

Sunday, November 15, 2020

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 Matthew 25:14-30

Talents Making a Difference

Many of you have toolboxes either in your car, your home or even at your place of work. Depending upon your job of course the tools you have in your toolbox vary. For some individuals, the tools needed are screwdrivers, hammers, levels, measuring tape. For other people the tools required include hardhat, safety boots, leather gloves, safety belts and goggles. Still others use the laptop and its accessories—mouse, disk drive, internet access. And then there are the many tools, machines and safety items used by those in the medical field. Just think for a moment about the tools that you have or use in your specific toolbox. Then reflect on the kind of knowledge that you have that enables you to need and have specific tools for your tasks. What are you aware of and can apply to do and say? What toolboxes contain depends upon your interests, your work or what you like to do. For example, if you do crafts you might have scissors, glue and yarn. If you sew you might not only have a sewing machine but also thread, needles and fabrics of different types. The point is that based upon the work, your interests or even what you like to do for fun, they all have different tools for different tasks.

But what about your skills? We don't often think about the skills you have acquired through the years as being a big part of your portfolio or even your toolbox. But we each have different skills developed through time. What are the skills you have acquired after putting in a lot of hard work and learning? What kinds of things do you understand and know how to do?

The last item on the Buckingham and Coffman's model of human attributes is talents. This is the modern definition of this word as it refers to something that one is born with as a natural ability and is something one does without really thinking about it. It is a recurring pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviours. So we each have these different attributes in our toolboxes, tools, skills, and talents. But what are you doing with them?

One of our favourite communion hymns begins with the words, "Let us talents and tongues employ, reaching out with a shout of joy! Bread is broken the wine is poured, Christ is spoken and seen and heard" (468VU) This hymn invites us to share in the elements for communion with joy because Jesus is experienced at the table. But what do the words "Let us talents and tongues employ" mean? It is a call to serve by reaching out in Jesus' name using the tongues—that is the various means of communication including speech as well as the

talents God has given to us. Again this is the modern understanding of 'talents' because when we employ or share our talents and our ways of communicating, we tell others of Jesus and what it means to have and be faithful.

Jesus teaching from Matthew 25 is of the parable of the talents. In this story, Jesus' uses the word talents to refer to not the natural abilities one has and does without thinking about it, but the weights allotted to money and in this story this was a great amount of money. The story is of a master who plans on going away from his household for a while and entrusts three of his servants with a great deal of money in all. The servants receive different amounts 5, 2 and 1 talents each according to their ability. The master knows whom he trusts with his money and in many ways he is testing each of them about what they will do with it. Then the master leaves for a while, not sure how long but it must have been a significant amount of time. Upon his return the master calls in these servants and asks them to give account of what they did with the money. The first and second workers invested their talents and doubled this money, and received the master's praise. Well done good and faithful servant you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many. But the third servant did nothing with the money at all. In speaking to the master, the servant reasons with him about what he did with it and why. The servant says I know that you are a hard man, you reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not plant seed. I was afraid of what might happen and so I buried the money. This servant's reasons for doing nothing because he knew that the master benefits from the work of others' labour and that his fear was stronger than his abilities. When the master heard this, he became angry and did not praise him, but called him, wicked and lazy. At least he could have invested the talent with bankers and get a little interest. But this servant did not do this, and the talent which had been given to him, which was buried and brought back to the master was placed into the hands of the first servant who had doubled his investments the most. The wicked servant was sent away and probably forced to live in the streets. He was already a servant what lower position could he hold?

What we might learn from this teaching is that even though God creates us we are not created with equal skills, abilities opportunities or talents. During memorial or funeral services this passage is often shared in reflecting upon the deceased person's life and what is often stated is their success. Every person is gifted by God with many talents but what measures success is when one takes action. Whether individuals actually know what these talents and gifts are and then sharing them is essential. But when one does share these talents and works, all efforts are to be aimed toward God and not for self pleasure or agenda.

When a person's life story is shared, often mentioned is the kind of tools they used in their work, their special interests and of course the talents they shared with others whom they loved. Yet what is interesting however, is that for many people, the God-given talents are not discovered at all or only later in life. We must realize that God always gives us everything we need to do what He has called us to do. But we must do what He says.

The master in the story wanted the servant to use their abilities, to invest his money and take action with the talents given to them. What talents do you have? That is, what are the abilities you have that are naturally and uniquely yours and what have you done with them lately? There will come a day when you will be held accountable for the talents God has given you. Are you ready to share your report?

Jesus tells us that as his faithful followers we don't need to be afraid to live out our faith. According to Paul, we just need to be sober, to have faith and love, and to know that salvation is ours through Jesus the Risen Saviour. What we really need to do is to encourage each other and build each other up so that the talents with which we have been blessed by God, are discovered and put into action. So that we can shout with joy the wonders of God's creation, the joy of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit's guidance. Yes we will be accountable for our lives, but with God guiding our daily living we do not have to be afraid.

With what talents has God blessed you? What are you doing with these gifts? How are you accountable to God and to those in your faith family who need your talents? God has blessed you with many talents, but you must discern how you will use them to make a difference. It is up to you to discover and develop them. Because you are called to make a difference in this world. Your talent is God's gift to you What you do with it is your gift back to God.

Let us pray:

Blessed God we praise you for your gifts to us. Help us to discern ,discover and use the talents you give to us so that we might share with joy the love we have for you. Through your Son Jesus we have learned what it means to share our talents with others and to respond in faith and hope that you truly love us. Bless us we pray and help us to live faithfully each day. In Jesus' name. Amen.