

A Good Investment Matthew 25:14-30

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This text is widely interpreted in this way: We are all given something by God to invest. And we are all called to invest it. Whatever we have been given, we're called by God to use it for the good of the community, for the good of others, for the good of the Kin-dom of God. By grace, God multiplies what we invest.

The word "talent" in this text has to do with a weight of precious metal, usually gold. A talent in New Testament times weighed about 57 pounds; it was the size of about one cubic foot, or, in liquid mass, 26 liters. A Greek talent equaled about 6,000 drachmae. Greek soldiers were paid one drachmae per day. So, Jesus is not talking about a few loose coins. To be the keeper of five talents—even one Talent—was a sizeable and valuable investment.

It is from these New Testament parables that this weight-value of precious metal came to describe the innate "talents" with which we humans are gifted: our skills, our abilities, our creativity. Our "talents"—problem-solving, interpersonal skills, relational abilities, the ability to raise kids or dribble basketballs—are valuable. And, for the person of faith, our talents are gifts from God.

Jesus is saying that God gives us precious gifts (people skills, money and temporal 'stuff', humor, hospitality, and more) to be "invested" in the community. So, use these gifts wisely. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus likens our gifts to a lamp. Who would put the lamp under a bushel basket? Only a fool. The thing to do with a lamp is to set it on top of the bushel so that the light fills the house and warms everyone in the room. Don't squander your gifts, is a message of this text. Use them to God's glory. *Shine.*

Three servants are giving a sum of money to invest. Two invest and earn some interest. But the third—what about him? He did not invest his talents. Why? The text tells us that he was afraid. He was afraid to invest his money because he knew the master was shrewd and harsh. What if the investment didn't pan out? What if he lost all of the money? Imagine it: the master would come back and say to him, give me my money back, plus the interest that it earned. The servant would have to admit that he lost it all. The investment didn't pay off. What would the master do? Banish the servant? Curse him?

It's no wonder the servant was afraid.

Many of us might be reluctant to use our God-given gifts because we, too, are afraid. We are afraid our work won't be as good as somebody else's. We are afraid we might fail. We might be afraid that we could succeed, and success would mean change. (Yikes! *Change.*)

And we have excuses for not using our gifts. I'm too old. I've already lived my life. I have nothing left to offer. Or, I'm too busy to share my gifts, to use my gifts, to develop my gifts. Or, my gifts don't possibly matter. What I have to offer is small, and what the world needs is bigger than what I have.

Jesus points to a reckoning. God will ask us, "How did you use the gifts I gave you?" And we will have to say, "If I had tried to use your gifts, I would have failed. Nothing I could do would have turned out very well. I could have been a teacher, but I'm not sure I could have managed a class of kids. I might have tried to use my carpentry skills at the church, but I would have accidentally caught the sanctuary on fire. So, God, I didn't use my gifts at all. I sat on my hands. *But at least I didn't fail.*"

And that's Jesus's point. Not trying is exactly the failure Jesus is talking about. The third servant didn't try. The master is not angry at the third servant for making a poor investment. The master is not angry at the third servant for investing unwisely, or for using his gift in a way that did not pay off. No. The master is angry with the third servant for not using his gift at all. The master is angry because the servant never made an investment in the first place.

If we use our God-given gifts, God will be pleased. If we use our gifts and good things happen, God will be pleased. And, if we use our gifts and it seems nothing good happens, God will still be pleased. Faithful servants use the gifts the master entrusts to their care.

And being faithful to God means using our God given gifts for the common good, in the manner of Jesus. We are not called to use our God given gifts only for our personal edification. That would be like putting a basket over our light. No, we are called to share our gifts so that everybody can enjoy them and be enriched by them. *Shine in darkness. Shine.*

The question this morning is not, "Do we have gifts?" Yes, we most certainly do. If you aren't sure what your gifts are, start asking around. Your friends and family will tell you; they'll help you. The question is not, "Do we have gifts?" The question is, will we share them? Will we invest them in the world?

The master wants to know.