

November 15, 2020

Gospel stories (like the one we just heard) are difficult for preachers, because they are so well known. It's one of the first stories we remember from Sunday School, as children we were probably all in that play of where the Master hands out the talents, and at the end of the story punishes the "lazy slave for not using the one". (to this very day, I can vividly remember acting out that story in the parish hall, and carrying the brown paper lunch bags with big black dollar signs on them (stuffed full of newspaper).

And we all think we know the message it contains, and therefore have trouble opening our minds to anything NEW the preacher might have to say.

And for the preacher — is the temptation to ask "why even bother?" Given a gospel as well known as this, I might as well just stand up here and read the phone book ... because there's nothing new to say.

You already know this is a story about *inequity*. That some got more than others. And while that may not seem fair - well, we are used to that. We don't have to look terribly hard to see that life isn't fair - that things

aren't equal - that some folks do have more and some folks have less.

Inequity.

You know this is a story about **abundance**. The last servant had control over just one bag -- but hey - it was still full of Gold. Some translations refer to the talents that were given rather than the gold ...

1 talent = 60 minas

1 mina = 60 sheckels

1 talent = 3600 sheckels

and while its difficult to put an actual modern dollar value on a sheckel, historians have determined that one talent would be equal to about fifteen years of wages for a hard-working labourer. So even one talent was a major sum.

Abundance.

You know that this is a story about **blessings**, and not just money. Yes, a talent was originally a financial unit, but it has come to be known as any ability or skill that a person may have. So the talents in this story are more than just money - they represent anything and everything we do.

Blessings.

You know this is a story about **stewardship**. It didn't end after the three servants received their money ... there was a definite interest in what each of them DID with the gift they had been given. Two of them used the money and reaped amazing returns ... One just held on to his.

Stewardship

Finally, you know this is a story about **judgement**. We hear how the master returns and evaluates the servants on what they have done with their talents. The two who used theirs are rewarded, the one who didn't is punished. Gifts and opportunities call for action -- inaction brings certain consequences.

Judgement.

So yes — you know this parable well. Up until now I haven't said anything that you didn't already know. No new insight, no little wrinkle that needed ironing out, no great surprise.

And rather than read the phone book ... I'd like to share this small story with you :

Once upon a time there was a wealthy miser who melted down his hoard of gold into one massive lump ~~~~ which he then secretly buried in his garden.

Every day he would go to the garden, dig up his gold and admire it ~~~ he would spend hours gloating over it.

One day, one of his servants discovered the miser's secret, and came during the night and stole the gold.

When the miser came to the garden the next day he was heart-broken.

One of his friends said to him "Don't take it so badly ...

just put a brick in the hole ~~~ and admire IT every day

instead. It won't be any different ... because even when

you HAD the gold, you never used it."

+ + +

There is a huge difference between counting your blessings, and being thankful.

God does not want us to just sit there and make a list of all our have's, and recognize that they come from him. Being thankful means **USING** those gifts we have for the purpose they were meant to serve.

God didn't give some people the gift of music so they could keep it to themselves! No - God blessed people like Nikki so that they could share that gift with us -- and lead us in our worship - so that we can all benefit.

God didn't bless some members of our parish with the ability to cook and bake, just so they can **say** they can do that. No - those abilities are meant to be used and shared so that all may be fed.

And God didn't bless us with money so we could boast about our huge bank account ... but so that we (corporately and individually) can step up and help others.

If we are truly to be thankful for what God has done for us, we will show our thanks through our actions - and not just through our words.

To the one whom much is given - much is expected.

The parable is quite clear, and reminds us that we must first ask ourselves how faithful we have been with what we already have, before we can be trusted to be faithful with more.

And yes – there is some risk involved ...

But the third servant in that parable failed NOT because he returned the same amount ... but because he didn't even try. Because it wasn't really about the end result at all – it was about using the gifts the Master had entrusted to them.

And that's the message we take away from the gospel this morning ... that its not about the end result, but that we use the gifts we've been given. It's not necessarily about finishing in the black – as long as we have done all that we can to **be** the people of God (as best we can) in this time and place, responding to the needs of those around us.

Life itself brings with it a degree of risk ... Faith brings even more.

Loving

Caring

Forgiving

Peacemaking

Giving

Evangelizing

Trusting

Hoping

ARE ALL RISKY ENDEAVOURS !!!

But that's what we must do - if we are to truly live out our faith. We must take risks.

But we do so - knowing that we are not alone, and that whatever the outcome God continues to be with us ... to love us and support us and carry us through **WHATEVER** may come.