

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Zephaniah 1:7,12-18

Psalm 90:1-8[9-11]12

I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Matthew 25:14-30

11/19/2023

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew,

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 14“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ 21His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ 23His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few

things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Talent

Good morning! It was a huge surprise to me when I first started here at St. Paul’s that when Advent came, I was going to be required to sing on Wednesday evenings. This was not part of the deal. There is no “sing-better” class in seminary, and so it was with great apprehension that I began practicing. My voice isn’t going to win any competitions, but I can at least make it so that I don’t DETRACT from the worship service. I doubt I am the only one who thinks this, but I had always been self-conscious about my voice. Instead of growing my ability and giving praise to God, I

suppressed it. But thanks to the good people of St. Paul's, my small gift was nurtured, and through love it grew to a point where I could feel confident in what I could do. You might say that I had a "talent" that I had "buried" and refused to share.

Bad transitions aside, our Gospel text today picks up where we left off last week. We hear a story that is most definitely NOT about how to invest your money. Let me make that clear, Jesus is not giving financial advice, so please don't rush out and follow his advice with your retirement plan. But what Jesus is sharing is about stewardship.

In our story three servants are given varying amounts of money. What's clear is that this money isn't the servants', but is owned by the king or ruler. He gives out "talents," which was a huge sum of money. You may be familiar with a denarii, well if the talent that was given was made of silver, it was worth 6,000 denarii, and if it was a gold talent, it was worth 30 times as much! Given the absurdity of the story, I think we can assume we're dealing with gold. The first two get a return on their different investments, but the third hides what he has, neither letting it flourish or be shared.

It's a perfect metaphor for the way that the church needs your help. Looking ahead, big changes are coming for Christianity, and the only way for us to flourish is if we share. Yes, this certainly means monetarily, at the end of the day there will always be financial expenses that need to be paid, but more than anything it means adopting an attitude of generosity. Just take today for example, because of the gifts of this community we have a whole group of people playing bells, a group of people who routinely practice the music to help lead us, as well as volunteers who welcome you as you walk in the door. Someone prepared the meal that we will soon receive,

two people volunteered to read, and another agreed to help lead worship. An acolyte lit the candles and during communion another will assist with the wine. Someone has volunteered to operate Zoom and manage the cameras, and amazingly, someone even walked through this space before worship to handle “bug” duty. All because they understand that they have been given skills and abilities by God that they want to share.

That last detail is very important. What we have isn't really ours. Like the servants in today's text, we are just custodians of what God has given us. Stewards, if you will. In Genesis when God created the world we were given stewardship of creation. God calls on us to care and help nurture its growth. In much the same way we continue caring for what God has created, sharing the gifts and talents that God has given us to help in that goal.

It really changes how one looks at the text. It becomes selfish to NOT share when God has given us such riches. Maybe your voice isn't as good as Taylor Swift, but that doesn't mean the community can't benefit from your singing as we gather to give praise to God. That's the other neat thing about the text, we are each given varying degrees of ability, what is important is that we do something with what we have. As St. Paul writes in I Corinthians: *“Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, 5 and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”*

After everything God has given us, it would be a shame to bury it in the ground where it decays. St. Paul's, are you ready to share your talents? Amen.