

our gifts. And some will say, "I helped other Christians deepen their spiritual life by leading them in the study of the word of God and praise." Some will say, "I took care of the church I belonged to and served it whenever the church asked or needed me." Some will say, "I took the little children at the church and tried to teach them 'Jesus loves me' in Sunday school."

What would be your answer when Jesus asks what were you doing for me? God has given us much to be thankful for. Let us not waste what we have. Let us use, invest, and energize our time, gifts and talents for God. AMEN.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you work or spend your time for church and ministry?
2. How are you willing to change or challenge for the sake of God's work? Are you willing to learn to do something new in ministry?
3. How can you or the church prepare for the future ministry and for the next generation? What specific ways you can do it?

November 11, 2018

What Do You Do with Your Talent?

Matthew 25:14-30

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Today's story is the well-known parable of the Talents. On the surface this parable is about a rich man and the three servants who look after his money while he is gone. But it has a deeper meaning. The Parable begins, "*For it is as if a man...*" (14) What is "it"? "It" is the return of Christ. So when Christ returns it will be as if a person had gone away and entrusted his servants with money.

This is a story about our Lord and those who serve our Lord. Our Lord has given each of us gifts. And he will return to see what we have done with those gifts. But the talents of money in this parable represent more than our talents of being able to do something very good. They include everything that God has so graciously given us. They include our life and health, our money and family, and even the gift of salvation itself.

As the men who received five talents, two talents, and one talent, there are three different groups of people in ministry at a church. Like a man who received five talents, there are the devoted people. They voluntarily work and spend their time whenever the church needs help. They think of how they can help their church out. They drop by their church from time to time during the week doing their ministry and taking care of the church.

Like a man who received two talents, there are the responsible people. Even though these people do not come to the church as often as the devoted people, they are doing well their responsibility as a committee member, a Sunday school teacher, or an usher. If the church asks them for a new project or ministry, they get involved and devote some time to the project. They are positive and do their best with their available time and gifts.

According to today's parable, Jesus, when he returns, will say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"* (21, 23) If there are many devoted and responsible church members, we will make a significant difference in our ministry.

However, there is the third group of people at the church. Like a man who received one talent and hid it in the ground, they don't have any devotion or responsibility for the ministry. They have no idea, concern, or enthusiasm on what is going on at the church. They just come to church when they are available and leave church soon after church. If there are many of this kind of people at the church, there is no hope and vision for the future.

In today's text, the third man said, *"Master, I knew you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you"* (24-25). This description shows what many churches or congregation look like today. They don't want to change or challenge anything. They worry about losing what they have in trying to do some new things. So they hide their properties in the ground and keep their old fashioned ways and out-of-date methods and thoughts. Ironically, however, they want to grow their church and they are longing for new people in the church without doing anything and without daring to change.

In today's text the infuriated Master said to the third servant: *"You wicked, lazy servant! Take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (26, 28-30).

Let us look at ourselves and our ministry and figure out whom we look like? Are we faithful servants or wicked and lazy servants? I see many faithful people in our ministry. But we need more people and new people to be involved in the ministry. I would like to ask you some questions. Who knows where the boiler room is and how to control the heating or cooling system? Who knows how to fill the oil in the altar candles, how to decorate the altar according to the season, or how to prepare communion? Who knows how to operate the sound system, or where the light controls are, or how to use power point? How many times were you involved in mowing or cleaning inside or outside of the church? Some of you know how to do these things. But many of you don't know how. Have you ever thought of who will take care of these things in 10 or 20 years?

We need people who are willing to learn to do some of these tasks. It is my concern what will happen to our church if we do not have new people, especially younger members, to become more involved with the many tasks that must be done to keep our church running properly. In doing our present ministry, we should think of and plan our next 10 or 20 years. We need the right direction and vision for the future, enthusiasm, and empowerment in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit for glorifying God.

We have been given so much in this life. If we truly realize that all of it is a gift from God, giving thanks to God is our response for these gifts. God has given us life. The very breath in our bodies is a gift from God. In America we have an abundance of food and all the other necessities of life. For these things we want to give thanks. God has even given us the most precious gift. God sent his only child to come and suffer death on a cross to give us salvation from our sins and eternal life.

God expects us to respond with faithful devotion. Too often we take our salvation and bury it in a hole, hoping to preserve it until

Christ comes again. But there will be a day of reckoning. When Christ returns he will ask each of us what we have done with all