



USING THE TALENTS GOD GAVE US

We are told many times that Jesus will come again. We don't know when or how but He has promised that He will return in glory to establish a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, we are all called to be vigilant and resourceful as we await the coming of our King. As people are called to care for their personal needs — their houses, property, businesses — to keep them running smoothly, so the Church is called to manage her affairs in a wise and prudent way. During this time of anticipation, we are called to use our resources to spread the Gospel and to ensure the spiritual prosperity of the Church. We are called to serve our Master and to please Him in our actions. Our vigilance affects the way we live.

Every day of our lives we have many opportunities to use God's gifts to us. We are also called to take risks for God's kingdom, stepping out in faith and watching to see God's work as we trust in Him. God

doesn't give us gifts and talents to hide them some place for safe keeping and turn them to selfish ends. Each and every one of us has been called by God to play a role in advancing His kingdom, using our money, abilities, time, training and background — nothing is irrelevant.

“You and I were not intended to be storehouses for safekeeping God's gifts, but rather clearinghouses and distribution centers!”

We can be quite certain and assured that whatever initiative we take to use our gifts will be blessed. Remember: God's desire for us is always much greater than ours; He will do everything He can to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. His active involvement in our lives is an adventure filled with all kinds of opportunities for us to use all that God has given us and to see

Him work wonders as we do.

Let's take a look at Matthew's Gospel of the talents (Matt 25:1-46). We've heard this Gospel story many times and we risk missing its deeper meaning. Jesus told a story of a rich man who decided to take

an extended journey. Before departing, he entrusted his wealth to three servants giving one 5 talents (the equivalent of about 1.7 million dollars today), another 2 talents and another 1 talent. After his trip, the man returned and gathered the servants to find out what they did with his money. The first two worked hard and doubled their amounts, but the focus of the story falls on the third man who still had the original amount he had been given.

Essentially this is a story about a man who decided to “play it safe.” He did not want the risk of losing anything, so he buried his master’s money in the ground. Nothing was gained, and nothing was lost. He said to his master, upon his return, “Here’s your money back.”

The startling part of this parable is how the master reacted. He was not pleased, to put it mildly. In fact, he was livid with rage. He called the servant, “a worthless, lazy lout,” took all his money back and banished him to a place of misery. We might be shocked by that severe sentence. The punishment does not seem to fit the crime. He didn’t cheat, steal or lie. He may not have deserved a promotion like the other two, but he didn’t deserve such a harsh treatment. The worst that can be said of him is that he had not done anything at all... and that’s the point of the story.

In Jesus’ eyes, it was a serious matter not to do anything. We may well remember the parable of the

Good Samaritan. The hero was the Good Samaritan, the villains were a priest and a Levite who saw the man’s needs and passed him by, doing nothing.

Jesus made it very clear that we need not be criminals in order to displease God. All we need to do is *nothing*. Take what He has given us — money, abilities, power, etc. — bury them in the ground or refuse to use them to their full potential; treating life as a holding action, sticking with things we already know, or are comfortable with, staying within our circle of friends rather than enlarging that circle; never turning loose, never launching out. Come to the end of the way saying, “Lord, here is your money back;” thus allowing the story of our lives to be summarized by the words, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

How did our third man reach this point? His attitude and actions were based on two mistaken concepts: First, an inordinate fear of failure. He said to his master, “I was afraid and buried your money in the ground.” He felt that the worst thing he could do in this life is to try and fail. Some of us could sympathize. We can understand it to some measure. No one enjoys failure; it’s painful. But it is not the worst thing a person can do. The worst thing is NOT TO TRY.

There are all kinds of sports events going on every week in the world, whether at the elementary, high school, college or professional level. One team goes up against another. They can’t all win, they won’t all lose. The winners are happy the losers are sad and disappointed. It is a painful experience, but it’s not the worst thing that can happen. The worst thing is NOT TO TRY. Imagine if a team were so afraid of losing that they did not bother to show up to a game!

The Second mistaken concept which prompted the servant to bury his gift, was a distorted idea of life. He said to his master, “I knew you were a hard man. You reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter.” These are the words of a true cynic. His slogan might have been, “it’s no use trying, nothing is going to turn out right anyway!” He was partly right; life can be cruel, harsh, and very unfair! But that is not the whole story and it’s no excuse for



Rembrandt: The Parable of the Talents

quitting. The evil in our world today makes it all the more imperative for us to use the abilities God gave us. You and I were not intended to be storehouses for safekeeping God's gifts, but rather **clearinghouses** and **distribution centers!** The world around us is dying for a little bit of love, hurting for justice and pleading for righteousness. If we have any of those, then our job is to *turn it loose*.

We might say it will do no good, that the world will never respond to anything we have to offer. But that's not our problem. How others respond is their problem and God's problem, we are not obliged to succeed but to TRY. Thus Christ has taught us and

showed us a new way of life. True, it is often difficult and sometimes dangerous, but His challenge to us is that we get it out of the ground, turn it loose, and give it a chance. So as we begin a new year, let's resolve to put the talents God has given us to good use, so that Our Lord may also say to us, as He said to the other two servants, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy."

