

Entrusted

Matthew 25:14-30

October 29, 2017

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.”

This is Stewardship Sunday. I want to thank the finance committee for all they do. The folks on that committee are good stewards of this church’s financial blessings and resources. I also want to thank Emily Honerbrink. She put a whole lot of energy into the videos we have been blessed to see. And I think they were well-done...top quality.

We are considering today this text from the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. The parable of the talents. This is not the first time we have read this story. Some of you have probably heard a sermon or two or more preached on this parable. It is possible today that you just might hear a different take on this story. Maybe not...but maybe.

So I would like for us to ponder this question as we wade through this story. There was a man...a master. We can assume he was fairly wealthy. He gave to three of his servants a gift. He gave the same gift to each. Yes...the same gift. What was that gift? We’ll come back to that.

I think it is important to set this story in its context. In chapter twenty-four Jesus talked about signs of the end of the age. He warned about false messiahs. He talked about wars and rumors of war. False prophets. Natural disasters. All of that. Then Jesus said that no one knows what day he—Jesus—will return. Jesus said he didn’t even know.

Chapter twenty-five, then, is all about what we must be doing in the meantime. As we wait for the return of Jesus—the end of the age—what ought we to be doing? The chapter ends with

Jesus saying that when he returns in all his glory, there will be a separating of the sheep from the goats. The chapter begins with that parable about the ten virgins. We will be looking at this story in a couple of weeks. The parable of the ten virgins is followed by the story we read today—the parable of the talents. The basic teaching of this story is we need to be about the Master’s business while we are waiting for the Master’s return. Use the gifts with which the Master has blessed us. In other words sitting around and doing nothing but waiting is not a good use of a Jesus’ follower’s time.

So...the story begins with a man who was preparing to take a trip. This man had a few servants. He started handing out money. To one servant he gave five talents. A talent was worth then what a thousand dollars would be worth to us. So he gave one servant five thousand dollars. We are talking first century Palestine here. That was a lot of money. To another servant he gave two thousand dollars. To a third servant he gave a thousand dollars.

Why did he not give to each the same amount? Well, for one, eight thousand dollars would not divide exactly equally among three servants. But that was not the reason. He gave to each what he believed each could handle. He gave according to the specific ability of each servant. The man then went on his journey.

So these three servants had their master’s money. The one with the five thousand dollars put that money to work. He took some risk. He could have lost some of it...or all of it. But he didn’t sit on it. The result was he doubled the money he was given. Same with the second servant. He may have received only two thousand dollars. But he doubled it. The third servant did not risk even one penny. He buried the money...and waited for his master to return.

The master was gone a long time. I'm sure the servants wondered when he would return. He did come back. Servants one and two were excited to report to the master that they had put to work what had been given to them. They received more blessing.

But poor servant number three. He spent that time waiting in fear. He did nothing. And when the master returned, this servant—rather than accept responsibility—laid the blame for his laziness at the master's feet. He accused the master of being a hard man and all that. The outcome was not so good for that servant.

So here's the deal on all this...and how I would like to apply it to this day. I mean, there are several lessons we could draw from this. I would merely like to lift up a couple of brief points.

First, as I said early on, each servant received the same gift. The details differ a bit, but to each was given the same thing.

You see, Jesus began many of his stories with a general statement. Check them out. He would begin with a very general introductory type statement. Then he would flesh out that statement. He would add detail to the story.

In the story we read today Jesus said that a man went on a journey. He called his servants. He entrusted his property to them. You notice how general that is? Jesus then went on to provide some specifics. He talked about the specific amount each received...and the specific actions of the three...and the specific response of the master upon his return. But he gave to the three of them—the three of them together—his property. He entrusted his property to them.

So the gift he gave to each of them was his trust. He trusted each one of them. To be trusted by another is a great gift. To be trusted by another with something of value? That is a gift.

Now listen! God trusts us.

Some of you heard me talk about this in my portion of our three-part stewardship video series. You can read this at the end of First

Chronicles. David was making plans to build the temple...a permanent structure for worship. David asked the people to give gifts for the building of the temple. The people gave gifts...lots of gifts. They gave freely. They gave whole-heartedly. David rejoiced. David praised the Lord. He praised the Lord in the presence of many people. And then he said to God, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." We have given you only what comes from your hand!

Here's the thing. Everything belongs to God. Everything! All that we have comes from God. When we give to God we are giving what has come to us from God's hand. But here's the further deal. God trusts us. God trusts us with what is his. What a gift. We sit here today the recipients of God's trust.

So that brings us to the final point here. How will we respond to God's trust in us? What will we do with what God has given us? To use the buzz word of this day...how will we be good stewards?

Back to our text. In the final analysis, what was the issue? What pleased the master? Was it the fact that servants one and two doubled what he had given them? Was he pleased they had made him more wealthy? Of course not. He was already wealthy.

The issue was simply one of faithfulness. "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Not, "Well done good and prosperous servant." Good and faithful. "You have been faithful with a few things...." The first two servants responded to their master's trust in them by being faithful.

So all we have is God's. What we give to the church is already God's. What we use to support our families is God's. What we use to have a bit of fun and enjoy life...to take a vacation...to go to that ball game or hockey game...it is God's. Will we be faithful...and use what is God's for good...not just toss it down some money pit and put dirt over it where it does no good...as servant number three did?

Which brings us to the conclusion. Why give? It belongs to God anyway. What's the point in that? Well, we should maybe be honest and practical. There are those financial obligations to be discharged. There are also so many great programs and ministries here. Great stuff is done here...and people are blessed...and the Good News is lifted up. We are all about Jesus and grace.

But really...God loves us. God has blessed us. God trusts us. Do we not often give tangible gifts to people as a way of saying "thank you" to those we love and appreciate? Giving to God...giving to the work of ministry is one very tangible way in which we say "thank you" to God. And then we are blessed even more.

Servants one and two...what were they blessed to experience as a result of their master's trust and their faithfulness? They experienced their master's happiness. God gives. We are faithful, and we give. We experience our Master's happiness. "Come and share your master's happiness." That would be some pretty good happiness there.

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