

The Parable of the Talents

Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann

West Valley Presbyterian Church

Read Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30Jean Fujiki

Ok...well that seems a little unfair you might be thinking

Why does the person who has ten talents, get the extra one from the servant who only had one to begin with....what kind of Master was that??

I want to answer the unfairness question in a minute by doing a little object lesson but before I do that I want to give you a quiz...and I want a show of hands for the right answer

(SLIDE THAT SAYS THE FOLLOWING)

1. A TALENT WAS WORTH HOW MUCH?

- A. \$10
- B. \$50
- C. \$100
- D. More than \$1,000

2. WHO OWNED THEIR TALENT(S)?

- a. everyone
- b. one of them
- c. none of them

3. This parable is totally unfair. It is wrong to take the talent from the servant who only has one talent, and give it to the servant who has more.

- a. agree
- b. disagree

1. Answer #1 - For the first answer, those of you that chose the letter "D" are correct. **The right answer is D.**

A talent was more than \$1,000, which at the time of Jesus was equal to fifteen years of a full time salary.

If you are earning a salary right now, multiply your annual salary by 15. That's the right amount! People listening to Jesus telling this story were supposed to get the message that this Master was **extremely generous** and was giving out an enormous amount to his servants....trusting that they would do something with it.....use it wisely.

Do you usually think of God as that generous? Sometimes we think of God as aloof, stingy, and withholding.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul writes (abundance scriptures....)

If you don't want to look at the witness of scripture

look at creation. It is *abundant* in beauty and unnecessary frills.

We don't need color to survive, but it is there! We don't need to have music, or mountains, or flowers but it is all there!

God is generous, abundant in his provision. Not stingy...barebones...and afraid to give too much to us because we might get spoiled.

Being spoiled comes from getting too much of the wrong stuff. Not too much of the right stuff....

God gives us abundance of the right stuff....God gives, and gives and gives. He is a giver....with limitless resources. He is generous...that is why one of our core values at WVPC is **extravagant generosity**...

Cause that is Who God is...

So even the servant who received one talent received a heck of a lot of money.

As he began his parable, Jesus wanted his listener's jaw to drop.

He wanted them to say, as he began this parable, **WHAT A GENEROUS MASTER!**

2. Answer #2: Who owned their talent? None of Them! **The right answer is C.**

None of the abundance of money given, ever belonged to the servants, ever..ever. It was on loan.

They were given what they were given for a limited amount of time, after which it all went back to the Master.

They were multiplying what he had given them by using their talents wisely...but it was always...hands down...no holds barred....for the Master. ..it was the Master's money

So as I said, the correct answer to the second question is C.

We didn't bring anything into the world with us, and we are not taking anything with us when we die.

It all belongs to God.

God gives us the gifts we have

On loan, for us to use for his glory

Our time, our talent/abilities, our money

It's all from him....he loans it to us....we use it for his glory...it goes back to him

3. For Answer #3 the answer is B. *This parable may seem totally unfair but it isn't.*

Let me explain this by acting it out.

I have some gifts for you this morning

They are wrapped up...and I am going to hand them out to you now

(Hand out four gifts)

You will notice as you open your gifts

That all of these gifts require a certain amount of effort, input from you

In order to see the results for which the gift was intended

In other words.....

Who has the **crayons**? What do you do with crayons? You draw a picture that everyone can enjoy....You use the crayons to create something new...and you multiply people's joy by creating a thing of beauty...You don't just sit and stare at the crayons....put them up on the mantle or something....

Who has the **LEGO**? What do you do with **LEGO**? You take the pieces, and you fit them together to build something new....You get a feeling of accomplishment when it all works...when all the pieces come together to form a little structure of some sort. But you don't just think...Oh that's a nice red cubed rectangle with bumps on it. I better hide it in my sock drawer so it doesn't crack in half.

What about the **cookie dough**? Who has the cookie dough? What do you do with cookie dough? You work with the dough and you cut it and bake it, and you multiply it...and you share the goods. (Someone pointed out that they don't do that...because the cookie dough tastes better than the cookies but that completely ruins the point of this illustration so we're not going there)

In fact I have some cookie dough for you Anton. Here is a gift for you!

Anton: *Well, it looks pretty but I don't really want to open it*

Kim: *Why not?*

Anton: *Because if I open it, it will mean that I will be obligated to bake the dough. I'd rather just hold onto the gift and look at how nicely it is wrapped and keep it somewhere in the closet.*

Kim: *But if you keep it in the closet, and don't use it, it will get stale....*

Anton: *I know but I don't think I want to risk burning the cookies. I've done that before...it was a big fail...besides all this takes time I don't have...and cutting the dough...it gets under my nails and its kind of slimy...I'd rather just hold onto it the way it is...*

Kim: *So you're not going to open it? That's wasting this gift...I can't let you have it then if you're not going to do something with it...*

Does anyone in the congregation want Anton's cookie dough...because if these don't get baked...they are going stale...and no one is going to get the joy of eating these.

(I give it to someone else)

SORRY ANTON!!

I just acted out for you the parable we read in scripture.

Was taking the cooking dough away from Anton unfair?

No...it wasn't....cause he wasn't even going to use it...it was going to go stale on a shelf in his closet....and then the ants would come...and it would turn green...

I remember sitting across the table from a woman who said to me ***"You know I used to be a joyful Christian. When I became a Christian in fact I was flooded with joy. But it didn't last. Now my faith is stale, my prayers are routine, and life is flat. What's wrong?"***

And I was rather blunt in my answer

I asked her

What did you do to share your joy when you had it?

What risks did you take in following Jesus?

Were you involved in the adventure of sharing your faith?

Were you involved with people who were hurting?

Did your faith make a difference where you live...at home, at

Work at school?

How did you invest what you had so that you multiplied what you'd been given and shared it with others?

We lose spiritual joy and vitality if we don't share what we've been given...Even what we have will be taken away...

Sometimes we can think of our faith, or church life as maintaining what is...Keeping things safe and the same

When we do that we identify with the servant who hid his talent in the ground, right?

We might think...well, if I can just get through my life without too many crises I'll be satisfied

If I can do reasonably well at my profession, raise a decent family, keep out of trouble and retire comfortably...I'll be satisfied

But where's the risk, the challenge, the investment in something beyond myself?

Beyond just getting by....staying safe (cause I'm afraid I'm going to burn the cookies ...so I never get the delight of sharing them, eating them)

We can be daring because we belong to a generous God who loves us

If we stay too safe...we'll never live...

Jesus risked everything...he loved people and poured everything out for them....he didn't just get by so he could have a comfortable life

And Jesus is constantly calling us to do something beyond the mediocrity of a safe and buried talent
As a church, we are not primarily about preservation. Rather the church exists to multiply the talent of abundant life in the world.

To multiply the love of Jesus

And I know there is a lot of need out there

But what we know we cannot do can sometimes dissuade us from doing what we can

We don't want to bury our talent in the ground because we're overwhelmed or scared or don't see anyone else doing anything - sometimes the lethargy of others can give us the wrong benchmark...

Friends...**the call to the Christian life is a call to high adventure**

We are the spiritually wealthy of the world

We have been loved, forgiven, healed

And all that we have...all that we own...is on loan

It doesn't belong to us

It's all equipment for the adventure of sharing with others the kingdom of God....

I remember standing by a rock wall, years ago

Before I even knew anything about rock climbing

And the side of the rock was sheer, and flat

And I said to my instructor, how can I ever scale a surface like that

Well you can't now, she said

You don't have any of the equipment on

But wait 'til I gear you up and there will be no surface that you cannot scale

God has entrusted us with resources...equipment for high adventure

Opportunity awaits us when we use what he has given to us to promote his purpose in the world

Lloyd Ogilvie, Chaplain in the US Senate said "The Christian life is not just a conservation of values but a confrontation with opportunity."

Do you feel that way today? That your Christian life is a risk taking confrontation with opportunity?

The risk part of the Christian life is why

Jesus had to keep reminding people of how good God is

How reliable to meet all of our needs;

He told people this over and over again, because holding our gifts tightly is such a big deterrent to joy....

Take money for instance since that what this parable is about (but it has to do with any kind of gift that we've been given that we don't share) -but money - it can just suck the life out of you if you don't hold it loosely and share it

It can make you so preoccupied that you miss the life your living
I tell you...more couples argue about finances than about any other issue a recent survey showed...

Here are three basic lessons that we can learn from this parable.

1. Everyone has been given something that they can use to further God's work; money, time, talent. (senior in nursing home, so eager to pray for others...its my chance to pray!)

2. When we use what we've been given for God, it grows in power. It multiplies. It becomes bigger and better than we ever thought and the adventure begins! The joy quotient goes up. When we don't use the gifts we've been given, our gifts grow stale, our joy quotient goes down.
One story from one church happened when a group of Jr High Youth who wanted to donate to a local mission.

Took ten dollars that they all collected among themselves and turned it all into pennies

They went from door to door in their neighborhood and asked people

"If I give you one penny, will you give me two?"

They returned to the church with triple the amount they started with and decided to do it again the next week. They had so much fun together!

3. God uses ordinary people/servants, equipped by him, to do extraordinary things. Our faith grows, when we take a risk...

Many of you know Rosalie. She was here as an intern for awhile and now she is done being an intern here, but has decided to continue worshiping with us which I am so glad about.

One of the things Rosalie said to me after being here for awhile was that she wanted to try ministry outside of the church. Her new internship is at Teen Challenge in San Jose. She said to me, "I really hope God kicks my butt"....in other words Rosalie is moving outside of her comfort zone to work with kids coming in off the streets who have all kinds of addiction issues. She wants and seeks the challenge. She is looking for that high adventure of taking this risk and trusting God...

I want you to hear from her how she is using the "talents" that God has put in her to multiply them for the kingdom...

(Rosalie – 5 minutes)