

Today's Gospel reading is familiar, the parable of the Talents. We know that 3 servants were given varying amount of money and they did different things. When the master returns 2 are praised and rewarded. The other was punished with his worst fear coming true. We approach parables from the perspective that we want to learn from it and get to the point. Except sometimes in jumping to the main idea we lose more than just the main point.

What is a talent? We know talent today to mean God given abilities or gifts & graces but that has not always been the case. In this story, in biblical times, a talent was the salary of a day laborer for 15 years. To put this in today's wages – hourly employee making \$7.25 hour (minimum wage) would make \$15,080 a year. In 15 years would be \$226,200, a quarter of a million. So being given 5 talents is about 1.1 million dollars. 2 talents just under .5 million. When I see this, I think about this parable differently. It is easy, so far removed from the day to day life in biblical times to wave off the details. Being trusted with 5 talents on the surface does not sound like a lot but when we make it comparable to today it is staggering.

We continue reading parables that are a part of the final discourse – teaching about what is to come and the end of the world as we know it. Last week we focused on looking at the ways we can begin to realize the kingdom of God on earth by practicing

the love of God & neighbor in all that we say and do. Our parable today continues our formation in what we do while we are waiting. This parable is not about judgment but is an invitation to consider what we do while we wait. And I think the waiting is even harder to deal with judgment. We've been accustomed to judgment. We do it self-consciously. We do it almost indiscriminately. But waiting, we avoid that, like the plague.

This parable, like all parables, is an allegory, meaning it speaks to something deeper. We focus on the judgment. But when we do that, do we miss the deeper meaning? Jesus, in telling this to the disciples is telling them what to do until he returns. In the first part of the chapter, the bridesmaids tells us to keep watch and be ready. In this part, we see that it is the waiting where we can better understand the kingdom of God. The amount of wealth that has been handed to the servants is staggering. One talent, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a million dollars in today's value just handed to the servants. And then a long time passes.

When the master returns, we hear excitement from him as he tells them, "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." Did you hear the compliments and the promise of joy to come? This is not a harsh judge. It is only when the slave who was given 1 talent, who did

nothing with it does the master have harsh words. It is not just an abundance of wealth that was given but an abundance of time and the question was what was done with it?

I was in a meeting a couple of months ago when someone shared all that they had accomplished during this pandemic. I was a little jealous. But then I began to think of what this time has brought to me. I've done projects with the kids at home. I've learned to make croissants, made my own sourdough starter and bread from said starter. I've slowed down. I've played games. I've treasured the extra time with children who are no longer little. But I've also found myself arguing with people, who not just disagree but do not value any other perspective than their own.

God does not want us to waste the time we have on foolish endeavors. God wants us to appreciate the joy of abundance that is lavished upon us by the God of Love. How do we invest the time in ourselves so that we can be vessels of love for others to experience? What is it in your life that you want more than anything else? And with that, how much time have you invested in it?

The Kingdom of God is both here and not, now and not yet. We know what we are looking for but we can't just sit around, burying our heads and wait for Jesus to return and have nothing

to show for it. The church does not exist merely to make ourselves feel better. The church is like a gym, where we invest in ourselves SO THAT we can go out and share the love of God with another. The reason that the Master was so upset with the slave who buried the talent – he had nothing to show for the time. The slave did not value the invitation that was given at the beginning.

So what is it we do, while we wait? Do we pick apart people around us to make ourselves feel better? Do we call to check on people and then only talk about ourselves? Do we criticize every mistake that we see? Do we humble ourselves and offer grace to those around us? Do we look to see what we may offer another, without regard for ourselves? Do we extend grace in every mistake that we see? The Kingdom of God is known by our fruit. Are we loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and calm? Are we growing in these practices? If we are not, then we have work to do. What would have happened if the servant, who had 1 talent, who was afraid of the master had asked the other servants for help and guidance? Or what if the servants asked the one that was struggling if there was anything that they needed? When we do this, not out of selfishness, we begin to experience the Kingdom of God more fully. So how do we wait? Are we working? Are we trying? Are we growing? What will we

have to show Jesus when he returns? In the name of the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.