

GRACE FOR THE JOURNEY--TALENTS
Matthew 25:14-27

Grace For The Journey Message Series
April 26, 2015
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God has given each one of us all the gifts and talents we could ever possibly need. Now that may be difficult for some to believe, yet the truth is that each one of you are so gifted, so amazingly talented, that it defies our imagination. The creativity, wisdom, and common sense you possess is simply unbelievable.

Oh I know that sometimes our favorite indoor sport is to whine about our gifts and talents. Lord, we may say, if you would have only given me more resources; if you would have only given me talents like some other person; if you would have only given me more brains and intelligence, then life would be so rich and full. If only; if only; if only.

Yes I'm sure we all know that self-pity and helplessness can easily take up residence in us and also in a church like ours; we may even say we are helpless to do certain things in God's kingdom. Yet Jesus declares unequivocally that each of us have been given many diverse talents and gifts, more than we can imagine. You and I are not empty vessels when we are born; we are filled with possibilities and open doors.

In the Bible parable we read this morning Jesus teaches us about the use and investment of our resources. His story tells about the man who gave five talents of money to one servant; two talents to another; one talent to another. The one who received five put it to work and gained five more; the one with two gained two more. However the one who received one went and buried it in the ground.

When the master came back the servant who gained five more was commended for his faithfulness and promised that he would be put in charge of many things. The one who gained two more was also commended for his faithfulness and promised more responsibilities.

Yet the man who buried his one talent of money explains to his master that he was afraid; he wasn't willing to risk for fear of losing what he had; thus the talent was wasted. The master is appalled; the servant is disgraced; the talent is misused.

There is a story about a woman named Martha Berry who back in the turn of the century had a vision to help children; in fact she began a school for poor children. She had no books, no building and no money; yet she had a dream. She even went to the car magnate Henry Ford to ask for a donation; he however reached into his pocket and gave Martha Berry a dime.

Most people would have been insulted—here is a multi-millionaire business tycoon and all he would give her was a dime. Martha however took that dime and bought a packet of seeds; she planted a garden; raised a crop; sold it and bought more seeds. After three or four harvests she had enough money to purchase an old run-down building for the children.

She then returned to Mr. Ford and said, *"Look what your dime has done."* Henry Ford was so impressed that he then donated a million dollars to the Berry School. A wonderful example of Jesus' parable and how God wants us to grow and multiply his gifts; his talents; his money.

So what do you think this story means for us; how do we understand Jesus' words? Something I have always said about our church here at Messiah and about our community is that we are blessed with mostly five talent people. Our church is filled with highly talented; gifted; intelligent; well educated; discerning; faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

Now another way to translate the word talent is with the word *"opportunity."* Every day as we journey through life each of us has been given a multitude of opportunities. Time and again doors have been flung open for us, often with very little effort or push on our part. For us to walk through these doors of opportunity, to invest our talents, opens us to wonderful possibilities.

Yet the sad thing is that even though these gifts are all around us, sometimes they remain unnoticed, unused. What are some of these most obvious gifts that God has given to us?

We have been given the gift of life; it is truly a gift of God. Incorporated into this gift are the gifts of our bodies; our minds; our spirits. God has given each of us infinite value—we are not machines or computers. The Psalmist says we are *"fearfully and wonderfully made."* Through this gift of life we are given opportunities for growth; for leadership; for creativity.

Secondly, we have been given the gift of rebirth. Through his grace God has given us the promise of new life. He has made it possible for us to live in a daily walk and journey of forgiveness. The promise is that no matter what powers of darkness are around us, we have the light and presence of Jesus to guide us.

Thirdly, we are given the gift of family. None of us emerge from a test tube into a cold, cruel world; we are born into a family. (Sadly however some grew up in dysfunctional, hurtful homes—it was not a positive thing for them which is very unfortunate.) Yet many of us have been nurtured by the love of a family, or by a special grandparent or relative; it is there many of us learned our first truths about God.

It is there many of us learned about the gifts we were given, about our value and worth. Our family gave us a name, a status, a self-image, a self-understanding, a sense of acceptance. This is a magnificent gift; an important gift we also pass on to our children and loved ones.

Fourthly, we have been given the gift of the church. Oh granted the church has not always been what it is meant to be; yet it is in the church that we are reminded that only in Jesus is true meaning found; only in Jesus' death and resurrection is there the message of life now and hope when we die. In worship we are reminded that we are not alone; Jesus gave us this gift so we may know that whatever falls apart in life, he is the solid rock (encouragement) who never fails.

Fifthly, we are given the gift of individuality; our person-hood. No matter how insignificant we might feel the Bible tells us we are unique; created in the image of God. The Psalmist again says that we were *"created a little less than the angels."* God created each of us with special

qualities and a special personality; God created us to shine and to let others see his reflection in us.

Lastly, we are given the gift of compassion. As we grow in faith and love for Jesus, he nurtures his heart in us. We may not always believe that; we may bury it away; yet in Jesus when others hurt, we hurt; we can stand with them. We love because he first loved us. Our compassion propels us to make a visit, send a card, offer a prayer, share a hug.

My friends, God's gifts are everywhere. Our church is filled with talents; with gifts; with opportunities; he wants us to use them for the sake of others. Also individually we are filled up with talents. Just think of the basket full of gifts that are present here this morning.

There are some who have the gift of working with their hands; of farming; of creating masterpieces out of wood or metal or cloth—use that gift to the glory of God. There are some who have the gift of organization, who can take a project from beginning and carry it all the way to the end—use that gift to the glory of God.

There are some who have the gift of making money, who can take five dollars and make ten or one hundred, who have the magic quality of investing well and wisely—use that gift to the glory of God. There are some who have the gift of loving little children, who can create a special bond with these little ones and share God's love with them—use that gift to the glory of God.

There are some who have mastered the intricacies of new technology, who know how to use computers and smart phones to open up wonderful new vistas of knowledge and communication—use that gift to the glory of God. There are some who have the gift of teaching, who can motivate students to develop a real love for learning—use that gift to the glory of God.

There are some who have the gift of music, who have a talent for finding harmony and beauty in God's creation—use that gift to the glory of God. There are some who have the gift of writing, a remarkable talent for taking ideas, feelings, stories and placing them on the printed page—use that gift to the glory of God.

There are some who have the gift of mechanics, who can fix anything, who can unscramble the complexities of modern engines, machines, computers—use that gift to the glory of God. There are some who have the gift of medicine and nursing care, who can provide healing and wholeness to those who are suffering—use that gift to the glory of God.

There are some who have the gift of management, of empowering others to utilize their gifts—use that gift to the glory of God. There are others who have the gift of customer service and selling; of understanding what others want or need; of meeting the needs of those they serve—use that gift to the glory of God.

The list could be almost endless. My friends whatever gift you have been given use the gift; give thanks for the gift; develop the gift; invest the gift wisely in this world and in the church—and do it all to the glory of God.

As the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 3:17: *“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

The truth is that as God uses our gifts together here at Messiah, as he multiplies our offerings and service, even greater things can and will be accomplished for his Kingdom.

Three men in the parable of the talents were given gifts. Two of them multiplied the gifts and were commended by the master. Let us as five talent people, and as a five talent congregation, use our gifts as God would want us to; let us do it all to God’s glory.