

June 16, 2019

Love 301 "The Starting and Ending Numbers"

Matthew 25:14-30

2 Corinthians 4:7

1 John 4:18

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

The Frillfin Goby is an ugly little fish, four inches long, that lives in tropical and sub-tropical regions around the world. You find them in rock pools. See a goby and you're not likely to give it much thought. It's not pretty like so many tropical species, nor is it impressive in size, nor is it any good to eat. It's just an ugly, nondescript little fish swimming in rock pools.

Many of us see ourselves as a Frillfin Goby: not much to look at, don't have anything big to brag about, and others have found us a bit hard to swallow at times.

Okay, some of that might be true! But, for God sake and for your sake and others, rejoice in being a Frillfin Goby; for you are a remarkable creature. When you're a fish living in a rock pool, the biggest danger to you are birds who see you as a fine meal. Not many places to run and hide. The goby however has developed an incredible technique to escape. It can fit its four inch body into a nearby rock pool, and if necessary to another, then another and on and on. The reason this is incredible is that the goby is jumping blind. It cannot see the rock pool into which it will leap, yet manages to jump with amazing accuracy. How does the goby do this? Scientists have discovered that at high tide the goby swims around the rocky areas and makes a mental map of the landscape, noting where the depressions that will form rock pools are located. It can do this with just one pass of an area. Then, from memory, it is able to leap from

rock pool to rock pool. The goby has a pea size brain, yet is able to accomplish this stunning feat.

Some of us are letting others devour us, and with that – there goes the treasure God has stored inside each and every one of us. Thus, we need to scope the area and find out who would like to chew us up and spit us out.

When I worked as a lobbyist for a social service nonprofit, I did some of my work in Harrisburg. There, I had a colleague (he was my mentor and I was really new at the lobbying thing) who asked me when we met for lunch on “the hill” what issue I was working on and I told him. Then he asked me to outline the arguments of my opponents. I was stunned. I didn’t know what they were. He then went on to tell me, I needed to know them better than my own.

When it comes to uncovering the God given gift or gifts within us, it is important to know the arguments of your enemy, who seek to counter that you have a treasure within you.

What goes on inside us or outside of us is what keeps us from sharing our gift and treasure. Here is the list that I think of when it comes to knowing the argument of the opposition.

- Your gift is **so small, thus it doesn’t really matter**. Our parable for today directly counters that! According to Jesus(let’s take him at his word) size doesn’t matter. All that matters is that you do something with what you have been given whether it is a little or a lot.
- Another argument used to stall the unveiling or cover up our treasure is that **my gift or talent isn’t very special**. The talent of the Frillfin Goby, isn’t really that special, others can do hide and seek, but it is necessary. What you contain within you is essential for you. Yet, even though

we need our talent to really live, we leave it like an unused oxygen tank near our lazy boy along with an oxygen mask that stays listless on our night stand.

We see ourselves as a common Goby and that what we can do with our talent has already been done before. Yet, it is important to remember the words of Elizabeth Gilbert, “Yes, it has been done before, but it has never been done by you.” The Goby surveys the landscape, makes a plan, and executes that plan. Would another Goby do it that same way, not sure! Yet, I know this, that for that Goby the execution is absolutely necessary, it is essential. And as it is for the Goby, so it is for you and me.

Scripture tells us that if we do not survey the land, make a plan, and begin to find refuge in that talent, we will end up with nothing, just a void. And as scripture says, that is like being in “hell”. There is a point in which the course has been set and if we don’t turn it around, we are going to wind up in a place that will give us eternal torment, where there is only darkness and all that can be heard is the sound of us gnashing our own teeth. Something we are now stuck with, because we have refused to sink our teeth into it, all those times we had the chance.

The truth is, things left in the ground, buried for long periods of time, **can rot away** to the point there is nothing left – just the void. Let’s not let it get to that point. Just because your treasure is buried now, doesn’t mean you can’t **pick up the shovel now.** and begin uncovering the first layer of dirt.

- And lastly, the Scripture for this morning voices what goes on in most, if not all our heads when we hear the

words, “I was afraid, so I went and hid my talent in the ground.” Too many of us have **buried our talent because of fear.** Real truth is, all of us are afraid to put ourselves out there. I think our main mistake is waiting for the fear to go away. I don’t think it does. Fear was his stop sign. Yet, the truth is that we should **not stop or even yield when it comes to fear.** Rather, we should hit the gas when we come to the intersection of Fear Avenue and Talent Boulevard. Instead, we then stop, yield, and end wind up in a cul-de-sac going round and round and round.

For years, I was like a ground hog. I remained underground, and when I did come out, I saw nothing, but my shadow and then knew all that was going to be was winter, no growth, no new life, so I returned to my burrow, and kept underground.

Early on, I had a passion for art. I wanted to make a career of it. That was until I believed someone who said they were glad I was not going to do it, because I wasn’t good enough to make a living at it. What I heard was not good enough at a whole lot of stuff, not just art, deficient, not having what it takes, not being able to do it, and when it came to my art my inner critic, I have heard for 42 years, “Looks like a fourth grader did it,” and still hear occasionally over the last year, yet not as loudly and now I am able to day, “Now, is not the time, you are not going to be the center of attention. Nope, don’t have time for that. Gotta get ready for my two art shows: one in September and the other in October. 48 pieces down! 10 more to go!”

Let me end, with this story. The other day, I was walking through one of the halls of Wallingford Elementary School where Luna and I do pet therapy reading, when I passed the hallway bulletin board of a fourth grade classroom. One of the students' art work caught my attention. Wow, it was amazing. Now, I know what is meant when I hear in regard to my own art, "Looks like a fourth grader did it." I can now respond, "Wow."

We all have a treasure in these our earthen vessels and it is nothing less than the excellency and power of God. Won't you join with me, grab your shovel and begin unearthing it. Love God, yourself and others enough to have your well-formed love banish your fear.