

Sunday, November 19, 2023 ***“Gifted, Talented and Willing”***

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 Matthew 25:14-31

In the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Section 15 (1) we read: “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.” Equality rights provisions can also be found in article 1(b) of the Canadian Bill of Rights as well as the Canadian Human Rights Act and similar provincial and territorial legislation. The Supreme Court also acknowledges that “equality includes the promotion of a society in which all are secure in the knowledge that they are recognized at law as human beings equally deserving of concern, respect and consideration.”

As people of faith, we are all equal in the eyes of God but when it comes to our abilities, we are as different as different can be. God simply did not create us all the same. God created us to be unique in our attitude, behavior, personality and talents. This means that we humans are totally different from each other, because we have gifts that are bestowed upon us. These differences also include the human physique -we have different shapes of our body, as well as differing likes, dislikes and perceptions. And people have different talents based upon abilities.

But what are talents? From our reading from Matthew 25, we read that ‘talents’ were given to three slaves each according to their ability. A talent was a measurement of weight and was worth more than 15 years’ wages of a labourer. That may not sound like an enormous sum to us in our inflationary times, but it was a considerable sum at that time. The parable is a story of a man who is wealthy and entrusts some of his wealth to three slaves. Three different people with different abilities that are known by the landowner. He gives the first slave 5 talents, the second 2 talents and the third just one talent. It must be noted that even the slave with one talent was trusted to receive something. All three receive the talents. But what each person does with this talent is what makes a difference in the story.

Immediately the slave with 5 talents invests it, and eventually doubles the earnings. So also the slave who was given 2 talents; he risks it and doubles it to become 4 talents. But the slave who received one talent hid it and buried it in the ground.

After a while the master returns to settle the accounts with those whom he entrusted with his wealth. They report in—slave with 5 makes it 10; slave with 2 made it 4. They are praised for what they have done by the master. They are rewarded for their work are entrusted to do

even more. But the third slave upon reporting in tells the master what he did. Buried his talent in the ground. And the reasons for this are bitter-sweet for the master to hear: a harsh man; one who reaped where he did not sow –stealing from others; and gathered where he had not scattered seed. The slave was also afraid and he hid the talent in the ground where no one could see it.

The master rebukes the slave and said, 'you knew these things about me: reap and gathering exploiting others, but you could have at least invested what I gave you with bankers= legitimate people who take care of money- but he had not. The repercussions? The talent that was buried was taken away and given to the one who now had ten talents. And for this worthless slave so named by the master, he is removed from his service, put out on the street per se and left on his own.

It is from this parable that our English word "talent," meaning "a natural gift," has entered the language. But when we think about the modern use of this word we might also think about other kinds of endowments. This parable acknowledges that people do not have the same number of gifts. Some persons' gifts are intensified because they have received them all in one field- would Shakespeare had 5 talents in literature; Leonardo da Vinci 5 in inventive and creative thinking or Michelangelo 5 in art? But the thing is, the world is not filled with people who have 5 talents!

One of the most popular summertime reality television shows that draws people from around the world is "America's Got Talent". People from across the globe audition to showcase their abilities- some are wonderful, others are humorous and still others leave us to wonder. But these people acknowledge something in themselves- they have talent- a unique gift worth sharing with the world and they are willing to risk sharing it for a reward.

Talents are gifts given by God; there are some people who have many and others who only have one. There are some people who can handle five talents; there are some who can handle only one. There are some persons who have great intellectual capabilities, and some who do not. There are some who have the ability to project and articulate their thoughts, and there are some who cannot. There are some who have physical prowess and attractive looks, and there are some who do not. The important thing to remember is that of us is given something. No one is left idle. You may not be a five-talent person, but you have some talent. We all do and I think that there are a whole lot more one and two talent people in this world than

there are five talent people. There are some people who seem to have it all but for many of us one or two talents is sufficient.

But what holds us back from using our talent or talents? The slave tells the master he was afraid. Of whom was he afraid? The investors, those who would question where the money came from, or was he fearful because he was unsure what to do or say with the money. He was fearful and did what he thought best- hide it and keep it safe. But sometimes when one is afraid things come along to change one's mind and maybe this slave was just not motivated enough to try again.

There is a story of the frog who fell into a deep rut and, try as he might, he could not get out? Mrs. Frog, standing above the rut, admonished, cajoled, beckoned, and belittled him: "Get out, come on, let's go." But Mr. Frog, down in the deep rut, said simply that he couldn't. "I've tried everything, and there is no way I can get out of this rut." So Mrs. Frog left him there and hopped on down to the pond and started to catch bugs to eat. A few minutes later, however, Mr. Frog appeared beside her on their favorite lily pad. "I thought you said you couldn't get out," she said. He responded, "A big truck came along and I had to."

Fear is a great motivator because of what might come about. Charlie Brown in the PEANUTS cartoon comes to the kitchen one morning in his pyjamas and says to his mother, "Mom, I think I've discovered my difficulty in getting out of bed." "What's that?" "I'm allergic to mornings," says Charlie. Many Christians are allergic to mornings. We orient our lives to the sunset and not the dawn. We live poor lives when we might be spiritually rich. We die before we really live out of fear because someone might complain, hurt or upset you. But this is not the way of Christ because he risked it all for our sake. He died for us how much more could he risk than sacrificing himself for the sake of others?

The one-talent slave in this parable could have been rich, but he settled for much less. He surveyed his past experience and concluded that life could never be different. He was a slave and that is what he wanted to stay being. Yet his master saw something potentially in him and tested him. But he did not know the good things that might have awaited him. He chose to die before he really lived. As Jesus sums up the parable he states: For to all those who have more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but those who have nothing even this will be taken away.

A minister was talking to a professing Christian and asked him if he was active in a local church. The man responded, "No, but the dying thief wasn't active in a church and yet he was

still accepted." The minister then asked if he had been baptized. The man responded, "The dying thief was not baptized and he still made it into heaven." The minister then asked if he had taken part in the Lord's Table. The man responded, "No, but the dying thief didn't either, and Christ still received him."

Yes this is true, but remember that the dying thief was on the cross beside Christ and knowing he would die soon. You on the other hand are alive but are dying in your faith. God grants each of us many talents and speaks to each of us. We are challenged to venture out, to live life in courageous faith, not be afraid but to invest our lives for Him. In this parable God is giving us a formula for living life to the fullest that is to fully live before we die. To be motivated in action, to see that knowing Christ as King, Saviour is worth all the talents we have. To know Christ Jesus as the One who redeems us and promises eternal life through faith, is worth it. Are we only wanting to keep everything the same? Or are we willing to review the talents we each have been gifted by God?

Let us pray

Holy God of grace and hope we praise you because have created us and blessed us with many talents. Call us together as your faithful people and enable us to step into faith by sharing our gifts and risking who we are and may be through the love we have one for another in Jesus.

Hear us O God as we pray and call us to serve you. Hear us as we pray.SILENCE.Amen.