

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

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. The family setting is a good place to start. In a family we were given life. Pass on the gift of life. Dance!

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 25:14-30

Clearly, the focus of this Gospel is what the servants did with the talents that they 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—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's ours, it sort of disappears. So we are encouraged to be both open to receiving gifts from God, and to passing them on to others. Ironically, we don't lose. Our life becomes richer. So any act of kindness doubles 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. Note also that the one who buried the talent he received was afraid of the master, and implicitly, afraid of God.

Parent Survival

One piece of advice we hear in our culture is that we need to take care of ourselves. We need to learn how to say "no." That's good advice if we tend to belittle ourselves, and fall into the role of being a victim of the demands of others. But we also have to be careful that we don't fall into a pattern of total self-centeredness or narcissism, a tendency much alive in our culture.

We are created in the image of a generous God. Our health, our survival, is grounded in acts of kindness to others. To live as if we are the only person on earth is like the servant who buried his one talent. We are created from love in order to love. What we receive, our life, and all it contains, is given to us to embrace, and to share with others. That's how we increase the talent pool. That's how God's kingdom grows.

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

Car or Meal Talk

It's time to list our gifts and talents. So, what is each person good at? And how do each of us share our gifts with others?

One-Line Prayer

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