

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

Theme: Jesus Calls us to His Service

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together". Amen

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Not many people like the word "servant." Who wants to be called a servant? But this word when is used in the Kingdom of God is neither a problem nor a disgrace. Our Lord is the One who has taught us the true meaning of this word when He died on the cross for us. Mt. 20:28 says "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." The whole earthly life of Jesus was a life of service toward others.

Now, we belong to Him and with His help we are useful in this life. "For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's," says Paul in the Epistle of Romans 14:7-8.

Believers in Christ serve Him, and we should not be ashamed to be called His servants. The servant of Christ has received the Word of God, in which we meditate daily, and we work to bring this Word of comfort to others. He has entrusted us His possessions and the task of investing them in His kingdom. Because of the faith we received in our Baptism we serve our God with gladness.

For a few weeks now, we have been encouraging the membership of this congregation to seek out and nominate certain people for various positions in the church. The church of God needs people with different talents to be used in God's kingdom. From this pulpit one more time I encourage those who think can serve in the church or have been nominated to consider seriously this call. Stewardship is when we use our skills, gift, and talents given by God in or out the church. Stewardship is not only to give money to the church. Of course the congregation needs the contribution of its members to cope with the expenses of the church. And we should give to the church, not the leftovers, but according to our income, and from a cheerful heart.

But stewardship involves everything that God has given us in this life that can be used for the benefit of His Church, and God's glory. If you do not have enough money, you can still contribute in the church with your time, mind, skills, etc.

Christians acknowledge that everything that we have has come from God. Job recognized this saying, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;" Job 1:21. And in another part of the Scriptures it is written: "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." 1 Chronicles 29:14. No doubt, everything belongs to the Lord of heaven and earth. We also have vocations to serve in God's name in this society. Whether you are a pastor, lawyer, engineer, teacher or work at home you and I have a vocation to accomplish what has been entrusted by our Lord. And in all these vocations we can propagate the Word of God to others. Christians must recognize that the first thing that God has given us is the treasure of faith.

"Percy Knauth, author of the best seller "A Season in Hell," says that "people who have faith are way ahead of the game because they have something besides themselves to hang onto." They are like the big Texas millionaire who jumped into a cab, and when the driver asked, "Where to?" the Texan answered, "Just anywhere. I have got business all over." As workers for God, you and I "have business everywhere."

We need to spread the Word of God toward others through our service. This Word of God is available to us and we do not need to bury it nor distort it, but to spread it. It is our responsibility as servants to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord. And God has also given us different gifts to be used in His Church. Think about it, find out what is your talent and exercise it! "Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober." We stay awake until the second and final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ when we hear God's Word, partake of the Holy Meal, and use our talents in or out of the church.

In our text for meditation "a man who is preparing to leave on a journey entrusts his possessions to his servants. He distributes his wealth among three servants, distributed to them on the basis of their abilities. To the first he entrusted five talents, to the second two talents, and to the third one talent."

The first two servants wasted no time in investing what the Master gave them. They were clear of their task and with great love and dedication they work to obtain a profit for their Master. They used the talents given by their Lord and the result were more goods to the kingdom of their Lord. They loved their Lord and they wanted to serve Him well. But the last servant hid the money. He recognized that the money did not belong to him and he acted in fear.

2 Corinthians 6:2 says: "In a favourable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Now is the time to work with what God has given us and use it in His Kingdom and toward others. Today is the day. Tomorrow may be late. Be alert. "The Lord will come like a thief in the night." One day Jesus will return and He will ask us what we did with our talents.

The three servants in the parable knew very well that these talents belonged to their Lord. Two servants use these talents on behalf of their Master. The other servant prefers to hide it and bury it instead of use it. The unfaithful servant put himself on the defensive and he argued with the Lord. There is a saying that "**The best defense is a good offense**". This servant told his master "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

This servant tried to hide his ineffectiveness. But there is only fear in his heart. There is no trust, nor love, nor concern for his master. This servant did not get involved in the affairs of his Lord; instead he sought his own interests. He tries to justify his laziness by the fear he has for the master. But the master shows him that not even this fear toward him caused him to act on his behalf. The attitude of this servant showed that he did not love nor fear his Lord.

Remember, this is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus wants us to learn something from it about God's economy. And in that kingdom and for the Lord of that kingdom, we are to be bold and risk-taking. We will not escape the judgment by seeking our security in ultraconservative caution. We are expected to use—to risk—what we have been given in bold and creative ways. And what happens if we don't? Then we are condemned to regret and guilt, to weeping and gnashing our teeth and wishing that we had done things differently. And more than that. The parable ends with what appears to be a harsh and unjust statement. "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

That hardly seems just does it? But this is not so much a threat as it is a statement of truth. It is a truth of life. Feed and develop a talent and it can grow; neglect or bury it and it will disappear. Fail to develop your talents and they will vanish; they will wither away. Conserving them does not save them. Bury them and they rust and rot. It is only in risking and using them that they can flourish and grow. So it happens, that those who use their talents and multiply them get more. Those who neglect their talents or bury them soon lose even what they started with—even that which they have will be taken away." Harsh maybe, but a slice of reality.

To deal with the business of our Lord requires love, enthusiasm, effort, patient, dedication, and hard work. Jesus Himself said that to follow Him is not easy. You and I are not here to question our Lord. No. You and I are here to serve Him, and others, and when serve others we serve Him. So the question is: How do we manage our time, our money, and our abilities for the benefit of God's kingdom? Do not forget that that the servant is not measured by the amount of talents that he or she has received, but by their faithfulness to the Lord of what has been entrusted to them. In the kingdom of God there is no competition. We are all in the same level. What really matter is our faithfulness in what we have received.

Let us ask God for faithfulness. Let us ask Him for wisdom to manage properly what belong to Him. In Jesus' Holy name. Amen

Let us pray: "Lord God, give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us. Amen