

November 13, 2011
Matthew 25:14-30

Proper 26A
Discipleship: Living Your Life as a Steward

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

These words of Jesus hit us at the heart. Sometimes they make us cringe. These words of Jesus are in the midst of his End Times discourse—he is speaking not only to his disciples of the day—but he is speaking to us as well. These words of Jesus provide an avenue to speak about one thing we are lacking – and before I go farther...when you Called me, “you authorized me to administer to you the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.”

This one main thing that we are lacking here is stewardship. Now since I have said that word, many of you are going to tune out by thinking –Pastor is going to preach a money sermon. That is the automatic response that will be given when a stewardship sermon or topic is brought up. TO be frank...this is one of the hardest topics to preach on. However, I am not preaching a sermon about how you are to give more. I am preaching a stewardship sermon today.

And here is the definition of stewardship brought to you from the stewardship offices of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: “Christian Stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the church, in managing all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes.”

So really this whole discipleship series, I have been working on this definition. I see stewardship being the same as discipleship and discipleship the same as stewardship.

But now let’s look at this parable of Jesus. As I began Jesus is in the midst of his End Times sermon. He is in the midst of His passion week. He knows what is approaching him. He has just finished the parable of the Ten Virgins, he has given us signs of the end of the age, but now he gives us this parable of the Talents.

In this parable of the Talents, the master is of course Jesus our Savior. In this parable we hear how the master freely gives his servant’s talents –to each he gave a sizeable amount of money. One he gave 5 talents, another he gave 2 talents, and to another 1. A talent in those days was worthy anywhere from 5-20 years of wages. I don’t have to tell you but that is A LOT!

In this text, you see right away the grace of God at work. Think about it for a moment with me. The life of the Christ, the toil and sacrifice that he made to establish his property—his kingdom, His CHURCH, his redemption from sin and death – it truly is a gift of love and compassion, for him to entrust his property to us.

Guess What?! We do not own anything! The Church belongs to Christ! And if we – you and I – are the church then we – you and I – and everything we have – time, talents, and treasure including our money- is not ours but God's. Our very lives belong to Christ.

How often do we put into practice what the first two servants did? How often do we take our gifts entrusted to us by God – gifts of time, talents, and treasure – and take the faith leaps to advance His Kingdom? We are a lot of times like the third servant...afraid. We are afraid to be like the first two and take the leap of faith...to take the risk. And folks, my dear family of God, sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zones and use the gifts that God has given to us. Does that mean to squander and use the gifts unwisely – Absolutely NOT! Does it mean that we are to be the church?! Yes, Absolutely!

What are we called to be as the church? Let's go directly to the Scriptures and hear words of Jesus. In Matthew 28 after Jesus had risen from the dead he says, *"All authority in heaven and earth has given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And lo, I will be with you always to the end of the age."* As the church we are called to make disciples, bring up stewards.

Are we doing that or are we like of the third servant who buried his talent because he was afraid? Absolutely we are. We are told by to hide our talent by the world. The world tells us all sorts of things. We are told that marriage is a thing of the past...really a joke with the Karsashian-humphries marriage lasting only 72 days. Or the news that I have heard that some our petitions want to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. The world wants us to see marriage as a joke – not the gift that God has given to us to use for His Kingdom. We also saw this last week our world defines life differently – that life does not begin at conception.

We see how God's gift of money is abused. We look at the NFL and the NBA going into lock-out recently over money. That is ridiculous. We have professional athletes raising an uproar that they don't make enough money? They even hold out to get more. Since when is \$20 million a year not enough.

That's what we are facing in our world...but really, now I am going to hit a bit closer to home. As a church since we are called to make disciples, to bring up stewards but yet we act out of fear and bury our talents, we aren't doing what we are called to do...that is evangelize. In this instance we are burying our talent. That makes me sad, disheartened, and raises my blood pressure. *We have two members on vision committee besides that of me and the President of our congregation. There are only four of us that see a need for a future, which sees a need for purpose once again. If that's the case then my sadness will become even greater. We can't even fill our boards of Education, stewardship, and have no one willing to step for evangelism. Let alone our lack of youth involvement.*

Really...what is our purpose of being here? I can tell you what it should be – it should be to share Christ's love with everyone. It's all about love and God's grace. I will never be able to guilt you into being the church. I can only speak God's truth to you in love. I can speak to you the gospel...for it is the gospel that does the motivating. Being a disciple, being a steward is not about what we will get in return. It's all about serving our neighbor out of love and concern.

Think about what Jesus Christ did for you. Did he ever ask for anything in return, besides being faithful? He died for you. He lives for you. He went to the cross for you knowing that you could never live to the standard God wants. He declares victory over sin, death, and the devil. He gives and gives and gives some more...so that you can live.

However, he chose you to be his hands and his feet. He chose you to use your talents for the Lord. Does he seek return for his life-giving sacrifice? No, but he does desire that you live out your calling at church, home, school, work, etc.

And with all this I am not saying that you all have to stop what you are doing and become a professional church worker. Or even be at church working during your waking hours. For not all have the same gifts – some of you have the gifts of music—some of the gift of teaching—some of the gift of compassion—some the gift of being a responsible parent – and if that's all the Lord has given you to do—that's great.

What I am saying though is that we need to serve God in all aspects of our life, in all our stations of life. And when we do use the gifts that God has entrusted to us and our master returns and we share with him what we have done – we will be told, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into your master's joy."

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus Our Lord and Savior. Amen.