

“The Gifts We Receive”
Matthew 25:14-30
11/19/2022
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¹⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving on a trip.
He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them.

¹⁵ To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two,
and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to
that servant's ability. Then he left on his journey.

– Matthew 25:14-15

When I was growing up,
I learned I could count on hearing this scripture passage
Every year
It was always read in the fall,
As our congregation had its annual stewardship campaign
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Hmmm...
I wonder if the preacher is going to preach about stewardship.

But if you think about it,
I don't preach stewardship sermons all that often.

If you'd read through an archive of my sermons
since I came to Pine Island
you'd find that a formal stewardship sermon is a rare thing.

Maybe, too rare.

Someone with more time than me
Counted the number of times the words
Believe, pray, love, and give
Appeared in the Bible.

(Show Believe/Pray/Love/Give Slide)

Believe appears 273 times
Pray appears 371 times
Love appears 714 times
Give appears 2,172 times

Based on this count,
I should be giving a stewardship sermon 2/3rd of the Sundays
And I should only preach about **love** 11 times
over the course of a year

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Back to the parable that Jesus is telling...

This wealthy man, as he heads away on a trip
Gives these valuable coins to his servants

(Show Talents/ ταλαντιαῖος Slide)

I grew up hearing that these valuable coins were called
“Talents” or in the Greek *talantas* - (ταλαντιαῖος)

So, to get a feel for this parable

We need to figure out how much a *talantas* was worth

It was more than 16 years of earnings for a laborer.

(Show \$74,844 Slide)

So if we say the median household income for Pine Island
Is \$74,844 in 2022

Sixteen times that is \$1,197,504

Right around 1.2 million dollars.

(Show \$5,987,520 Slide)

The guy that got five coins

Got about \$5,987,520

Just about six million dollars

So imagine your boss walking up to you

just before he leaves on a trip

and handing you a briefcase that had \$6 million in it

How do **you** feel at that moment?

Even if I was the guy **with only one talent**,

I can't imagine holding \$1.2 million in my hand

Yeah, I can really identify with this guy

Who hid the money away for safekeeping

So it wouldn't get lost

Now hang on while a take we sharp turn.

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The gift **that Jesus is talking about** is not a big pile of money

What is the priceless gift that Jesus gives?

(Abundant eternal life)

(Our gifts and our graces and our skills)

By the way, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary,
Our modern day word “talent” comes from Latin word *talenta*
which means balance, weight, sum of money

This parable is where we get our modern word “talent”.

Our **God-given talents**

are these valuable gifts and skills that we receive from God.

And these talents are valuable in God’s sight.

They are Priceless

Don’t squander the gifts and graces and skills God has given you.

Don’t hide them in a hole in the ground

Don’t say, “I can’t do that,”

because by the grace of God, you can!

Instead use them,

Strengthen them – as you would a muscle

Build upon them – by practicing them often

Multiply these priceless gifts

For the sake of the kingdom of heaven

You see, God has made an **enormous investment** in you!

And lest you let it go to your head,

Remember this...

We are not the **owners** of this gift that God gives us

We are the **stewards** of this enormous gift

Have you ever considered the investment God made in you?

Have you ever considered the faith that Jesus had **in you**
as he took his final steps to the cross?

As those nails were being hammered into his wrists

Jesus had faith,

Jesus was counting on the hope

That you and I would respond 2,000 years later

To this ultimate sacrifice that he was making for us

If all of us would’ve ignored or dismissed

What Jesus was doing for us

as he started to bleed

as he struggled against affixation for his next breath

Jesus’ death on the cross would’ve all been for nothing

So have you ever considered

The faith that Jesus had **in you**

as he took his final steps to the cross?

He bet the investment of his life on us

And he was all “all in” for us

There is that story about some farm animals

Who wanted to show their appreciation to the farmer

Who day in and day out fed and cared for them

They decided to give the farmer the gift of a nice breakfast

Ah, but what should we make for breakfast?

Ham and eggs

The hen is offering a gift,

But the pig is wholly and completely committed,

fully invested in this breakfast

Where on the spectrum between the hen and the hog are you?

Think about the **enormous investment** in you

That was made as Jesus – the Son of God – hung on that cross

All of a sudden that that six million dollars in talents
Seems like only a portion of what Jesus freely gave for us

So what are you going to do?
Squander it?
Hide it in a hole in the ground?
Or use this enormous, valuable investment for the glory of God?

What are your talents?
What gifts do you have that you can offer?

What would it look like to dedicate ourselves to Jesus?

Just in case this sounds like a new idea to you...
Back in 1873, Francis Havergal wrote,
*Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee*

It is all about dedicating
this investment that God has made in each of us
to the glory of God
to the glory of the kingdom of heaven

What will your response be?

Oh, this was also going to be a **financial stewardship** sermon, too

So, here is some quick math.

In the Old Testament,
There is the regulation of the Tithe,
Which is a thank offering of 10% of what God has given us
As an aside, in the New Testament,
Jesus is not asking for 10% commitment to him
But a complete 100% commitment of us

But for the sake of math, let's use the 10% figure

If you remember,
the median household income for Pine Island in 2022 was
\$74,844

Some of us here have a lower household income
Some of us here have a higher household income

We have about 101 giving units in our congregation.

If all of us were average
And, of course, none of us are average!
If each of our families gave 10% to support
the great ministry **that we are already doing here**
We would have almost \$800,000 in annual giving

That about **four times** of our projected expenses for 2024

That should blow your mind

Now, I am not counting on that much coming in

But if we had an increase of 4-6%
Instead of 400%
We be able to cover our projected expenses
As our utilities, and building insurance,
and our costs have risen in the past couple of years

So, let's say if you give \$35 a week,
That comes to about two dollars more a week,
Raising it up to \$37
If all of us could afford do something similar
Based on our current giving levels
We can continue to support doing the great ministry
That our congregation **is known for** around our community

Please seriously and prayerfully consider this
If we all help out,
We will continue to be able do great things together

But hear this important thing,

Stewardship is not just about finances
It's about growing and multiplying
the gifts, and the graces, and the talents
That God has already given each and every one of us

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Let's consider how we can dedicate and consecrate
this investment that God has made in each of us
to the glory of God
to the glory of the kingdom of heaven

(Hymn "Take My Life, and Let it Be" # 399 (HENDON))

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