



Make Responsible Choices

Matthew 25:14–30

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

November 16, 2014

Thought For The Week

Scripture References: Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20 30-31 • 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-6 • Matthew 25: 14-30

I have on occasion watched *Britain’s Got Talent* or *America’s Got Talent*. What first got me enticed me was the show from Britain in which Susan Boyle, a plump, middle-aged lady from a tiny English village, came on stage to try out for the voice award. She hardly looked the part of a “show-girl.” Actually, when she came on stage to be introduced, the three judges rolled their eyes and obviously had their doubts about her talent as a pops singer. However when Susan began to sing, the judges and the entire audience simply went silent in surprise. Then they stood up and cheered uproariously with amazement and joy as they listened to her crystal-clear voice and her confident presence. Susan Boyle is still a hit in the music world of Great Britain today. The lesson: do not judge a book by its cover.

I should imagine that there are many people out there in the world today who have great talent of various sorts and are simply waiting to tell the world about it.

That story came to mind when I read the parable in the gospel about the rich man who handed over a certain number of talents to three would-be investors. Unlike the talent show, a talent is a Roman measuring weight. A Roman talent in today’s measure would be worth approximately a million dollars. So, the rich man gives a talent to each of three potential investors which amounts to something in the nature of three million dollars. Not a lot on Wall Street today, of course, but an extravagant amount in Palestinian times.

Of course now, this is a parable and as usual Jesus included a number items for effect that might stretch the imagination a bit if you were to take them literally. The outrageous amount offered the three investors stands out immediately and the point that Jesus is making is that this is exactly the outrageous way God treats each of us each day in the amount of free gifts we receive, spiritual and natural. Think, for instance of the gift of sight, hearing, feeling, that we take for granted; think of the gift of life itself; think about the cosmos in which we live that gives us life, day and night, the seasons of warmth and cold, the colors of spring, summer and autumn and winter. When one thinks about it, any one of these is worth far more than a million dollars.

The second point Jesus is making in the parable is that the million dollars does not belong to the recipients, that they are free to stuff in their trouser pockets and head to the local bank. They are expected to invest it, to make more of it; it is simply for their use, nothing more. The owner of the money wants to see if these three individuals are clever enough to bring back more than they started with. This will be a test of their intelligence and skill.

The third point Jesus wishes to make is that in this world there will always be some who are willing to take a chance with God’s gifts and there are others who have no imagination, no wish to risk what they have. The old axiom applies here: “use it or lose it.” In short, two of the risk-takers covered their odds

and made it big. The third person who did not want to get caught short, inviting the owner's criticism, buried the money where it did no good for anyone.

So, the parable in modern terms is all about appreciating the gifts of all creation, protecting them, using them, and yes, even multiplying them each according to our natural, God-given gifts.

So, a last point to take from the story is this: nothing is free in this world, but if you want something precious, you need to earn it; once you receive it you need to show your appreciation by using it for the glory of the One who first gave it; otherwise you lose it, simple as that.

Now suddenly life becomes a little more exciting and challenging, doesn't it?

Prayer For The Week

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God. We humbly ask your blessing upon all people in their daily life and work; for our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone.

We pray for the well-being of this community, the nations, and especially the people of Oman this day. They are a people who practice peace. Bless them in their efforts to be a light of peace in this war-torn corner of our world.

We remember the special needs and concerns of this congregation, and we confess to you our shortcomings. In your compassion forgive us our sins, we ask.

Open our eyes for new ways to a just and proper use of your creation. We have exploited the land and its people. Teach us to work for justice, freedom, and peace, not for ourselves alone but for all persons.

Hear our prayers, Great God, and send your Holy Spirit to be with us as we seek to know you and do your will. Amen.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

Stewardship, in its simplest form, is the practice of generosity. It is essential to the daily expression of our faith. As a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life, we know that understanding personal and household stewardship is crucial in responding to God's abundant grace.

Each of us has a unique story, and we are part of a larger story that makes up the Community of Christ. In the Road to Emmaus story, it is at the household table where Christ is revealed and recognized, where hearts are warmed for greater sharing and generosity. Recognizing God's story in our own story shapes our lives, identity and choices. When we join with other individuals and households in making daily decisions rooted in the stories of our loving and benevolent God, the result is our increased capacity to give generously and boldly participate in God's plan for our world.

Our congregation has the opportunity to be a voice that teaches some very different ideas about time, talent and treasure. The practice of generosity takes the support of an entire faith community, conversation between individuals in all generations and a focus on households.

Living generously begins with the involvement of children and continues through every age and stage of life.