

Matthew 25:14-30

Proper 28

November 19, 2017

This controversial passage in the Gospel is used today to preach everything from condemning the rich and the leaders of industry to requesting more money from the congregation. But my heart heard something else in this parable that we all were given talents alright but not the talent you can spend that today would equal anywhere from \$500,000 to one million dollars each ... but our innate abilities, the gifts God has given us to bring Love into the world. The talent of being good, kind, generous, compassionate ... the talent to love God's people. And when we do use that talent we allow the life of God to flow through us and it reaches those around us ... the audience. Yes, I would like to use the metaphor of us as performers on a stage or behind the scenes ... using this talent depicting the life that God has given us ... this earth, our stage where ever we are; a dessert of sand, the mountains of dirt and rocks, the streets of our city of cement and gravel ... the curtains of wind and rain and snow ... the sun and the moon and stars being our stage lights ... This is our stage and we are the performers.

Now if this was my play I would show Jesus showering his people, in this case three workers in the community, Milton, Manny, and Margaret, with the gifts from God and let them know that they have been entrusted with the most precious gifts that cannot be bought do with them as you will. He let them know that he will be gone for a while but will be back and will meet with them again. Jesus then would disappear – somehow I would let the audience know he went up to see his Father in heaven. We would then watch what Manny, Margaret, and Milton would do with all that has been given to them ... I would show Margaret going walking the streets and caring of the poor and sick. Letting everyone she meets know that they are loved. Milton would go out and preach the word of God and help the young people and families deal with their struggles. Manny had heard in some home meetings about how vengeful God is and all about the wrath of God. He did not want to get Jesus angry by doing or saying something wrong so he stayed in his home and only came out when he had to.

When Jesus came back he asked how everyone was doing - Margaret told him that His followers had doubled and that there are people spreading the gifts of God not only in Chicago but in St. Louis, New Orleans, and Miami. Wow, Jesus said, and how do you feel about that. I feel great Jesus! ... Milton said he too had doubled the people in his congregation and they range from Chicago to Cleveland to New York. That is terrific Milton, Jesus said, and how does that make you feel? I have never been happier Jesus. Jesus turned to Manny and asked him how he did while he was gone ... hoping that the West Coast was covered ... Manny let Jesus know what he had heard about the vengeful God and he did not want to make any mistakes by doing or saying anything wrong so he just stayed in his home praying that God would take care of him. I see, said Jesus, and how does that make you feel? Manny looked down and said, not so good. The curtain closes.

I had a little fun with the parable but hopefully you understand a bit better on what I feel Jesus was trying to tell us.

We are all given the talent to go into the world to show God's love ...

On this stage we dance to the beat of our Lord with gladness and singleness of heart taking those steps to feed the poor and pray for the ill ... we sing to God's glory to all we meet with smiles and warm wishes ... perhaps we are not able to be quite as industrious as Margaret and Milton but we have just as much of God's talent, God's gifts our special talents. God has given us the script we just have to use it.

The whole scenario depicts that we are put on this earth to be good stewards of all that God gives us ... using our time and our treasures and our talent to portray to all our Love for God and God's Love for the people who are put in our path ... the audience.

Yes, we have an audience out there ... people we see everyday ... people we read about ... people who need to know they are loved. Let us let the spirit of the Lord go through us and allow our abundance of talent displayed by love, compassion, generosity, and kindness fill the area around us. Let's invite the audience into this lovely world of singing only kindness, dancing to help all who need us, reciting the words of love, and being present for God ...

My heart breaks for the slave who buried his talent. I felt so bad that he believed things about God that just was not true ... what church did he go to? He was not motivated by faith but by fear ... He did not want to venture out of his "safety zone" to execute his part in this adventurous play God has given us to perform ... you could say he received a bad review when Milton and Margaret received standing ovations. And I do understand it is hard at time to get started because it is leaping with faith to reach out and we are never sure of the outcome, where we might land. It is scary and it takes courage ... I like what Maya Angelou has to say about courage. *One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.* PAUSE

Sometimes there are tasks we have to perform showing the love of God that take great courage such as letting a person know that they are loved and asking if they would like to pray ... but most of the time we just need to make a gesture, ask a question, make a sandwich, smile.

And what does happen, every time we courageously take that leap... we become stronger in the Lord and our talents grow and grow ... and let us not forget the great joy WE receive when we take that leap.

Speaking of courage I am reminded when I was in theater a million years ago and the courage it takes to get on the stage. I also learned that everyone is needed in a production... EVERYONE. The performance would not be as enjoyable without all the characters – What would the Nutcracker be without the toy soldiers – the dwarfs without Dopey?... the play would not be complete with out the script and the lighting directions ... And how much pleasure we would be missing without the scenery and props ... Everyone is needed.

And we must depend on each other, as was mentioned in the second reading today ... we need to learn our lines, learn the steps, rehearse being God's people and doing it over and over again. When we fail we pick up where we left off and continue the performance.

Of course we are not really "performing" being the children of God ... we are the children of God and that role will never end. And remember the show must go on and on and on and on. And Annunciation is your rehearsal time every Sunday ... every Morning and Evening Prayer ... your quiet time with the Lord through out the day ... in your spiritual reading, this all helps us be the best "performer" for Christ we can be.

After the service today we are going to have a Parish Planning Meeting. Time for some of us to perhaps take a leap and volunteer to assist our parish in becoming the best it can be for the People of God. If not at this meeting perhaps some time down the road. We also have many ministries that are already in place that need more people to keep them successful in feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and ministering to those who are unable to attend church. Perhaps there is a person who you see every day that seems like they could use a person to talk to. Take that Leap and let them know that you care ...

As Shakespeare reminds us; *All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players, they have their exits and their entrances; and [we] in [our] time play many parts ...* What part do you play in this academy award winning performance of life God has given to us?

Linda Lutter
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On the deeper level he is looking at the fact that our lives although the main focus to us are only fleeting parts of the larger world, we all make entrances and exits, as do the people in our life. We all are different things at different times in our lives: a man is a son, a brother, a father, a grand-father, an uncle, a friend, a boss, a laborer, a liar, a hero, a creator, a destroyer, etc. All of these aspects create us and we often play these 'roles' at the same time. We enter others lives to accomplish something, good or bad, and then we depart. Our lives also change as we grow and gain wisdom what we did in our first act is not the same as in our third even though the situation maybe the same, we have changed our role is different we have more knowledge, more experience, other people in our lives.

In today's Gospel about the talents my mind went directly to the stage ... not the talent of silver that would be worth anywhere from \$300,000 to \$500,000 today ... but the talent we are born with