

Be Purposeful with Great Gifts

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Matthew 25:14-30 NIV (The Parable of the Talents)

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ 21 “His master replied, ‘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!’ 22 “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ 23 “His master replied, ‘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!’ 24 “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ 26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 “ ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When my kids were small, we took them on a shopping spree to buy toys. They got to do all the spending of mom and dad’s money so that other kids could have Christmas presents. *Have you ever had the chance to be generous with other people’s money?*

That’s what this parable is about. Jesus challenges the notion that our lives and our resources are, in fact, ours. While a “talent” in this parable is a monetary amount – a laborer’s typical

wages for 15 years – talking about our gifts, abilities and talents would equally apply. All our capacities come from, and belong to, God.

Last week we heard the first of these three parables in the Matthew 25. The call was to *be prepared*. In this parable, the call is *be purposeful*. That is: God's servants have been entrusted with great gifts, according to God's purpose. But with these great gifts come great responsibility. There is hard work to be done over the long haul. *Day by day we are called to live purposefully, risking what God has given to us for the sake of God's glory.*

I should have called this sermon *God Likes It When We Hustle*, because God does! God has gifted each of us with "one wild and precious life," as Mary Oliver put it in her poem, "The Summer Day." And God will call each of us to an account of how we have invested it.

So let me remind you of some things about this parable that are prone to trouble us.

- First, the three servants receive different amounts. They don't all get the same resources. That just how life is.
- Second, the first two servants are equally faithful and equally praised by the Master, even though they have unequal outcomes. The one who doubled his *two* is just as honored as the one who doubled his *five*.
- Then, we see that the one who buried it in the ground accuses the Master of being "a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed." And the Master agrees with him! If Jesus is describing God and God's kingdom economy, then this feels like a very different picture of God than what Jesus has given elsewhere.

But this parable is driving a very different kind of point home. Jesus is going to step back from the disciples. They are going to be living a wild and precious life without Jesus in their midst. They, and *we, are given freedom... freedom to grow, and to grow UP*. The third servant gives us a vivid picture of what happens when we refuse to live into that freedom or refuse to grow up. The third servant commits to playing small and playing not-to-lose. He would rather live in fear and resentment than live with risk.

And this seems to be the point of that Jesus is driving at. For the Kingdom, we are expected to take risks. We are expected to risk all we have, all we've been given, for the sake of the Master. But we must remember that our lives are not our own! We are playing with house money! This is supposed to be fun!

What about us? When did being the church stop being an adventure, cease to be about risk taking, stop being fun? *What are we, as a church, so afraid of losing that we would rather bury it than risk for the sake of the Master?* What has God given to us that we treat as more "ours" than "His"? What are we so afraid of losing that we can't imagine putting it to work for something greater than us?

Jesus offered another image that involved burying. In John 12:24 Jesus says:

24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

In order for new life to happen, there always has to be some form of death. Whatever seed West Valley has, we must sow it as far and as wide as we are able. That kind of risking is what the Master honors. We should to leave the storehouse empty if only to hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servants! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

And what about you? Tell me, [what is it you plan to do/ with your one wild and precious life?](#)