
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 9, 2015

The Common Life Lived Uncommonly

*“To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two,
and to another he gave one.”*

Matthew 25:15 (Common English Bible)

It is natural to strive for greatness, for recognition and for making a large contribution. Each one of us is endowed with some talent, some gift and ability and the business of life is to discover what it is. Once discovered, that talent is developed and polished much like a rough, natural diamond that is placed in the hands of a jeweler. No one really wants to be common. Every normal young person has dreams and aspirations and strives to get on with life, to climb the success ladder and pass others in the walk of life.

This is admirable, of course, if the motivation is wholesome and the desire is directed toward worthy ends. But our Lord's parable of the valuable coins is a reminder that there is a limit on each one of us. Some may be endowed with greater ability but everyone has some limit on capacity for achievement. Five star generals do not win battles by themselves. Without apology, Jesus teaches that talent and ability is unevenly distributed. Some people will be exceptionally talented and have the potential for greater accomplishment than others. Some are uncommonly gifted and many of us are simply common.

The question then becomes, will we do our best with what we have? Will we focus our efforts for maximum contribution, for the welfare of others or will we begin to whine and recline because we cannot shine? Unreasonable expectations and demands upon ourselves result in chronic unhappiness and diminish not only our lives but also the lives of those who love us. There are far more ordinary doctors, lawyers, persons in the service sector and administrative roles than exceptional ones. Yet, each has the capacity to make an important contribution each day to their families, friends and community.

The simple and practical course to follow is to make a realistic appraisal of our capacity and gifts. This may mean for many the discarding of delusions of grandeur, acknowledging and accepting that in the Lord's distribution of gifts we may have received only one or two talents, and that God's expectation of us is the same as those who received five talents. The acid test of character is whether we have discovered what talent we have and then, having discovered it, placed it to maximum use. That is when the common life is lived uncommonly.

Doug Hood