

15th November 2020 – Pentecost +24 – Chris’s Sermon

Matthew 25:14-30

Our reading today talks about our calling to give ourselves in service to God – to contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God. In particular, it calls us to think a bit about how we will respond to God’s call – what we will do with this life that we’re given – and the gifts that we’re given – the talents that we’re given. In the words of our Gospel:

“... For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents, made two more. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them...”

According to our reading, the first two servants were rewarded for their shrewd and trustworthy actions, which saw the master’s investments grow and multiply. The master praises the first two servants – “well done good and trustworthy servant...”

But, the master’s response to the actions of the third servant is less positive (perhaps that’s an understatement) – the third servant is described as wicked and lazy – and, ultimately, he’s cast out - thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. The third servant hides his treasure away, where it can do nothing – it sits in the ground and does nothing – it’s wasted.

So, the Gospel is a metaphor - a metaphor for faith – it’s a story about the power of a living faith, which can help to transform the world. This faith, when it’s put to work, can help the blessings of God to grow – if we invest these blessings wisely. In a way, this story reminds us that we are co—creators with God – we help God build the kingdom.

Through faith, we become the living vessels, through which the power of the Holy Spirit moves and works. (This is what Jesus is saying.) And, surely, this is part of our function – this is what a living faith looks like. Through faith, we help to create and multiply the blessings of God. And, this can be a bit risky and challenging, at times – it’s not for the faint hearted.

I think this was probably the case for those early Christians who helped Peter and Paul build the Church – the great pioneers of our faith – the teachers and leaders and missionaries of the early Church who carried the love of God out into the world – they carried the kingdom in their hearts and they shared the story of Christ’s love, through their example and their sacrifice.

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews he talks to the early church about this ministry of service, in some detail – he talks about our work as disciples of Christ and the example that we share – the fruits of the kingdom, reflected in our attitudes and our priorities.

In the words of Paul (Heb 4), "...Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers... remember those in prison... keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have... remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you... Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God... may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus... make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight..."

Again, Paul is talking about heaven on earth – the lives of the faithful given in service to God's purpose. Paul reminds us that the faithful (and their blessings) ultimately belong to God and serve God's purpose.

And today, I think we're called to follow in their footsteps. Like those first Christians, we're called to make our own small contribution to this great faith – through our participation, our leadership and our guidance – through our vision and our commitment to serve.

So, how will we invest our blessings and our gifts? This is the question that we're called to consider today. In the words of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12), there are a variety of gifts, but just one Spirit – one purpose that ties us together. According to Paul, we are each given a manifestation of the Spirit to serve the common good. "...To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing... to another the working of miracles... All of these are activated by one and the same Spirit..."

Today, I pray that God will strengthen us and sustain us in our calling – as we are shaped and moved by the power of the Spirit. I pray that we will be moved to invest our blessings with care – our time and our talents - to help build the kingdom, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Again, in the words of our Gospel:

"... For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away..."

May our loving and generous God guide us with wisdom and purpose - as we invest our blessings and work to build the kingdom, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord be with you.