

Proper 28 A  
St. Matthew 25:14-30  
November 19, 2017  
St. George's Bolton  
Fr. Chris

## Talented

“Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”

Who do you think the ‘man’ going on the journey giving out the talents to his servants is? I think this is a thinly veiled reference to God as the giver of talents. And while modern translations expunge the word talents as an obscure reference to an ancient currency assuming that modern readers will not understand, I like the duality of meaning between the idea of money and treasure, and our greatest gift, the most valuable treasure we possess, which would be the God-given talent that we possess.

Some would protest that they are untalented. They resign themselves to believing they possess no talent(s), considering themselves peons, losers, and failures. It is easy to wallow in self pity believing these sorts of things about yourself. But I have never met anyone who lacks even one talent, and I will bet you, each us has several that God gave to us, even if it is only a talent to survive.

We have all been entrusted with talents from God. The question is what do we do with them? How do we use those gifts. How have we invested our time and these gifts to be as fruitful as God intended?

Perhaps we don't use them at all. Maybe we just bury them for safekeeping on a back burner, worried that our gift isn't good enough and that we do not possess the talent to be successful using the gift that we have been given. Perhaps we are afraid that if we use it, our talent might be invalidated by others, or proven to be of little value or worth. Perhaps we feel our talent is not as good as that possessed by others. Who wants to be labeled as untalented? But Life is not a talent competition. Life is not the “Gong Show!”

Using your gift does involve taking a risk, but we can never move forward in life without taking risks. Doing nothing allows our inner parts to rust, corrode and decay. What gift we have been given, when it suffers a lifetime of going unused, will wither to the point that it is unusable or too late to use it and we may as well never have possessed it. Risk taking implies that we possess some faith, even as tiny as a mustard seed. Without faith, risk taking is impossible.

If we do not invest our gifts in what we do, what we do will lack the creativity and fruitfulness that God intended. We will be less productive, and we will not be happy or satisfied with what

we do. Fruitfulness and success require an investment of passion in what we do, no matter what that is. And our passion is intricately connected with our innate talent.

A gift is not a talent we want to have or long to complete ourselves or our self worth by having. I remember wanting to be a rock star when I was young-I'm sure I had plenty of company. I fancied myself a talented guitar player (on the air guitar) and a great rock and roll singer. I have known several rock and roll guitar professionals in my life- very good ones. They had not only the luck of being in the right place at the right time, but in addition to that, they had real talent. Most of you who know me well, know that this is neither part of my skill set or a talent I possess. Maybe that is why I don't sing for my supper or at yours! A gift is a talent for doing something that we do possess.

Though we may protest, everyone has at least one talent, and most of us have many talents that we can use. When you combine a talent with a passion, you possess the recipe not only for success in what you do, but you will likely enjoy performing your talent. You will discover a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

I have been an Episcopal Priest for 39 years next month. I still believe God called me to this vocation. And God gave me a few talents or gifts for parts of the ministry of doing it, of being a priest. There are some parts of the job I have no talent for, and many of you are aware of that: singing and things musical. (Going back to my air guitar days!) However, I have had a passion for my vocation, and when combined with the gifts I have been given, I feel as though I enjoy what I do, and that I have been fruitful at it. Am I the best, most talented priest who ever lived? No, not by a long shot. And I have learned over the years that exercising your gifts is not about winning some crazy, stupid competition. It is about fulfilling your destiny. It is about doing something that you will feel fulfilled doing. It is about satisfying your own soul and satisfying God. I can remember many times during my tenure as a priest, saying to myself, 'wow, I get to do this and they pay me for it?' We can do many things during our life, but when we invest our talents wisely and in the right place, our labors will be fruitful and our vocation fulfilling.

God wants us to use our God given talent in God's service. For some this will be inspiring others by teaching. For some it will be healing others physically and mentally. For still others it will be in serving others with kindness and humanity. For others it may be by seeking God's justice for the less fortunate or down-trodden. For others it will be raising children and caring for a family. For others it may be making music to sooth the soul or inspire the mind. For still others it may be making gardens to give us beauty and respite. For others it may be tending a farm or raising animals or going fishing, or working in a kitchen to help feed us physically, when done with love, and spiritually. For others it may be building shelter or repairing or improving it. For some it will be giving security in a world where people are frightened. For some it will be crafting things of beauty like blankets, mittens, sweaters, paintings, pictures and pottery that will either bring comfort and beauty to our lives, or remind us of the artfulness of God's creation. For some it will be building roads and bridges to carry us and the message of God's love to other corners of the world. For still others it will mean feeding those in need and the poor and the elderly who have little. My words by no means limit the list of possibilities where God given talents may be applied.

First Corinthians chapter 12 highlights the concept that we have a variety of gifts and talents to apply in life:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually, just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.”

What is your main gift, your talent? How have you invested it? Have you shoved it to the back burner? Did you bury it in some dark closet in your life and forget about it? Or have you invested it like the servant with the 5 talents? Have you made 10 talents with your investment in this life? Have you tried to be fruitful in God’s service? Have you considered how your talent might contribute to the ministry of St. George’s parish community?

When the Master returns to take accounts for each of us, what will that Master find? Will we return to the Lord what God gave us, multiplied? Will we have used our talents in living fulfilling lives that have been fruitful, paying interest and dividends on the talent and gifts God has invested in us? Use it or lose it!

AMEN