn't and ended up with nothing. He tells his master that he "knew he was a harsh man" and he was afraid. If that is how we imagine God, if we are afraid, we will not be motivated to take risks, we will not give our ability, time, and energy to serve and love others.

So we can ask ourselves, "How am I doing?" "Am I doing well?" "What can I do better?"

The tragedy is that many of us are afraid of losing our faith by straying away from what we know and do well. We feel we may disappoint God but in reality, like the third man, we are not trusting in Him.

Ask yourself today, “what will I do with what I have been given?” Are you taking risks, trying new things, developing new gifts?

A lot of us here today are already blessed with many gifts. Some of us are lectors who read the lessons, pastoral providers who call and check on church members who are homebound, great cooks that feed us at coffee hour, acolytes to assist during the service, altar guild members who prepare and clean up after the service, property maintainers who keep the buildings and grounds immaculate,

musicians who provide music for the service, strong singers to lead us in song, and everyone is part of this church. The more gifts that God has given you, the more he will require of you! Your abilities are truly a blessing!

Remember your life is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God. It's not what you have, but what you do with what you have that makes the difference. God gives us what we can handle, when we can handle it.

The more you give of your heart and time, the more you will receive. Live generously. We must serve God and be active participants, not just sit and wait for someone to ask for our help. We should be asking others if they need assistance.

God is seeking a profitable return on the gifts he has given us. God has entrusted you with a great fortune.

I thought of all the years I spent as a teacher. As I near the end of my career, I can see that there is no pot of gold at the end of a teacher's rainbow. I made enough to raise a family but no more. Okay, the t.v. in the kids bedroom was a bit extravagant!

For the past 30 years, despite a lot of screaming and crying children, along with a lot of throw up and poop, I have been rewarded not with money but with seeing children who on the first day of school couldn't say a word, but who by the last day of school could tell me about what they did on the weekend.

Or other children who would cry when their mom
dropped them off to school but in a few weeks would
cry when they had to go home from school!

It is faithfulness that God rewards, not worldly
success. What are you doing with those things that God
has entrusted to you?

When the church needs you what will you do?

When the community and the world cries out for
help, what will you do?

When Jesus calls and says, “Come follow me?”,
what will you do?

Life is short and time is ticking away. Who knows
how long we will be here and what tomorrow will bring.
Now is the time. This is the hour. God has entrusted
you with a gift and he is calling you. What will you do?