Year A: Proper 28

Special thanks to Mother Susan, for inviting me, a neighbor, to be with you this week and next as we end the liturgical year and slide into the newness of Advent.

An ongoing sense of urgency continues from the parable heard last week about some bridesmaids being shut out of the celebration because they failed to bring enough oil for their lamps. In today's Parable of the Talents we could say that Jesus is trying to "tie up lose ends" with the realization that he is about to face his own "moment of truth" by dying on the cross.

In both parables the urgency is palatable. Emotions similar to a parent, I propose, talking to a teenager about not drinking and driving, or a security person telling you to hurry up because

there is an emergency. Sometimes, nice and easy just doesn't communicate the seriousness of a situation…

Both parables also contain themes of being allowed in or being left out. Personally, this makes me to feel uneasy - quickly to be calmed by Paul's words heard today from his First Letter to the Thessalonians: **"For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Other "clarifications" may also soothe any shared uneasiness that might block us from "inwardly digesting" the fullness of this potentially troubling parable.

The image of using slaves to make a point remains disturbing. The gospel writer is using an example relatable to the reality of the time. An example tragically later used - as

misguided justification for slavery because some benefited from the largesse derived from the the master's wealth.[1]

Also not to be overlooked is the fact that the "master/landowner's" wealth came about from exploitation. The wealthy man would likely have been seen as "wicked," a reputation he did not dispute when the unfortunate slave bravely retorted that the master was a **"harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed.** It is misleading, as some have done, to compare the landowner to God or Jesus as clearly the landowner was an unjust person.

The "twist" in this parable is that at its core, this is a parable about **faithfulness, practice, generosity, and love.**

[1]Andrew McGowan, " Buried Treasure: The Parable of the Talents, Proper 28, Year A; Matt 25:14-30", abmcg@substack.com, November 10, 2026

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It is through the lens of faith, practice, and generosity, Jesus is urgently asking his disciples: "Can I trust you?" "Can I rely on you?"

Can I trust you to help bring about the kingdom of God?

Can I count on you?

Will you take the necessary risks?

Will you use your God-given gifts to share God's love?

Will you be resilient?

Will you recover when difficulties get in your way?

Jesus uses the common image of "a talent" to illustrate his point. A talent was an ancient unit of weight of precious metal equivalent to 15-20 years of daily wages! From the perspective of today's dollars, one talent would be worth at least a million dollars!

Sit with that for awhile. A million dollars of God's abundance from "God's brokerage house to assist us in living faithfully and generously. It's overwhelming!

Were we to employ some "Christian imagination" we might conjure a Christian currency - akin to "crypto currency" - to translate God's abundance - also known as grace - into the currency motivating the interactions in our life. Patience, gentleness, love, forgiveness, for example, as well as motivation for choosing how we use our treasure.

Granted, choices not always clear given the realities of life, but choices buoyed by our ready answers at Baptism that **"we will with God's help."** Such was the case for the two and the five-talent earners. They did something with their gifts and were joyfully rewarded.

But what about the one-talent man cast in outer darkness? As children of God charged to love our neighbor we can't help but be concerned about him.

His was tragedy on two levels: not willing to recognize generosity nor seeing himself as having value. Because of misunderstood perceptions, the one-talent man he was limited by fear.

Take this to heart please. Fear, just like anxiety, is contrary to God's desire for us.

From Paul's Second Letter to Timothy: **"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."**

Appearing in the Upper Room after his resurrection Jesus' greetings to disciples: **"Peace be with you."**

Julian of Norwich, a mystic from the fourteenth century, whose writings about her visions of Jesus still resonate universally, wrote:

"… our Lord revealed to me that I…[will] sin…. "And in this I conceived a gentle fear, and in answer our Lord said: 'I protect you very safely.' This word was said with more love and assurance of protection for my soul than I can or may tell."

In all that we do, in our misconceptions of life, in misguided intents, in navigating the nitty gritty, let us not forget that God's voice is **pure love.** Pure extravagant love.

The invitation, then and now, remains compelling: “for to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance… Jesus is talking about a spirit centered in Christ. A spirit formed by love where **“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**