

Good and Faithful

Matthew 25:14-30

November 15, 2020

Once there was a king who had three sons, each with a special talent. The first had a talent for growing fruit. The second for raising sheep. And the third for playing the violin. Once, the king had to go overseas on important business. Before departing he called his three sons together and told them he was depending on them to keep the people contented in his absence.

Now for a while, things went well. But then came the winter, a bitter and cruel winter it was. There was an acute shortage of firewood. Thus, the first son was faced with a very difficult decision. Should he allow the people to cut down some of his beloved fruit trees for firewood? When he saw the people shivering with cold, he finally allowed them to do so. The second son was also faced with a difficult decision. Food became very scarce. Should he allow the people to kill some of his beloved sheep for food? When he saw the children crying for hunger, his heart went out to them and he allowed them to kill some of the sheep. Thus, the people had firewood for their fires, and food for their tables.

Nevertheless, the harsh winter continued to oppress them. Their spirits began to sag, and there was no one to cheer them up. They turned to the fiddler, but he refused to play for them. In the end, things got so bad that in desperation many of them emigrated.

Then one day the king arrived back home. He was terribly sad to find that many of his people had left his kingdom. He called in his three sons to give an account of what had gone wrong. The first said, "Father, I hope you won't be mad at me, but the winter was very cold and so I allowed the people to cut down some of the fruit trees for firewood." And the second son said, "Father, I hope you won't be mad with me because when food got scarce I allowed the people to kill some of my sheep." On hearing this, far from being angry, the father embraced his two sons, and told them that he was proud of them.

Then the third son came forward carrying his fiddle with him. "Father", he said, "I refused to play because you were not here to enjoy the music." "Well then", said the king, "play me a tune now because my heart is full of sorrow." The son raised the violin and bow, but found that his fingers had gone stiff from lack of exercise. No matter how hard he tried, he could not get them to move. Then the father said, "You could have cheered up the people with your music, but you refused. If the kingdom is half-empty, the fault is yours. But now you can no longer play. That will be your punishment."

This is a story written by an American writer - Henry David Thoreau, based on today's parable.

1

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. (Matthew 25: 14-15, NKJV)

One thing we notice from the parable is that every man in this parable had been given gifts. One man was given five talents, another man two, and another man one, but every man had at least one talent. So, everyone had been given talents by God.

Now let me make sure you hear what Jesus was saying. Every one of these talents were important because they were given by the master. Every gift of God is important, either small or big, because it is a gift from God.

There is a psychologist at Harvard named Howard Gardner who is trying to revolutionize the study of intelligence. He says we have been studying I.Q. all wrong. On our intelligence tests we only measure one or two forms of intelligence.

Gardner says that there are actually seven forms of intelligence. Some people are gifted with linguistic intelligence, he says. These are our writers and poets. Others have what he calls logical/mathematical intelligence. They are our good accountants and scientists and electricians. Some people

are gifted at working with space. These are our artists and architects and plumbers. Some are gifted kinesthetically. Their bodies are unusually graceful and coordinated. These are our athletes and dancers. Others are gifted interpersonally. They know instinctively how to get along well with the people around them. These are our salespersons, counselors and teachers. Some are gifted in their ability to think and look within. These are our philosophers and thinkers -- our wise people. Some are gifted musically. These are our music conductor and instrumentalists.

Here is the important point. Gardner claims that everyone he has ever tested has scored high on at least one of these seven forms of intelligence. Wow. Isn't it interesting? All of us are gifted in our own way. Yes, each one of us have received a unique and special gift from God.

We are all equal in the eyes of God. In an election, our votes are all equal. But when it comes to our abilities, we are as different as we are. God simply did not make us all the same. There are some people who can handle five talents, there are some who can handle only one. We may not be a five-talent person, but we have some talent.

I am sure you agree with me that there are a whole lot more one and two talent people in this world than there are five talent people. We are here to use whatever talent we have received for the glory of God.

You know Kyong Hee, my wife. She is a pianist as you know teaching students, young and old in Wilton. "Playing Heart" is an annual benefit concert she has been orchestrating last 13 years to raise fund for non-profit local communities. I thought due to the Covid-19 pandemic there would not be "Playing Heart" benefic concert. Guest what. It is happening. Neither at a church nor in a library. Instead, it will be on Youtube. Pre-recorded performance will be posted on Youtube. What a creative way it is. It is a great joy to see Kyong Hee and her students, young and old using their musical gifts to reach out people in need.

2

Back to the ranch,

Hear the verse 15 once again. “to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his own ability.” (vs 15) Did you hear that they each received talents and abilities according to his own ability. What a grace it is.

God has not given us gifts and graces we cannot handle well. God has given us appropriate talents and abilities that we can handle and enjoy using well. This truth set us free to enjoy using talents and abilities with joy and thanksgiving.

Then, one question arises: Why did the man in Jesus parable choose to do nothing with the one small sum he had been given to him? What do you think?

Perhaps, he feared failure, thinking “what if I lose it when I invest like those who get more talents than I? What if I end up with nothing in my hand?” Perhaps he kept wasting time, thinking, “If only I had been given the talent of these other two men. If only I had been given more than one talent.” These may be sound reasons but more than likely he did nothing because he thought his one little talent would not make a difference.

Sir Michael Costa, the celebrated conductor, was holding a rehearsal. As the mighty chorus rang out, accompanied by scores of instruments, the piccolo player, (piccolo is a little pint-sized flute) being a little bit tired, did not play his brief part, thinking that his contribution would not be missed amid so much music. Suddenly, the great leader stopped and cried out, "Where is the piccolo?"

The sound of that one small instrument was necessary to the harmony, and the Master Conductor missed it when it dropped out. The point? To the Conductor there are no insignificant instruments in an orchestra. Sometimes the smallest and seemingly least important one can make the greatest contribution. The conductor knows it right away.

In the Church the players and the instruments are diverse—different sizes, different shapes, different notes, different roles to play. But like the piccolo player in Sir Michael's orchestra, we often think that our contribution is not significant. Our contribution would not possibly make a difference. And so

we stop playing. We stop doing that which we've been given to do. But guess what? People might not notice it. But the Conductor immediately notices. From God's perspective, everyone's contribution is crucial.

3

"Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money." (Matthew 25: 16-18, NJKV) "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."

Do you notice that the Lord teaches us our abilities and talents are like money to be invested?

One of the wise advices financial planners give us is that we don't need to wait until you have a lot of money. We can begin investing even with a little.

Likewise, being a part of and participating at a part of what God is doing in the world and in this church family is something you and I can do TODAY and RIGHT NOW!

We don't have to wait until we have a lot of faith. We don't have to wait until we are stronger in the faith. We don't have to wait until we know God better and deeper. We can participate in God's kingdom NOW! We are called to use the gifts God has given us NOW.

I pray that we all may participate at the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ NOW with joy and thanksgiving. I pray that all of us may hear every day the Lord saying, "Well done! Good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.' Amen. Amen.