

Proper 28 Year A November 19, 2017

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The Parable of the Talents is a favorite for stewardship seasons due to the double meaning of the word Talent. It is used to refer to both “talents” as is skills and talents in the literal sense of referring to a large amount of money.

One talent is equivalent to the wages a laborer would earn in a 15 year period. So the master has given them, in turn the equivalent of 75, 30 and 15 years worth of wages. Two of them double that into the equivalent of 150 and 60 years worth of wages. WOW,

But just as this parable is not about “talents/abilities it is not n about money,” it’s about something much more important. It’s about Trust and faithfulness, and in regards to the third servant it’s about fear, which is what you have when you don’t trust.

The third servant reduced his financial risk to zero because his trust in his master is zero.

I suspect that had the investments of the first two not panned out the Master would have been less harsh with them than he was the third because what the Master commends in them is not their profits but their faithfulness. You have been trustworthy. In responding to the third servant, the master indicates that he would have accepted anything—even rock bottom savings account interest that was motivated by faith, rather than fear.

The first two trust the Master, while the third paints an ugly picture of a grasping master who demands success. What the third servant gets for his trouble is exactly the rejection he fears.

The other two servants recognize generosity when they see it and they see someone who trusts them enough to give them piles of money, and because of his trust they feel empowered and are willing to take risks of their own. The love and trust they have received overcomes their fear of failure.

There used to be a TV show called “Who Do You Trust”?

That is perhaps the question for us today. Who do you trust, in what or whom do you have faith. And how does that faith, trust or lack of it, impact your life and your actions?

If we trust God, can we go into the world to love and truly serve the Lord. What does that look like? Are we willing to take a risk and speak out for those who have no voice? Do we go out and stand up for the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed? That is an act of faithfulness.

And if we are shouted down or rejected do we understand that it is our faithfulness that God wants, less than evidence of success. Remember, the first two servants were praised, not for their success but for their faithfulness.

We each have something we can do to live out our faith and act on our trust in God. There is a line in the hymn “Come Labor On”—no arm so weak but may do service here. Even the weakest and feeblest of us can be emboldened and empowered by our Trust in God.

Paul, Canady, not Saint, has pointed out in the past how many times Jesus says “Fear not” or “Be not afraid.” Can we as a Church (locally and globally) go forth as custodians of Christ’s Word and message, take the sometimes unpopular stances we feel are dictated by the Gospel. As I have said before it’s the Jesus Movement, not the Jesus sitment.

How can we stay silent in the face of hate and injustice and still say we believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Our inaction is a testament to the same sort of fear we see in the third servant. We may fail, but God has promised that, if we try, he will say “Well done, good and trustworthy servant”.

Someone recently compared our fear of action to a Jr. High Dance—a frightening place for most of us. All the boys standing along the wall waiting to see who will be first to go up and ask a girl to dance. What if she says No. And maybe it’s worse if she says yes. Music playing, nobody dancing. Girls are on the other wall, “What if I don’t get asked?” Even during girls choice, “I don’t want to be the only one dancing” all those good dancers will laugh at me. Some of us spent the whole dance against a wall and never participated, because of our fears.

God wants us to cut loose and dance to his music. He wants us to leave the wall, to take the risk, to move in step with the music of the kingdom despite our hesitation, doubt or feelings of inadequacy.

Remember the hymn “Come Labor On”. “Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain. Come Labor on. Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fears. No arm so weak but may do service here. By feeblest agents may our God fulfill his righteous will. Come Labor On, No time for rest, till glows the western sky, till the long shadows o’er out pathway lie, and a glad sound comes with the setting sun. Servants, well done!

