

Willow River Parish

Title: The Parable of The Talents

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:14-30 (NRSV)

¹⁴“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘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.’ ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘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.’ ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Good morning Church! Nowadays, Willow River Parish is very busy preparing for the Charge Conference on December 3. Until last week, all three churches

had Ad Council Meeting and had time to check our leadership and nomination list and church budget. It has not been long since I was sent here and started my ministry, but I'm very happy to have a chance to learn more about Willow River Parish while preparing for the Charge Conference.

The past Wednesday was Veterans Day. My family and I visited the cemetery in Clear Lake before it got cold. I'm not sure what the cemetery means to you, but for me, it was a peaceful place that showed the history of Clear Lake. We had time to pray for Clear Lake and Wisconsin there. One impressive thing was the tomb of Veteran, who participated in the Korean War. It takes about 11 hours from California to South Korea. I heard that there are no direct flights now from Twin Cities to South Korea because of Covid-19, but it takes about 14 hours before COVID-19. The Korean War began 70 years ago, and it was amazing that a young man from Clear Lake participated in the war. We had time to pray for veterans on the day.

Today's gospel reading is about the parable of the talents. For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; (14) to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. (15) The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them and made five more talents. (16) In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. (17) But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. (18) We wonder why the slave who had received the one talent hid it in the ground, unlike other two. We can find why he acted like that in verse 24. When their master came, the slave who had received one talent said to him, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground." (24-25) From his words, we can see what images and understandings the slave had about his master. He hid the money in the ground because he was afraid his master would scold him if he lost it.

The master praised the one who had received the five and made five more; the one who had received the two and made two more, but the master said "You Wicked and lazy slave!" to the slave who had received the one and hid it in the ground. You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers,

and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest.” (26-27)

When we read this parable, we may misunderstand that the master punishes his slave because he did not make money, but the reason the master scolds him was because of his attitude to manage the talent. In this parable, the master means Jesus. The journey of the master means that Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection. The master who came back from the journey means the second coming of Jesus Christ. Beloved, this parable gives us an opportunity to think about the character of God. What images and understandings do you have about God? // We believe in God of love and God of grace.

One of the mistakes the slave made was that he misunderstood his master. He followed his thoughts and experiences rather than trying to understand his master. In other words, the slave did not trust his master. If he really knew that his master harvested where he did not sow, and gathered where he did not scatter seed, he would have used the talent he received like other slaves. However, he felt afraid because he did not trust his master's ability. The common thing from the parables Jesus says is that trusting God and preparing for the day of the Lord. I hope we trust God, hold on to God, and prepare for the kingdom of God.

As I read the gospel reading for today, I thought what the master would have told the one who had received five talents and the another one who had received two talents if they lost their talents because of failure of business. But I think the master would have praised them, saying “Well Done, good and trustworthy slave” even though they lost the master's money in business. This is because the important thing is their attitude to use the talents. For God, how many talents do we have is not important, but He sees that we trust in God, and that we have used the talents faithfully.

From the scripture reading for today: Judges 4:1-7 (NRSV), we can know the nature of God. The people of Israel fled Egypt following Moses and entered into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. However, after Joshua died, they began to serve idols such as Baal. According to the verse 1, the Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So, the Lord sold them to another county. But, when the Israelites had been oppressed for twenty years and cried out to the Lord for help, He promised that He will save them from their enemy.

Like the Israelites, we may often forget the grace and the love of God, but Our God is love and grace, so He never gives up on us. And, when we return to Him and confess our sins, He listens and responds to our prayers.

God has also given us talents to each according to our abilities. Some people received five talents, some received two talents, and some received the one talent. However, the important thing is not how many talents we received, but how we faithfully use them. In the parable of the vineyard owner, the slave who worked from 6 a.m. and the slave who worked from 5 p.m. received the exact same pay from the owner. God is a creator of this world and created us and gave us talents according to our abilities. Our talents and we belong to Him. So, I hope that we will faithfully trust and love our God, and that we will use what we have received from God for our neighbors and be called as good and trustworthy slave by God. Amen.