

Pentecost 25 – November 19, 2023
Text: Matthew 25:14-30
Theme: Are Your Talents Glorifying God?

The Gospel for today is a wonderful parable. Last week we were reminded that we are the attendants to the Lord's Church until he returns. We are the wise maidens. This week he reminds us that we have been uniquely gifted to do much work while he is away. In other words, falling asleep while waiting for the bridegroom is not ideal. There is too much to do to prepare for his return. My friend who was a pastor in Buffalo just retired and he says that he is so busy, he's not sure when he ever had time to work. That's how it is for Christians especially. We know that there is no time to waste when people we love do not have oil in their lamps and the bridegroom will be returning immanently.

In Jesus' parable, 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 has. 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. Teaching youth for more than 35 years, there are always some who get upset with me because I demand more from them than I do from others. That is because I know they are

capable of more so what is acceptable for one may not be acceptable for another. With God, and with me, "fair" is not an issue. There is no such thing as "fair" because everyone is gifted differently.

Whatever particular talent we may have, it's not really ours. It is just a gift from God for us to use for a while. If we find ourselves the servant with just 1 talent, 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! Remember Jack Nicholson's line from "A Few Good Men" when told by the prosecutor that he wants the truth?

"You can't handle the truth!" That's like what God says to us when we want more than he has given us. He provides what we are able to handle. When you are ready for more talents, the master will give them to you. Until then, just enjoy serving God, and use your one talent, and in so doing, you will glorify your master.

Second, remember that the master wants the talents used. 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. I hear this phrase all the time, "if only I had blank, I would blank." If only I had a million dollars, I would buy the church whatever she needs. Well, what are you doing to glorify God with

that hundred dollar bill you have stuffed in the back of your sock drawer? If only I had more time, I would sing in the choir. Well, you have plenty of time to do the other things you really want to do. Are those other things glorifying God? The master did not give us 168 hours every single week to watch mindless TV and surf Instagram for hours every night. Nor did he expect us to trade all our time for money or use all our money on ourselves. We have time for everything we consider a priority. The question for the servant who buried his talent, and for us is; "is Jesus your priority?"

Third, 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 last Sunday of the Church year. We are the attendants awaiting the return of the master. That is really who we are. What we do for a living is just something we do to increase our talents as we serve the master. Beyond being in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, our earthly genealogy is utterly unimportant. The particular congregation of the Church that we attend is almost immaterial. Our watch for the groom is that for which we exist, and when we devote our talents to serve our master, we are happiest, most fulfilled, and truly blessed.

So now is an excellent time to take inventory of your talents. How are you using them for God's glory as you attend His Church

and prepare for His arrival? Are you enjoying and rejoicing in the talents he has left you while he is away? 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. And, in the end, we will hear him say those wonderful words to us, "Well done good and faithful servant."

Does that sound like pie in the sky rainbows and unicorns? Well, pay attention to what we prayed for today. Look in your bulletin at the prayer of the day.

"Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found wanting." It sounds to me that we are asking God to shine His light on us so that we will use our talents to glorify Him and increase our faith. He made the promises. Expect them to be fulfilled and don't play both sides of the fence – living as though you need a back-up-plan in case God doesn't come through for you. He promises to come through. He promises to bless us when we use His talents for His glory. Believe His promises and live accordingly.