



COMMUNITY  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

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Matthew 25:14-30

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### Celebrating our Gifts

Intro: Our NT reading this morning is from Matthew. It is the second in a string of parables that Jesus begins with the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” is like... Let us listen for the God’s word as it is to be found within the parable of the talents.

An 85 year old woman who was a patient of Dr. Bernie Seigel’s wrote these words as she looked back on her life. If I had my life to live over ..I would take more chances, I would take more trips, I would scale more mountains, I would swim more rivers, and I would watch more sunsets. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. You see I was one of those people who lived safely and sensibly and sanely, hour after hour and day after day ...I’ve been one of those people who never went anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat and a parachute ..If I had it to do all over again, I’d travel lighter, much lighter, than I have. I would start barefoot earlier in the spring, and I’d stay that way later in the fall. And I would ride more merry-go-rounds, and catch more gold rings, and greet more

people, and pick more flowers, and dance more often. If I had it to do all over again. But you see, I don’t.

The parable of the talents is not about money, or even the gifts of God. It is about how we live life as people of grace. The talents in this story do represent huge sums of money. One talent, which has the largest unit of money in that day, would be worth 15 years wages for a day laborer. So you don’t just take down to the store and expect they can make change for a talent.

Again this is a parable, a story to make a point. Three slaves are chosen to serve their master by managing his money while he is absent. They are given these huge sums to look after and take care of. Imagine your employer came in one day and said I’m going overseas for a while,

here is 15, 30, or 75 years worth of wages, I’ll be back...someday. I see some of you are really enjoying that scenario, boss gone, no one looking over your shoulder, kind of tempting? Maybe there is enough here for one of those Packers-Vikings fiesta trips? “Here” say the master, look after these while I’m away. I’ll be back, don’t know when. See ya. This parable is not about money. (Did I say that already?) It is about the freedom, the potential, the grace, that is given to us all. Given in amounts that are more than we can imagine would ever be really given us. (Whether it is one, two or five.)

If this were to happen again just the same way today - we’d all know what ought to be done. Put in the market right? Not in Jesus’ day. The one who dug a hole and buried the talent was in fact following an honored tradition of playing it safe. In these days it was indeed a responsible thing to do was to bury treasure, no one could blame you, for that was truly the safest thing. But by burying it one was also discharging their responsibility, see its good as locked up, there is nothing more I will have to do with it. It’s safely buried in the ground. I will do nothing further except remember where it is buried. (In another parable Jesus talks about a person who spent all the money they had to buy a field and in the field there was treasure. Somebody forgot) So people did bury their money. Kind of like putting it your mattress. It is the safest place.

But in this story he is the one we’re not to emulate. He dug a hole and said that’s all I’m going to do. Play it safe, make no mistakes, not lose a cent for my master. It was a fear-based response. I don’t want to make any move that could be wrong. So I won’t move at all. If I don’t do anything - I can’t be accused of doing anything wrong. Well, not so, is the message from today’s lesson.

As creations of God, we are to be growing and changing in our relationships with each other and with God That is what it is to be alive. To move through stages of growth- all the while hopefully growing closer to God.

On that journey of growth there is no way to avoid danger or risk. There is only a way through. We can not grow unless we cross safe boundaries we have set for ourselves and make ourselves vulnerable to failure, rejection, and loss. One can not learn to speak another language without being willing to be laughed at by those who speak fluently. You can not establish a new friendship until one is willing to be rebuffed by someone whose goodwill and esteem we long to have. We can never gain any more until we are willing to lose the little we may already have.

From our scripture we see that there is no fooling God. God will not listen to the lies we may tell ourselves. The servant had tried to explain away his actions by convincing himself that the problem with his own character was in fact a problem

with his masters. Instead of looking within, he pointed his finger out and away, at the master. The master was too severe, his demands were too unreasonable. Any sensible person would see the risks involved in taking care of such a large sum of money. I can't take any chances with this.

Yes you can. You ought to. In the telling of this story, the third slave is shamed for not doing anything, except burying it. He could have at least taken it to the bank and accrued some interest. If you were not willing to take any chances at least give it to someone who would, and get your 2% interest from a passbook account. The slave was unwilling to do even that.

When he did act, when he took a risk, it was when the master returned and confronted him with doing nothing. Then he tried to blackmail his master into pitying him. He tried to manipulate and control by pleading weakness and timidity. "You are so hard and demanding" he whined "and I am so small and powerless." This servant was trying to evoke pity to get his master to concede what never should be conceded, to overlook what should be punished and to reward self indulgence with leniency. It doesn't happen. The masters demands were not unreasonable. The swift justice of the master puts a merciful end to the idea that God's goodness can be manipulated or that God's grace can be contained or selfishly kept or controlled.

This morning we dedicate our pledges for the coming year as well as celebrate the beginning of our building project. Digging holes is not always a bad thing. The parable is about taking risks and striving to grow. We are people of faith who share their beliefs and who are willing to take risks. And in doing so reshaping reality the around us, declaring that this is a place where all are welcome

CPC's vision statement says what we are about: (quote vision statement)

We are not sitting still, resting on all the wonderful faithful things done in the past. We are not sticking our heads in the sand saying we can stay just we are and hope that no one notices that we have not changed with the spirit. We are changing, growing, remaining faithful by acting on the tremendous grace that is ours by no right of our own, but simply because we are people of God. Today we respond in very real ways to that grace, ever thankful for the freedom and the potential that is offered us and that is ours. In joy may we proceed to the days ahead, looking forward to the return of our master. Amen.