

***"Well Done Good and Faithful Servant"***

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November 13, 2011

Matthew 25:14-30

*When was the last time you took a risk? What was the risk?* We already know how to risk. Have you invested in the stock market? Have you tried out for a sports team, a school play, a musical? Have you changed jobs, moved to a different city, opened your heart to a friend? Have you had surgery? Have gotten married, have you gotten divorced? Have you started a family, a business, a new career? Have you enlisted in the military? Have you ridden a motorcycle? Life is full of risks. Risk is a reality! We already know how to risk!

Yet how many identify the call of Jesus Christ with a willingness to take risks? How many identify the church with risk taking? I have a hunch that most don't say to themselves, *"I want to take a risk, so I'm going to church."* Perhaps most seek out a church for security, comfort and as a refuge so we can face the risks in the world. While many desire the church to be "risk averse" Jesus continually invites us to risk and get out of the boat.

The early church knew about risk and they were said to have *"turned the world upside down."* No risk aversion in the early church. They knew they had been commissioned to *"make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* They knew they were putting their lives on the line to make disciples and many of them died for affirming Jesus as Lord and Savior. Their risk taking faith was encouraged by Jesus' willing example to go to the cross and by his teachings to risk it all for sake of the world. One of Jesus' risky living teachings is found in the Parable of the Talents

God's kingdom is like.....Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup>**"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then 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.' <sup>21</sup>His 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.' <sup>22</sup>And 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.' <sup>23</sup>His 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.' <sup>24</sup>Then 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; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' <sup>26</sup>But 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? <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For 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. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This parable begins innocently enough. A master distributes his capital to three servants before leaving on a long trip. One servant receives five talents, another two and another one. On a first reading, the parable sets up a natural sympathy for the one-talent servant. After all, he received the least and what is a person to do with so little? But, in reality, that one talent was actually a huge sum of money. Talents were weights of copper, gold or silver. The value of one talent was an average income for three years. Don't feel sorry for the one talent servant. He received three years wages from the master! When we read that the master "*entrusted his property to*" his servants, think generosity! The master gave to each as he saw fit and he gave generously to all. While the talents would have been understood in Jesus day as gifts of money, let us view them as the "stuff of life." Time....Abilities.....Resources.....all that we have at our disposal to live life fully!

This parable is not about the number of talents we have been given. This parable is about what we do with the talents we've been given! The five and two talent servants stepped up to the plate and risked what the master had given them and they heard those beautiful words we all hope to hear one day, "***Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.***" But the one talent servant "***went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.***" When the master came back the one talent servant refused to take responsibility for his riskless behavior. He blamed his master's harshness and said, "***I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground.***" Fear has buried a lot of talent. *What if I fail? What if I lose the talent the master has given me? What if I use my talent and nothing happens?* Fear has squelched our ability to risk and we've buried a lot of talent because of that fear.

Sometimes we simply get tired and we have no energy to risk. We give and give and give and, while we know we have talent and they are to be offered for the blessing of God and others, we bury our talent.

Yet, in spite of our fear and weariness we hear that still small voice encouraging us to risk our talents for the sake of God's mission and for the blessing of others. *What encourages you to take the risk, even when afraid and/or weary, to use your talents for God, the church and others outside the church? Where do you turn for strength and help to keep on keeping on in reaching out with the gifts God has given you?* I believe the church is to play a role in encouraging its people to take risks with their talents. I know our friends and family help us identify our talents and push us to use them. The Spirit's empowerment keeps us positive when faced with doubt, discouragement or disappointment. God's Spirit often uses the scriptures to motivate the use of use our talents. I following passages remind us that God is the giver and sustainer of our talents.

### **Isaiah 40:28-31**

<sup>28</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. <sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; <sup>31</sup>but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

## Psalm 46

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

<sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah

<sup>10</sup>“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

## Matthew 28:20

<sup>20</sup>... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

## Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

## Romans 8:1, 37-39

<sup>8</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..... <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Hebrews 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## Psalms 121

<sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

<sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup>He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

God has given you talent to be used for the well being of others and to the glory of God! *What might God be calling you to do? How might God be calling you to invest your talent?* We face many uncertainties and life is always filled with risks but we offer our talents in the certainty that, whether we are successful or not, God's commitment of grace and love to us is secure and eternal. There is nothing that will ever separate us from the love of God!

Amen

