

**Sermon Notes – June 12, 2022**  
(Matthew 25:14-15, 19, 24-29)

I want us to think a little today about talents and skills and things that people in this church do, as well as I want to make some points from the scripture lesson today.

Many years ago I asked Jessica Spain if she'd do the children's sermon in worship. She was a little scared at first, but she has a knack for working with children. She is just really good with them and I am so grateful that she took on the role of doing children's sermons here. Jess, you do a beautiful job, and I have no idea how many people have said thank you for the beautiful job that you do. Thank you for using your skills with children to do our children's sermon.

There are some in this church who have the gift and ability of woodworking. Jerry Mallonee has made stuff for us. Steve Thornburg made the wooden cross that hangs in the Fellowship Hall. Rev. Earle Potts made the wooden crosses that the choir and I wear on Sunday mornings -- such a gift to have that talent! There are people in this church who bake cookies, do casseroles, and make homemade soup that I take to some of our shut-ins. There are people in this church who make meals for bereaved families (those who are going through grief) and use your cooking/baking skills -- we thank you for that. There are some (like Todd Dickerson) who can sing all kinds of levels from high to low. We also have such a talented choir, choir director, and Marty. (Marty is away on vacation this week with Kellie -- but, they are so talented and have such music ability.) There are many in this church that God has given you gifts - organizing, teaching, praying, singing, leading, etc.

I want you to know that (from the scripture) God has given each of us a gift or gifts and abilities. One day he's going to have an accounting of how we've used those gifts. It doesn't matter how few you have or how many gifts you have; God is looking at how well and how wisely we have used what he has given us. In our gospel lesson today the one man had five and he got five more bags of gold. (Wouldn't you like to be his

financial investor or banker and know how he got it?) The man with two bags of gold earned two more, but the third man with one took his and hid it in the ground. Now you may not know - it was not uncommon in that day for people who didn't trust banks to dig a hole in the ground and bury their money. The problem is... can't you imagine somebody watching them to see where it was or maybe they forgot where their money was. But, anyway, he dug a hole and buried his master's money. He went back and gave his master the same amount that the master had originally given him. The story tells us that the master was disappointed in him, because at least he could've put it in the bank and let it draw interest. I think what Jesus is trying to tell us is that no matter if we have one skill or five or ten skills (or talents and abilities), we are to use them to make a difference in the world. We are to use them for others and not just our selfish reasons.

The story tells us that the third man, with one talent, was afraid of the master. God doesn't want us to be afraid of him. Was he really afraid of the master or was he using it as an excuse? How many of you have ever met people who always have an excuse for their mistakes and failures? They can't ever take responsibility for their mistakes; it's always somebody else's fault. "Honey, it's yours... No, it's my kid's... No, it's that worker over there... No, it's somebody else's." There are some people that always have to blame somebody else, but one day that won't get it. That won't cut it with Jesus when he returns. He wants to know that we've used the gifts and abilities he's given us - whatever that gift is. People make all kinds of excuses.

There are some people that are afraid and maybe they have a bad description of who God is. I heard a story that a Pastor told about a woman in his church. One day she said, "Pastor, you preach about a loving God, but I never heard about a loving God when I was a kid growing up. I heard about a God who was wrathful and vengeful, and was always looking to catch you when you did something wrong to reprimand you. It's hard for me to believe in a loving God when all I've heard about is a condemning, judgmental God."

I've never forgotten the story about C.S. Lewis who said he had a hard time accepting God as a loving, forgiving God because his father (who was a primary male figure in his life) was a very cruel and harsh man - always punishing his children. George Bernard Shaw (who was an English playwright and book author) said that his father was a scandal and an absentee father. He said, "My father spent more time in pubs than he did at home. Even when he was home, he was cruel and always punishing us for something. It's hard to believe that God is loving and forgiving when you have bad male role models." Some people have a bad description of who God is. God is loving. God wants us to thrive rather than just survive. He wants us to succeed rather than fail. He wants us to use the gifts and talents that he's given us - not just bury them or ignore them or pretend that we don't have them.

I've often heard people say, "Well, Miss Peggy, I only have one gift. There's somebody out there, at church, or somewhere that can do a better job than me." Guess what? ... God still wants you to use your gift and talent.

I want to challenge you today to remember that God gives us gifts according to our ability. Did you notice in the story that he gave one man five talents, another three talents, and one only one talent? He knew each person's personality; their make-up; their uniqueness; their ability and he gave gifts based on their ability. He didn't compare the one talent man to the five talent man. He was comparing that man against himself and what God had given him. "I've given you one talent. What did you do with it?" "I buried it. I hid it. I ignored it. Then, I brought you back what you gave me." God's going to say to us: *"What did you do with the talents and abilities that I gave you? How did you use them?"* God gives all of us something - our time, our intellect, our financial resources, our talents. He gives each according to our ability. One day there is going to be an accounting. God's not concerned with what he gave you but how wisely and how uniquely we have used those gifts he's given us.

I want to share some concerns for abilities that you can use in this church right now. This summer our Brotherhood is going to do the BBQ

for the Old Soldier's Reunion in August. They're needing some people to help cook BBQ; they need some people to help serve; they need people to set-up and take-down tents; they need people to set-up and take-down tables; they need people to just come and serve the BBQ. There's another opportunity for people to serve - Vacation Bible School. Jess and the Board of Christian Education have already asked for volunteers. They need people to tell Bible stories, people to do crafts, people to help with refreshments, and people to help with recreation. So, if you have a few hours or one night you can give, Jessica Spain would be more than glad to have volunteers for Vacation Bible School. Do you know that we have a need in our church for a Bereavement Committee? We have been in the process for two years of not having bereavement meals much for families who go through grief, but we're trying to get back into that ministry. We need some people who will serve, who don't mind being a team captain, who will get the food together, make sure it's served here at the church or served at the family's home. But, we need some people to cook and some to be team leaders and to help out. If you'd be willing to do that, please let Tamara or myself know in the church office. I know many of you cook and I know many of you are willing to serve for thirty minutes or an hour one day at a funeral. I also want to tell you about another opportunity. There's a need for people that are good at childcare to work in the nursery. Sometimes, on special occasions (like Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Easter, etc.), we need extra folks in the nursery - besides just Sonya (our paid nursery worker). So, if you would give an hour or an hour and a half to work in the nursery one Sunday about four times a year, let me know. I just want you to know there are opportunities to serve in this church. Mrs. Martha would love to have some more singers in the choir. So, if you'd like to sing and give of your talent ... You say, "Oh, Miss Peggy, I can't sing." Guess what? ... I have people all the time tell me that they sit behind some of you that sing really well. If you can sing, we invite you to come and join the choir with us. There are all kinds of things. Some of you are good at organizing; some of you are good at fixing things. We have some mechanical fixers in this church that can do most anything -- Richard Bowers, Shuford Abernethy, Andy Kanipe, David Eckard, Ted Setzer - lots of people in this church. You are mechanical and "fix-it" people.

There are many other things that some of you do that is behind the scenes. I know a man in this church who took a load of gravel to one of our homebound. He bought the gravel. He and one of his men unloaded it and put it in her driveway. He never did charge her anything. I know people in this church who take flowers; who take food; who give people rides to the doctor -- thank you for giving and serving God.

So, I want to ask you today -- What gift do you have that you're not using? What is God wanting you to use in some way (whether it's in this church or in the community)? One day God will hold us accountable. How do we live between the time he came and the time he comes back? Jesus said, "Be ready because you won't know when I'm coming. Use what I've given you - your time, your intellect, your financial resources, your skills and abilities - for his glory."

In the gospel story today we also discover that God rewards faithfulness. Now, he was not too pleased with the one talent man, so therefore, that man did not enjoy the rewards that God had for him. What are the rewards for those who are faithful -- greater opportunities to serve God on this earth and then rewards in heaven. But those who do not use their gifts, don't get the same reward. God rewards our faithfulness. God wants to use each of us to make a difference.

May God show you your talent - something you're not using - something you could do for somebody - even if it's just listening to somebody hurting right now and praying for them. God's given us all gifts and abilities. May God bless and use us to rise to the occasion and do whatever he calls us - to take the risk to trust him, to put our faith in action, and to know that he will use whatever we give for his glory. And, all God's children said, "Amen."