**11/19/23**

**Talent(s)**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2 NRSV) (2) Amen.

You know it is fun sitting in a car and talking while traveling places to visit family and friends. Then, of course there is the opportunity to experience new or different things while creating memories along the way. For those of you that happen to be on Facebook then you already know where I am going with this story. Heather posted our journeys and stops throughout the day, and she added a few pictures in as well. For those of you that don’t know, then let me catch you up to speed here. Heather and I headed on our way to visit my mother and aunt in Lancaster yesterday. Now, mind you, we have been there several times in the past, but there is always something new to see, or something different to experience. Along our journeys yesterday we also ended up in Hershey for what ended up being not too shabby of a day out and about.

There indeed is nothing like spending time with family and catching up while creating more memories. I mean I all too often would have just been content with sitting at home on a Saturday reading and catching up on work and school work, as well as researching and preparing this very sermon I am sharing with you right now. I could have easily informed my mother and aunt that I was busy and overwhelmed with everything I had to accomplish, and made an excuse not to spend time with them when they were right around the proverbial corner instead of all the way back home in Pittsburgh. However, Heather often finds a way to pull me out of that shell or rut of living, and she calls me out into the world and has me do things and be around others. She does not allow me to miss out on life, experiences, and memories. That indeed is one of her many special talents.

Yes, I just used the term talent in a much different context than you might have perceived from today’s Gospel Reading. That is fine, I was also in that ballpark when I first began looking at things. I mean it is rather easy to be like me yesterday while sitting in the passenger seat and talking about things. It is so easy to have a singular vision until you explore things more deeply and consider alternative purposes and thoughts behind them. In that same accord it is just as easy to go to familiar places you have visited several times before, just like Lancaster and Hershey, and not take in the additional sites and sounds because you are just along for the ride and not along for the experience or the journey.

As Heather took the wheel for the beginning of the driving leg of our journey yesterday, and as I was thinking out loud on what today’s lesson was while reading through various research, I then said that it was all focused-on money, and she was quick to say no it isn’t. Now, it indeed is a blessing that my wife teaches Sunday School, and has taught on several of the parables time and time again. Heather was quick to inform me that she had taught the children about having skills or abilities, and ensuring that they used these talents and shared them with others. Eureka! She indeed hit the nail on the head. That is very much what today’s message is all about in a nutshell. So, I guess her words while teaching the Sunday School children and her example of using her talents to get me out and about yesterday allow me to be done here today. Thanks, Heather, for correcting my limited mindset and ensuring that I informed everyone of what the true message of today’s Gospel Reading was all about. Now, they can rejoice and be ever so thankful to you for a shorter than usual sermon as we move on with our Worship Service here today.

Alright, not so quick there! Heather did very much share two of her many talents, and summarize things perfectly. However, we do indeed need to dig into things a little bit more for some additional context and thought process here before we move on and join one another at the table for the Lord’s Supper today. So, let me share a rather interesting story with you from my research before we move on. “Many of us are like the knife in the following: "A small boy thought his pocket-knife was to be used for sticking into the ground or flicking into trees. Grandpa watched as the boy used the knife in this common way for many days. Then Grandpa said, ’Let me show you what you can do with that! Grandpa found a piece of kindling and carved an intricate design of stars and circles. Grandpa said, ’Let me show you something else. He took some soft wood, whittled, gouged and cut, and shaved for about a half-hour. When he was finished, the boy was staring at the smiling bearded face which had emerged from the block of wood. Smiling from ear to ear, Grandpa said again, ’Let me show you something.’ He went to the refrigerator and using the knife’s bottle opener, he opened two bottles of pop. ‘There,’ Grandpa said, ‘you can see there are a lot of good things you can do with this knife.’ The boy smiled and looked in amazement at this very special knife." (3) We are indeed reminded that, “Many times our gifts, our talents, are like that knife. God gave us something beautiful, something which can do a lot of good things, but placed in our hands we don’t know quite what to do with it. Placing these gifts in God’s hands, placing our lives in His hands, then, then we can see how wonderful the gifts are, we can see what truly wonderful things we can accomplish with God’s gifts.” (3)

Eureka! Yes, I have now said that twice today. Well, hitting the nail on the head for a second time while talking with you is pretty awesome. We get another story and example here, just like the one I shared about my wife and I earlier. This example reminds us of what we truly need to do in our ministry and life here on earth as we are continually reminded that we march on towards the end times where we do not know the day or the hour of His second coming. We do indeed need to use the gifts that we have been blessed, provided, and entrusted with. We need to utilize these gifts just like the talents provided by the master, just like the talent of getting me out of my shell or rut of living like my wife, and just like the small boy and grandpa here with the several uses of the knife. We are forever reminded that using the gifts God has given us confirms our faith. It indeed enriches our lives and gives us confidence that we shall be welcomed to glory when the Lord returns to judge the living and the dead.

“The treasure of the church has been entrusted to us. Each of us, who live in the interim, who await our Lord’s return, share in the responsibility to ensure the continuance of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel – all that our crucified and risen Lord gave his life to accomplish. For the true issue of our Lord’s teaching about the end of time is not a matter of when it will occur, but a challenge for each of us to give of their time and abilities and treasures to ensure the growth of our Lord’s kingdom until he returns.” (4)

With all of that being said, and hopefully getting all of you to think in a various manner and way about today’s Gospel Reading, why don’t we close off this sermon in prayer just like we started it. If you would like go ahead and bow your heads as I share a prayer from my research. “Creator God, maker of all things, you have gifted your church with uncountable talents. Sometimes we are wise and use our talents for good purposes, investing them in usefulness to your kingdom. At other times, we are afraid, and do not use what you have given us in ways that promote the gospel or the work of your kingdom in our world. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, teach us to be wise stewards of all that you give us, and give us courage to invest ourselves for the growth of your church. In Christ’s name we pray.” (4)

Amen.

**References**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year A 2023

 November 19th, 2023

 25th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) Bible.com

(3) SermonCentral.com

 Risk?

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Nov 7, 2005

 Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

 Denomination: Lutheran

(4) SermonCentral.com

 Let's Be Trustful Stewards

 Contributed by Ronald Harbaugh on Nov 9, 2005

 Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

 Denomination: Lutheran

 Our readings during November speak of the end times. Zephaniah proclaims that

 the coming day of the Lord will be filled with wrath and distress. Paul says it will

 come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the

 parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the

 greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather

 around signs of hope—word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the

 good news of Christ’s coming among us.

 **Matthew 25:14-30**

 Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient

 merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make

 good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

 [Jesus said to the disciples:] 14“For it is as if a man, going on a journey,

 summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five

 talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he

 went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and

 traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who

 had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the

 one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with

 them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing

 five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have

 made five more talents.’ 21His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and

 trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in

 charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22And the one with the

 two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two

 talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ 23His master said to him, ‘Well done,

 good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put

 you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then 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; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the

 ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and

 lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I

 did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers,

 and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So

 take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all

 those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from

 those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this

 worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping

 and gnashing of teeth.’ ”