

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

1. The Parable, as well known as it is, reminds us that between now and the anticipated return of the Lord, we are entrusted with a portion of his wealth (“talents”, gifts, abilities, resources) that we are expected to use for the building up of his estate (The Kingdom). The startling message here is that NOT to use (invest) his wealth is tantamount to sin.
2. The reason for the disappointment of the master can be plainly seen in the behavior of Servant number 3 – the unfaithful one.
 - a. First, his fear of failure virtually paralyzes him.
 - b. Next he projects his fear onto the master whom he now judges to be a harsh and cruel man.
 - c. It is important to note that this servant is not dishonest. He is no embezzler (as in the parable of the unjust steward) nor is he a wastrel (as in the Prodigal son) – he is simply afraid. While caution and prudence can be virtues, their underbelly is inaction and self-concern.
 - d. Perhaps most distressing of all is that, though the master has expressed confidence in him, the servant has rejected this trust and given in to fear.
3. This is a stewardship gospel. The lessons are:
 - a. God gives his servants differing gifts;
 - b. He expects us to invest those gifts;
 - c. Not to invest our gifts is not only wrong, it is sin.
 - d. To invest our gifts leads to more responsibility and favour.
4. As we reflect on the “success” of the two faithful servants, we note that
 - a. God expects us to take risks for the kingdom;
 - b. It would be better to fail than to not have tried;
 - c. For the first disciples (and for us) the risk was to use our talents to proclaim the gospel;
 - d. If we are unwilling to risk for God there is no enrichment of life – in doing nothing we gain nothing – “use it or lose it”;
 - e. But of course, there is risk in success, too. The two faithful servants got more responsibility – and with more responsibility comes more risk;
 - f. BUT there is also the invitation to “enter the joy of the master”; to “bask” in his presence, to enjoy the fruits of his household, the protection of his kingdom.
5. Five Talents is in a risky business.
 - a. There is risk for the **entrepreneur**.
 - i. There are the usual risks of starting one’s own business;
 - ii. Entrepreneurs in developing countries can face unfriendly business climates;
 - iii. There is training needed to learn new skills in financing and money management;
 - b. There is risk for the **giver**.
 - i. Those of us who contribute to Five Talents are sharing in the risks of the entrepreneur; and
 - ii. When we give to a ministry, we seek to “encourage...and build up” our brothers and sisters; yet the very nature of giving requires that we release control of the gift into the hands of the recipient.
 - c. There is risk for the **ministry of Five Talents**.
 - i. We seek to encourage people who have grown up in poverty to use their gifts to overcome hopelessness and poverty;

- ii. Building trust is crucial. Many people in poverty have had hopes dashed by well-meaning people. Five Talents seeks to convey its intention to be a trustworthy partner.

6. The ministry of Five Talents is to help people identify their gifts, train them with skills to nurture those gifts and then provide a community of support to sustain them in their use.
 - i. We do not see work in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of life; nor do we see it as a “necessary evil” – a means to afford the “real” pleasures and luxuries of life; but rather we understand work as an expression of one’s soul: creative, energizing and contributing to wholeness.
 - ii. We do not blindly champion a work ethic, but a balanced life that integrates the “things of the spirit.”
 - iii. For this reason, in establishing “Talent Banks,” Five Talents sets the stage for both mutual accountability and spiritual development with bible study and prayer.
 - iv. We believe that people of faith do not wait for others to labor or think or pray, but rather our faith plunges us into the realities of everyday living.

7. It is our hope that by drawing alongside people who want a jump start in starting their own business, more and more people will know the blessing of hearing the words of the master when he says, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

8. If you would like to include stories about entrepreneurs helped by Five Talents, please visit our website at <http://www.fivetalents.org.uk> or call the office on 0845 054 7525/ 0203 326 0426.