

Sermon November 15th The Parable of the Talents

Are you a risk taker? Are you a gambler? Or are you more cautious and prudent? Are you an investor or a saver?

The Parable of the Talents in Matthew's Gospel is asking these questions.

There are many ways we could approach this Gospel - several ways I could decide to preach about it.

I could do a sermon on using our gifts. This parable is often used to talk about time and talents and stewardship.

Or I could focus on God's generosity or not being ruled by fear or I could ask what is our greatest treasure that we are asked to be stewards of?

Our Parable of the Talents is a rich field indeed.

In our story today we hear about a rich landowner who is going on a journey. He entrusts his slaves with a substantial amount of money. In Biblical times a talent was worth 15 years of a labourers wages! A talent was originally a monetary term. Historians of language believe that our modern understanding of a talent has derived directly from this parable.

So the three slaves are left to do something with a significant amount of money. The first 2 are risk takers - they do something with the money and they are rewarded - they are able to double the money. The 3rd slave is more cautious - we might refer to this slave as "risk adverse". He chose to bury the money in the ground - and in the 1st century this was considered to be a wise security measure.

The 3rd slave is not a bad person. But this slave is a cautious one. This slave is driven by fear and this emotion paralyzes him.

The Parable of the talents reminds us what is needed for faith. We can believe ideas about Jesus and God but what we really need to do if we want to be disciples is to act. In many parts of our lives prudence and caution are necessary and to be commended. But when it comes to our faith NO!

Are you a risk taker? Are you willing to be a risk taker for your faith?

What is at risk in a life of witness and service? Our dignity? Or perhaps our privacy or our security? Self preservation and caution is not what the kingdom is about.

We are called - we are challenged to use the things that God has given us while we still have time. We are asked to use

our gifts for the common good. It is not enough to just keep things as they are.

We must not treat the Gospel as if it is something to be preserved - hidden away for security and protection. The call of the gospel is to put it to work.

When we look beyond ourselves and our own desires, when we put aside fear we find that God provides beyond our expectations. The blessings are substantial. Because God gives extravagantly.

So are you a risk taker? Do you think you could consider being a risk taker for the sake of the Gospel? Are you willing to risk sharing your faith?

The greatest risk of all is not to risk anything. Not to care deeply and profoundly enough about anything. The greatest risk is to play it safe. But Jesus would challenge us that this is not living fully and deeply and passionately. Living without risking anything is not really living. It is something like death - or being cast into the outer darkness.

Jesus invites us to be his disciples living our lives as fully as possible, risking things, expanding the horizons of our responsibility.

Be bold and brave reach high and care deeply this is what following Jesus is all about.

Are you a risk taker or are you more cautious?

We bury too much goodness, time, love, treasure and talent in the ground.

Are you willing to risk things to follow Jesus? We know what faithful living looks like - but sometimes something holds us back something prevents us - something says do not take a risk - play it safe. Why? Maybe we feel that our talent is too small to make a difference in the world?

In the Parable of the talents fear and distrust paralyses the 3rd slave. This slave is driven by fear and as a result he does not act and the penalty for that was to lose everything.

Perhaps for Matthew, the God we face is the one we imagine. A God of punishment and judgement or a God of extravagance and love and abundance.

Let's take a risk, for what we do or do not do, what we do in and with our faith shapes us and the world around us.

The parable of the talents is about resisting fear. A challenge to behave like the 2 slaves who took some risks. We have a treasure well beyond the talents that the 3 slaves in this story had. We have been asked to be stewards of scripture, law, gospel and the goodness we have found in our relationship with God.

We have been asked to share our faith - to teach others - to share the gospel and the good news of Jesus. That is the risky behaviour we are all invited to practice.

AMEN