

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Thirty-third Sunday **Gospel Word**
Ordinary Time **Matthew 25:14-30**

Clearly, the focus of this Gospel reading is what the servants did with the talents they had received from their master. It's unclear about what "talents" really are. Some say they are a sum of money. Others say they are anything that one has been given. The real issue is the circulation of the talents. Two of the servants give their share over to others. They invest them in something outside of themselves. The act of giving to another is one of the most spectacular acts in the universe! It automatically doubles what's given. Everyone wins — both the giver and the receiver. This is not what's called a zero-sum equation. It doubles.

We are once again drawn into the paradoxical logic of the Gospels. In giving, we receive. In losing, we gain. If we try to hold onto what is ours, it sort of disappears. So we are encouraged to be open to receiving gifts from God and then pass them on to others. Ironically, we don't lose. Our life becomes richer. Acts of kindness double in value. Any act of forgiveness does the same. But if we turn life inward, which is what is meant by burying the one talent, we lose it. It is interesting to note that the one who buried the talent he received was afraid of the master, and implicitly, afraid of God.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

It's time for God's Great Talent Show. Let's call it "Dancing with God." We've heard the story before. The master (God) distributes talents to three servants. We focus first on God as the giver of all that we have received. That's the nature of God. God is always the one who gives. Ultimately, God has brought each of us into existence with a set of talents that are ours. We are receivers. And it's always our decision to do "whatever" with what we have received. It's not helpful or healthy to focus on comparing what we have received with what others have received, despite our tendency to do so. Mostly, it's impossible to make exact comparisons. We tend to overrate what others receive. So it's best to focus on our own lives. The question is: What do we do with what we have received?

God's important gifts are freely given. We don't earn them. The big question is what do we do with them? The Gospels say over and over again that we should share them. In a word, we are to give them away. If you have joy within, share your joy with someone else. If you are at peace, pass on the peace to someone who is disturbed. If you have time to do a favor for someone, do it. If you have a skill or talent that could benefit someone, use it for them. Dance!

Prayer

Dear God of Great Generosity, Open our eyes to see the talents you have given us. And take us to those who need what we have, so that we can share our talents with them.
Amen.