

Pentecost 24 – November 15, 2020
Text: Matthew 25:14–30
Theme: Use Those Talents!

In the Gospel according to Matthew, we have a wonderful parable that Jesus uses to remind us that we have all been uniquely gifted to do much work while he is away. Human beings were created to work, to tend the garden into which God has placed us, and he has equipped us with everything we need to do our jobs. During these last days of the Church year, we focus on the Church struggling to get her work done in a world that is very foreign to us, and 2020 has proven that it is getting more and more foreign! Nothing works quite the way God says it should and we are sent forth as sheep among wolves to do his bidding no matter what.

In the parable Jesus tells us, each servant was given a specific amount of money to handle when the master left. First remember that it was the master's money, so no one gets credit for the amount of money he had. In fact, the one who had the greater amount was not to be envied because if he messed up, he would be in that much more trouble with the master when he returned. To whom much is given, much is expected and being that one is not enviable. When I was in High School, Miss Worley, my Latin teacher, always demanded more from me than I wanted to give. It was frustrating when I would give a perfectly adequate translation from the third

book of Caesar and she would give me a B and say, "I know you can do better than that, Mr. Rogers." She pushed me to exceed what I believed my best was, and she never allowed me to coast along on "good enough." God is like this with us. He pushes us to excel with the gifts he has given us and never allows us to just coast along with "good enough."

Whatever particular number of talents we may have, they're not really ours. They are just gifts from God for us to use for a while. We may find ourselves being the servant with just 1 talent. If that is the case, what do we do? Do we cry and whine because we do not have 2 talents or 5 talents? Wait! Don't ask for what you can't handle! God has given you that which you are capable of managing. When you are ready for more talents, the master will give them to you. Until then, just enjoy your one talent and strive to use it to glorify your master.

Remember also that the master wants the talents used not buried in the backyard. They are not to be hoarded – put away for a rainy day – kept a secret. Everything is to be used and why not? The master has plenty more – and he has promised to provide – so use everything you have to glorify him. So often, I hear this phrase, "if only I had "fill in the blank," I would "fill in the blank." If only I had a million dollars, I would pay off the church's deficit. Well what

are you doing to glorify God with that hundred-dollar bill you have stuffed behind your library card in your wallet? If only I had more time, I would play in the bell choir. Well you have plenty of time to do other things you really want to do. Are those things glorifying God? The master did not give us 168 hours every single week to binge on Netflix and surf Facebook for hours every night. Nor did he expect us to sell all of our time for money or use all of our money on ourselves. We have time for everything we consider a priority. We have money for things we consider essential. The question for the servant who buried his talent, and for us is this. Is the master your essential priority?

The master knows that the more talents we devote to his service, the happier we will be. That's the whole point of this parable showing up on the 2nd to the last Sunday of the Church year. We are the bridesmaids awaiting the return of the bridegroom. That is really who we are. What we do for a living is just a side issue. Our heritage is unimportant. Our political affiliation is completely immaterial. Our mission is to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them that Christ died on the cross for their sins, so watch for the bridegroom and proclaim his imminent return. That is why we exist, and when we devote our

talents to serve our master, we are the happiest, the most fulfilled, truly blessed.

So today is an excellent time to take inventory of your talents: your money, your time and your abilities. How are you using them for God's glory as you attend His Church, prepare for His arrival and proclaim his love and forgiveness to the world? Are you using your talents well? You can't really go wrong when you use them because they are after all, God's talents and they will always produce a rich harvest. The only wrong things you can do is hoard them, bury them, or use them to benefit only yourself. Use your talents to His glory, and when he returns, or when you join him in paradise, you will hear him say those wonderful most coveted words, words that Bishop Pittelko heard Thursday morning last week, "Well done good and faithful servant. Welcome home."