

FAITH QUEST - St. Mary's Anglican Church – Regina
“Use It or Lose It” PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Based on Matthew 25:14-30, 34-40

Background Notes and Concepts:

God gives each of us spiritual gifts and talents. We need to discover them, then share them, in order to glorify God. Hearing the story of the Parable of the Talents that Jesus told, we can recognize that God has given each of us different spiritual gifts and talents and we are to use them for the good of all, not hide them. Multiple intelligence learning plays to the gifts we have, so rotation, in a way exemplifies the parable of the talents!

Memory Verse: *“Each one should use whatever gifts they have received to serve others ...” 1 Peter 4:10*

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey. The man (who was very rich) calls his three servants and entrusts them with large sums of money “each according to his ability”. Well the master certainly knew his servants because the two who had been entrusted with greater sums got straight to work and doubled this money for their master. The third servant, afraid to take a risk with even the smaller amount of money entrusted to him, digs a hole and hides it in the ground. The master returns, calls his servants before him and demands an accounting of the ‘talents’ entrusted to them.

The two servants that doubled the money were highly praised and given more responsibility (and the privileges that come with it). The third servant, although the money had remained intact, was punished because he had not used his “talents” wisely or even used them at all. He had covered up his “talents” so they could not be seen. “Master”, cries the third servant, “I know that 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.” The master is furious with this account of his money. “You wicked, lazy servant!” he angrily replies, “So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.” What happens next may be surprising to some. The master takes the one talent from the third servant and entrusts it to the second servant. “Everyone who has will be given more”, the master declares, “and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” And with that he throws the third servant out of his presence and into the darkness. Why was the master so angry? And why is this like the kingdom of heaven?

No one received more or less than he could handle. If he failed in his assignment, his excuse could not be that he was overwhelmed. Failure could come only from laziness or hatred toward the master. The talents represent any kind of resource we are given. God gives us time, gifts, and other resources according to our abilities, and He expects us to invest them wisely until he returns. We are responsible to use well what God has given us. The issue is not how much we have, but how well we use what we have.

Each person in the kingdom of heaven is given a certain number of gifts and opportunities (talents) to serve God (the master). We can either waste those opportunities out of fear of failure (like the third servant) or invest them in a way that furthers the kingdom. We plant the seeds and tend the crop by spreading the Good News and using our gifts to benefit the body of Christ. God reaps the harvest of new Christians (after the seeds are sown and tended) through the work of His Holy Spirit. It is our privilege to use the natural and spiritual gifts given to us by God to further the kingdom in this way.

You have probably heard the expression, “If you don’t use it, you lose it.” That is the same as Jesus’ message in this parable. It can be hard to hear that “to those that have much, even more will be given, and

to those that have nothing, even the little they have will be taken away.” Using our gifts to further the kingdom is our natural response to God’s mercy.

In this unit, we will be helping the children to identify their own gifts and encouraging them to put them to work for the kingdom of God.

Additional notes and thoughts on The Parable of the Talents

A talent in Biblical times is a unit of money. Sources differ in how much a talent is worth. Some sources say 15 years wages, others say about \$1,000. All agree that the master was “very rich.” Even if it means taking a risk, God expects us to use our talents for good. There is more than one way to use our talents in any given situation. Do what you do best, just do something. God will consider his investment in you to be a good one if you look for ways to use your talents in ways that solve problems, bring happiness to others, offer comfort and real assistance to those who are ill, in distress or sad. Anybody can complain but it takes real talent to make a bad situation better. No talent is small or unimportant in God’s eyes, even mopping floors, an encouraging smile, an expression of concern. As we use our talents, we get better with practice. Therefore, the talent that God invests in us grows into a force for good in our present and future.

Using something does not mean that it will always be easy. We need to work at and with what we have been given. There is also an emphasis on being intentional about what we do. We can’t just wait for something to happen. We must be like the two servants who doubled the money . . . we have to actively go out and use our talents, rather than sit around and wait for an opportunity to come our way.