

Sermon
Proper 28 A
November 13, 2003

Like most of the rabbi's of his time, Jesus liked to teach in parables. Over a third of the Gospel of Matthew contains parables by Jesus. He liked to draw pictures with simple words to tell stories that everyone could relate to and understand. The stories appealed to the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the learned and the unlearned. With Jesus, though, the parable wasn't just about what it was about. It always had a double meaning. The literal meaning, which is what it was about, and then the underlying meaning... a beneath the surface meaning about God's truth...a buried treasure just waiting to be discovered by those who had "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" Jesus' parables were always meant to help people understand who God is and what God's kingdom, or God's reign, is like. The people of this time understood the illustrations that Jesus was using from their everyday life. But, because they were written for the people of Jesus' time and place, and because they really are timeless, those of us today, living in such a different time and place need to do our "homework" to understand them.

For instance, take the word “Talent”. When it was used without qualification, as in the parable today, it was understood by everyone of this time, to refer to silver as the unit of currency, and they knew that it was worth about 6,000 denari. Since a denarius was the usual payment for a day’s labor, a talent was roughly the value of fifteen, to twenty years work, depending on whether you were a common laborer or a skilled laborer...No small sum.

Even the slave entrusted with just one talent, was given quite an amount.

Now, that being said, this parable is **not** about money. That may be the literal meaning, but this is a parable of Jesus, so it’s not just about what it’s about.

The Master is going away. He entrusts large gifts to his people before he leaves. He is going to return, and when he does, he will expect there to be great returns on these gifts....

Is this plot sounding familiar?

Christ knew that he was going to die. He knew that where he was going, we could not go. But He trusted his disciples and he trusts us also to be sure countless people

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of countless generations all over the world, will know what we need to know. He entrusted his disciples and he entrusted us with gifts; gifts that were to be used to bring His salvation to the whole world. Besides the priceless gift of Christ's sacrifice, and the treasure of the Gospels and the rest of holy scripture, each and every one of us are given gifts. When we talk about being true to ourselves, we are talking about our gifts...what we have discerned that we do best... and then developing that talent...and then utilizing that God given gift.

When we talk about vocation, whether it's an artist or an engineer, a teacher or a cleric, we are talking about perceiving the will of God for our lives and then acting upon it.

We are all given gifts. Differing gifts. We need to be in community with others so that we can fully utilize all of our gifts. If we join our gifts with gifts of others, we can do amazing things. I think that was very evident at our Flower Festival, and I think it will continue to be evident as we continue with our Centennial Celebrations.

But here's the truth, we need to develop are gifts, and we need to use them...not bury them, like the servant in the Gospel did today,

because we are afraid, too. We need to take risks. We need to be bold with our God given “talents” .

Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Desmond Tutu ...

were all given the gift of rhetoric. Thank God they developed it.

What if they hadn't? What if they had buried that God given gift.

What if they hadn't used it for fear of being called “different” ...

for fear of being “persecuted”...or for fear of being “killed”.

What if the veteran's and those serving our country today

Hadn't answered the call on their lives Think how different our world

would be today without having had them, just the way they were, just

the way they are.

And think about the gift of the word of God...not just the Word

Incarnate, but the written words of God...carefully preserved

and handed down to us from generation to generation to generation.

Think of how blessed we are to have them. Think of all the people in

the world that don't. I can't imagine trying to make it though the trials

of my life without the knowledge and the comfort of knowing that God

was right there by me every step of the way.

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And that knowledge was given to me by those words. And I wouldn't have had the if someone hadn't given me that gift. How many people have you given that gift? Are you afraid to take the chance?

Are you afraid of what people might say about you?

Are you afraid of what people might think about you?

We are all given gifts. But, here's the thing...

You have to use the gift to enjoy the rewards of the gift...

it is just that simple and it is just that complicated.

And isn't it worth striving for just so you can hear him say, when he returns, "well done, my good and faithful servant"..... "well done"