

Each according to his ability
Matthew 25:14-30
November 19, 2023

Today we have the parable I mentioned in the sermon last week. A man goes on a journey but before he does, he entrusts his property to three guys, one gets 5 talents, another 2 and the third one. You know the outcome. He comes back and the one given 5 talents lets the man know that he has earned 5 more. The one with two earns two more and the one given one talent had buried his one and then returned it to the man.

The master deals with them, to the one given 5, he was given 5 more. To the one given 2 was given 2 more and the one given one, that worthless servant was cast out into the darkness.

We know all this and yet what was it that caused the man to give out to the three in different amounts? The man, the master knew his servants and so he gave to them, as it is written, "to each according to his ability".

Ability, how is a person to know the ability of another person? If you have ever hired anyone, what are you looking for in the beginning. Yes, you can look at the resume or to the responses of those you have checked with to see what their ability might be but you want to see for yourself, what ability the person might have.

The man that went away on a journey had seen what each man could do and how he would go about it. Was the man given the one talent a new guy who maybe hadn't been working long, given just one talent to see how he would handle it was given the opportunity to see what he would do with a little?

We may have looked at the text and wondered why that master would have given the one to the one who already had ten? Wouldn't this be the case of the rich getting richer and to poor getting poorer? It may seem a little that way. Yet the one with one was living in fear, fear that what he had been given might be lost. Could he have invested it and gotten more, as sure thing? yet he didn't. Sure he could have, but he buried it, didn't want to think about it. He went about his life, we don't know how he was to serve the master but if the master was a banker, what kind of work should he have been doing?

What do bankers do? They loan out at interest. A person goes there to finance something they need, either to survive or to buy something that will help them in thinking what will earn them 5 more or 2 more.

I remember my Dad who used to buy and sell dairy cattle while farming. It was in those days when there would be some what they called “counter” checks that had the bank’s name and address on them but a person could fill one out and when it was sent to the bank, they would honor the check if you had the money in the account.

You may not have had much money but what a person had was their name. That name meant something to those they knew. So when Dad thought he had a good deal on some cattle, he would buy them and write a check, even if he didn’t have the money in the account to pay for them. Today you might say it was wrong to do that, but in those days, his name meant something to the bank and all he did was call the bank and tell them to write out a note and he would be in, in a day or two and sign it. I don’t know what kind of regulations the bank had to deal with in those days, but when a person called them to ask for a loan, they knew that some men’s word were as good as gold.

Yes, we never had much but we always had food on the table and a roof over our heads. Yes, we trusted in the Lord that He would watch over us and keep us. There was a time though when the church was turning from the scriptures that caused us to not attend church. Maybe it wasn’t the best thing to do but Dad, the leader of our family didn’t see that he could trust the church to bring the pure Word of God.

We were members of an ALC church. They were in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS for a time but they strayed from the pure Word of God and now are in the ELCA. Some in the ALC left to make a new synod, the AALC which now the LCMS is in altar and pulpit fellowship again.

Yes, we look to the pure Word of God, for without that pure Word, it is going to be filled with something else and that, more than likely will be the sin tainted word of man. It is that word, the word of man that we have to deal with today.

The man with the one talent, buried it so he wouldn’t have to worry. He knew he could lay his hands on it at any time but he didn’t think about what he should have done. He decided what would be best without thinking what would be best for the master. He let what he thought the master to be, maybe he hadn’t known him long enough, to control his decisions. What HE thought about it controlled what he did.

I mentioned that after burying the talent, he would be free to do whatever he wanted. Yes, he was free to do what he wanted. Did the other two have that same freedom? Yes, they did so why didn’t they just bury theirs and do what they wanted? We don’t see the master giving any of them instructions as to what to do with the talents

given them. So, why did the two use what they had been given to earn more? What was it that made them go out on their own and risk what they had been given? Did they know the master was a hard man, just like the one with the one talent? I'm sure they did, but what was it that would encourage them to take the risk?

What would you do? What would cause you to take a risk for someone else, maybe even someone that you knew might not like it if you somehow failed them? What is it in you that you would stick your neck out? You would have to know something about the master, the one given the one talent didn't realize, didn't know. Yes, it may have been as the guy with the one talent said, "Master, I knew you to be hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. . ." but what might the other two know as well? They might have known and loved the master so that they would do all they could to be worthy of his trust.

I have told those who go to work for someone else that they are getting the job because they one who hires them thinks that they will earn him or her more that what it costs to hire them. If they can't make any more money than he or she is paying them, then they more than likely wouldn't have gotten hired. The more you are likely to earn for the master, the more you will be treated well, will more likely be given a raise and be trusted with even more.

Yes, there may be a time of trial to see what you are made of and to what extent you will use the abilities you have, to be better for the business. If you do a good job, your employer will be reluctant to let you go and may entice you with much if you ever consider going elsewhere.

We know this parable that Jesus told that day. We know of how the master handled the situation. Those who did well, got even more while the one who thought only of himself and how he might come under the gun was considered by the master as wicked and slothful.

We know how parables work so what is the story for us? Is it to use our talents to make more? Some might see it that way. We think of all those who think only in the terms of the dollar but money is just a tool, a means of exchange.

Jesus, wants something more. He looks at each of you and sees your ability. Yes, He sees in you and investment. He went to the cross to invest in you. He has given each of you much, or maybe just one talent. You don't know how you are viewed by Jesus other than He loves you very much. He knows who you are and knows what He has given each of you.

The master hired the third servant. He thought he was worth hiring, yet he didn't prove out as the master thought. The third guy, who should have known to at least invest the talent with the bankers with others so that he could have at least gotten interest but he wasn't even willing to do that.

Jesus has given you and all who believe very much. Yet, no one has the same abilities as others. It isn't money but who you are in Him that is in talent, in ability that He has given you.

Have you ever wondered, "Why me?" Why would God choose me to do what I do, to be given faith over and above many you know who don't have that awesome, free gift you have been blessed with.

I have. Why me? Why some guy that grew up on a farm, cleaning up after pigs and cows and horses and other animals which isn't the sweetest smelling job in the world, why me who didn't enter His house for years? Why me who has a hard time, sometimes to proclaim Him the way I should?

James talks of a little thing that we possess. It isn't such a big thing. Oh, we might think he would talk of our abilities in doing all the things we do. We might think of our talent in engineering or leadership or maybe in cooking or baking. He could have talked even of our ability in our jobs of making more for our employer but what does he point out, what is the thing he points to, that makes so much difference? It is the little thing called the tongue.

Yes, that muscular thing in our mouths that helps us to speak, helps us to form into words, words that tell of Jesus and what He has done for us and for all. Yes, it is the tongue as James says that can be used to curse and say all sorts of evil things or be held back from saying good.

Each of you and me too have been given much. What are we going to do with it, bury it? Not a good choice. Did the one with 5 and with 2 risk what they were given? Yes, they did. They risked and you will too. The thing of it is, in your risking what you have been given by Jesus, you know the outcome for you. You know the outcome for you have been promised eternal life. Yes, you have eternal life, the greatest gift ever by God who sent Jesus to risk it all on you.

Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. . ." It is not your works though that will get you there but your faith in Jesus as He is working in you each day to do the will of God the Father in heaven.