

An EXEGESIS—EA51
November 15, 2020
The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

For Faith Sharing—Gospel: [Matthew 25:14-30](#)

Theme: Jesus calls us to use our gifts for the kingdom of God

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one-- to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received **five talents** came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, '**Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.**' Then the one who had received **two talents** also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'

Then the one who had received the **one talent** came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

SCRIPTURAL NOTE: This parable has always been known as the Parable of the Talents. The *talent* was not a coin; it was a **weight**. Therefore, its value obviously depended on whether the coinage was silver, gold or copper. The commonest metal involved was silver; and the value of a talent of silver was about 240 pounds-sterling (per the 1975 exchange rate). There is little doubt that originally this parable riveted its attention on the useless servant. There can also be little doubt that he stands for the Scribes and the Pharisees, and for their attitude to the Law and the truth of God. The useless servant buried his talent in the ground, in order that he might hand it back to its master exactly as it was. **The whole aim of the Scribes and the Pharisees was to keep the Law exactly as it was.** In their words, "to build a fence around the Law." Any change, any development, any alteration, anything new was to them anathema. This paralyzed religious truth. It is for this that Jesus condemned them. [William Barclay, Matthew, 322]

1. **Question:** What lesson is there in this parable for us?
2. **Question:** Why is the third servant punished?
3. **Question:** What universal rule of life does the parable lay down?

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4. **Question:** This parable invites us to **examine our image of God**. What are some ways that we might view God? What are the consequences?
5. **Question:** How does our picture of God match the picture of God we know in Jesus?
6. **Question:** What does this parable teach us about being too risk-averse with our discipleship?
7. **Question:** When we approach another person who is unchurched, a family member or friend, what words may we use to help introduce them to Jesus?

Q1. This parable also tells us that God gives men differing gifts. One person has received five talents, another two, another one. **It is not a person's talent that matters; what matters is how he uses it.** God never demands from a person abilities which he does not have, but, he does demand that a person should use to the full the abilities which he does possess. **Men are not equal in talent; but men can be equal in effort.** The parable tells us that whatever talent we have, little or great, we must lay it at the service of God.

Q2. The man who is punished is **the man who does not try**. The man with the one talent did not lose his talent; he simply did nothing with it. Even if he had adventured with it and lost it, it would have been better than to do nothing at all. It is always a temptation for the one talent person to say, "I have so small a talent and I can do so little with it. It is not worthwhile to try, for all the contribution I can make." The condemnation is for the person who, having been given one talent, will not try to use it and risk it for the common good. [ibid, 323]

Q3. **The parable tells us that to him/her who has more will be given.** And he/she who has not will lose even what they have. The meaning is this. **If a person has a talent and exercises it, he is progressively able to do more with it.** But, if he has a talent and fails to exercise it, he will inevitably lose it. If we have some proficiency at a game or an art, if we have some gift for doing something, the more we exercise that proficiency or gift, the harder we work and the bigger the task we will be able to tackle. But, if we fail to use it, we lose it. [ibid, 324]

Some examples are: playing college or professional football or basketball or tennis or golf; playing the piano, singing songs, writing books or sermons, carving wood, thinking out rough ideas, studying subject matter, lifelong learning, memory skills, mental puzzles, brain teasers, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, . **It is the lesson of life that the only way to keep a gift is to use it in the service of God and in the service of our fellow-men and women.** Keep your faith vibrant and alive by giving it away.

Q4. I wonder how often this happens in our relationship with God. (1) We might imagine God primarily as an enforcer of rules, and we get hung up by the legalism of religion. (2) We might visualize God as stern and prone to punishment, and we come to believe that everything bad in our lives is punishment from God. (3) We might see God as arbitrary and capricious, and that's what we experience, a fickle and unsympathetic God who meets our expectations. (4) On the other hand, **when we view God primarily in terms of grace**, we are surprised and **uplifted by the numerous gifts and moments of grace we experience all around us. And when we imagine God to be a God of love, we find it far easier to experience God's love in our own lives and to share it with others.**

[<http://www.davidlose.net/2014/11/pentecost-23-a/>]

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Q5. It may help to anchor this parable in its narrative context. Jesus tells this parable just days before he will give his life on the cross, not as a substitute or surrogate to be punished in our place, but rather as testimony to **just how far God will go to communicate God's love for us and all the world. Jesus has spent his life and ministry proclaiming God's kingdom, feeding the hungry, healing and sick, offering forgiveness, and welcoming ALL who recognize their need into the loving embrace of God.** And for that message he is crucified. *That's* how much God wants us to know of God's love. And just in case we miss or underestimate that message, God raises Jesus on the third day **that we might know that life is stronger than death and love more powerful than hate.**

That's the God we proclaim and I pray that our people do not go the way of the "third servant," but instead see, rejoice in, and live under the love and grace of the God we know in Jesus. Thanks very much for sharing this good news with your people. For some of them, your words of grace this week will make all the difference in the world. [ibid, Lose]

Q6. Do we fear failure and do not take the chances our discipleship requires? **It seems the parable encourages bold, even risky action.** The parable resists overly cautious actions and invites us to risk and trust when we are doing the Master's "business." We are grateful for our faith, it has seen us through very difficult times; but **the parable urges us not to get too cozy.** Faith isn't so much about believing in Jesus, as in following his commands and example. Faith isn't meant to provide intellectual answers about God and Jesus that we assent to. Instead faith can urge us **to leave our personal comfort zones and venture into a more risky world where we are asked to use our faith. Risk-taking faith would urge us to invest in situations that may be beyond our usual horizon, but urgently need our presence and action.** How about our response to Jesus command in Matthew 28:19-20 to **Go, make disciples?** How? By **sharing with others our personal relationship with God** in response to his loving action to redeem us. [Jude Siciliano, OP, on this gospel, Nov 16, 2014]

Q7. The **ancient Christian "kerygma"** preached by the early Christians was a proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. "Kerygma" means "proclamation. The leaders of the early Church realized that if they were to preach about Jesus, they would have to show people who he was, why he came to earth, and, what problem he solved. This proclamation helps the seeker to a personal relationship with Christ.

7 Parts/Messages of the Kerygma:

1. **God loves you and has plan for your life.** – Yes, God the Father loves you and seeks you. And that ache in your heart, that longing, that yearning, and that "never satisfied" quality in your desires all point to God and he has written his name in your heart. He wants to turn you away from a passing and unsatisfying world, towards him. He wants to save you and prepare you to live with him for all eternity. He wants to fill the hole in your heart and its infinite longing with his infinite Love. (CCC 1).
2. **Sin will destroy you.** – Nothing is so destructive in your life and this world as sin. It is desire gone wrong, it is rooted in the lie that the creature rather than the Creator can help and save us. Cultivating sin will put you in bondage to desires gone mad that will not ultimately be satisfied. Satan is lying to you and saying that rebellion from the One who made will bring happiness to you. It will not. And you know this already don't you? Sin and indulgence does not ultimately satisfy. The world cannot satisfy,

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for it is finite and your desire is infinite. Sin does not ultimately bring happiness, it brings bondage, addiction, dissatisfaction, and ultimately spiritual death.

3. **Christ Jesus died to save you.** – Into this mess of our wayward desires and our foolish grasping at worldly trinkets Jesus came. He met the woman at the well (who is us) and told her that everyone who drinks from this well (the world) will be thirsty again. In other words, the world cannot ultimately satisfy or save us. We must die to this world and rise to God. But our way to God was cut off by sin. Jesus came and reopened the way to the Father by dying to this world, to its lies and false claims. Rising and ascending he has re-opened the way to the Father, our hearts true desire. Now we can be saved by being led back to the Father by the saving power of Jesus. And dying to this world, we can one day fully be satisfied by God.
4. **Repent and believe the Gospel.** – To repent means to come to a new mind, to come to understand and accept all that has been stated: that the Lord loves me, is calling me in my desires, and want to save me from the sinful drives that will destroy me. It is time for me to come to believe in this Love God has form me and accept the promise and salvation of his love: Jesus Christ **and the saving truth he proclaims.**
5. **Be Baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.** – And thus in Baptism our sins are washed away, we are incorporated into Christ, we become a member of his body. And having done so, the Holy Spirit, the life, love, serenity, joy and wisdom of God comes to dwell in me and begins a work of transforming me, that includes the other Sacraments as well.
6. **Abide in Christ and his body the Church.** – Grow in this relationship with Jesus and His Father in the Holy Spirit by living in the life of the Church, which is Jesus presence and Body in this world. Abide there, that is go on dwelling there.
7. **Go make disciples.** – And so the cycle repeats

Q12. Why do Catholics not share the faith? The number of religiously unaffiliated is growing: 17% of Baby Boomers (1946-1964); 25% of Generation X (1965-1980) and 40% of Millennials (1981-1996) Only half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten are religious “nones,”

The trends are clear – the U.S. is steadily becoming less Christian and less religiously observant as the share of adults who are not religious grows.

Declining church attendance and missionary malaise or complacency are rampant in our secular society. **Catholics today are not overwhelmed by the Gospel.** The reason for this is that many Catholics have not heard the Gospel Story proclaimed to them as the apostles boldly proclaimed the Jesus Story in the early Church. This proclamation is the **kerygma** (Greek for “proclamation”). The Acts of the Apostles reports dozens of incidents in the early church of the apostles preaching the kerygma and converting hundreds, thousands of persons to Christ and his Church. **Most Catholics today have not heard the kerygma. And so, they are not on fire with the faith.** Fr. John Riccardo, CEO of the ActsXXIX Initiative, preaches that the kerygma addresses four very important questions in a person’s life.

1. **Created:** Why is there something rather than nothing? Why am I here?
2. **Captured:** Why is everything so obviously messed up in this world?
3. **Rescued:** What has God been doing about it?
4. **Response:** How should I respond to what God has done for me? [NOTE: We will explore answers to these four critical questions during Advent.]