

Sermon for Sunday Nov. 13

Scripture Matt. 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

“A Full investment Strategy”

The First Point to note is that I intend to make fun of investment strategies with their claims of accomplishment which they offer with the right hand, and which they take away with the left hand saying: PAST PERFORMANCE IS NO GUARANTEE OF FUTURE RESULTS. (The disclaimer is then fulfilled with the investment maxim to a diversified portfolio which is balanced.) What this disclaimer (and the diversification and balance) points to is RISK. And it is risk which the poor steward failed to meet.

Now keep in mind, the poor steward isn't bad, they were just afraid. None of us like failure. We avoid it. We avoid situations which are likely to result in it. Yet there are some jobs which are naturally exposed to it.

In this regard preaching and worship are an example. How many people say, “I avoid public speaking”? Yet there is an interesting discrepancy. I remember in seminary, as young seminarians went through their trepidation at their first sermon. What they didn't grasp was how much leniency there is toward a sermon foible. On any given Sunday let's say one third of the congregation is not paying attention, one third has momentary distractions. So, if you misspeak, your failure is two-thirds erased. The remaining third will probably say, “Oh, they were having a bad day”. BUT. If you want to know the person in church **who is at risk** of failure – look to – your musician. Not the choir director, the organist.

If the organist plays a bad note – everyone knows it. We don't know what the preacher was trying to say – but we know how the hymn is supposed to sound.

The point of all this talk of failure points to a very human trait which I will refer to as creative backpressure. Simply, we want to avoid failure. The problem is that we may avoid risk. The consequence is that we are poor stewards who do not develop and employ our gifts and abilities. The problem is that we may feel overwhelmed by the task and so avoid **the tasks to which God is calling us!**

In this regard our prayer of Consecration and Dedication is very helpful in directing our thoughts and actions.

Wondrous and all governing God, This day do I surrender myself to Thee.

I reject all things that distract me from Your purpose. We must avoid distraction, which is a primary way of avoiding

I reject all things and relationships to which I have given power over my life. Be careful! We give away our creative power – to things and to relationships. It is our creative power which GOD wants. God wants us to be creative stewards. (the first and second stewards)

I renounce all excuses which I have held, and reject all factors which cover over my accountability. **EXCUSES. EXCUSES. They are a big ticket to avoid responsibilities. Responsibilities and ACCOUNTABILITY. A fundamental truth of faith is that God holds us accountable. (the master is tallying the ACCOUNTS of the stewards)**

To You I consecrate all that I am and all that I have:

The faculties of my mind

The members of my body

My worldly possessions

My time and influence over others.

To You, and to Your loving purpose, I give my whole self.

Amen **SO, we pledge our whole self, creatively, to God's purpose**

What is at stake in faith is our stewardship. In this regard, this parable calls us to the EXACT OPPOSITE of an investment strategy. It calls us to invest everything, our whole being, and our whole future, into one "issue" God and God's purpose.

Now let's be clear. I would never claim that I have already accomplished this stewardship. This complete dedication. We do fall short.

But we are called to the goal. We are called in our life to give ourselves (in spite of our hesitations and distractions) to God's loving purpose. (We are called) Not only to give our past, and what we have "earned", but **to give** our future and our efforts, the **development of all our gifts to God and God's loving purpose. AMEN**

Pastor Dave