

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera

15th November 2020 – 24th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 25:14-30

DIVINELY TALENT-ED

Have you ever been jealous of the talents which someone else has, or wished that you had been given gifts which you don't have? On a personal level, I have always had a dream of being an AFL footballer, captaining the Crows to a premiership, or of playing cricket for Australia. I sometimes wish that God had given me those talents, and I believe that I would have been one of those sports people who would have used my fame and success to witness to God. Or, sometimes I am jealous or envious of the talents of those who understand finances and money markets, or who have musical gifts like being able to play the guitar very well, something I've tried to take up a few times over the years but just can't do. Again, I think, 'Hey God, if you'd given me those talents, I promise that I would have used them to serve and praise you'.

How about with people you know, have you ever been jealous of the gifts and abilities they have? Perhaps the person whom it seems that it doesn't matter what is happening they keep their cool and stay unflappable? Maybe it's the person who doesn't get flustered by others, and who always has a good word to say about everyone? Or do you find yourself being envious of the person who can talk to everyone, or is good at building things, or has a gift with teaching either children or adults? Or is it the person who can make things with their hands, or who is a confident and capable leader whom others willingly follow, are they the people about whom you say, 'I wish I could do that?' You may not think like this at all, and may be very comfortable with the gifts and abilities you have been given without looking at others, and that is great. For many of us, though, how much easier is it for us to look jealously at the talents of others, rather than recognising and being thankful for the talents which God has given to us?

It's about attitude then, isn't it, which is why some of us think like this more than others, and some don't think like it at all? We all know that we have been gifted with talents by God, talents to serve Him and others, but we don't always look at them as being something to treasure and use. It's also a difference in peoples' attitudes towards their gifts which gives us the meaning of the parable we have here. A master is going away and leaves his three servants in charge of all he owns. Does he give them equal money as he leaves? No, one gets 5000 coins, one 2000, and one just 1000. Why is that, and this is very important? He gives them different talents because 'the man knew what each servant could do'. Think about those words. Was this a master who knew his servants? Yes. Did he want them to succeed in the task he had given them? Yes. So, as he leaves, he looks at each servant and gives each one a gift and a task to carry out for him.

How does it finish up though (and this is where the different attitudes come out)? The master returns and the first servant says, 'that five thousand coins you gave me? Well, I doubled it, and here you go'. Understandably the master was very happy with him (who wouldn't be? How would your boss react if you doubled their money?), and he praises the servant and promises much more power and responsibility to him. The second servant can also proudly say that he has doubled his original 2000 coins and can now give back 4000. Again, he is praised and promised much more in return. But then we come to the third servant, the one whom the master obviously knew was going to struggle a bit with this task because he had only given him 1000 coins. When he comes before his master, what does he say? "Sir, I know that you are hard to get along with. You harvest what you don't plant and gather crops where you haven't scattered seed. ²⁵I was frightened and went out and hid your money in the ground. Here is every single coin!" Why did he hide the money away and not invest it like the other two? Because he was frightened. Rather than risk doing something which might turn out wrong, he decided to take the safe path and do nothing. Is he rewarded? No, he is instead both told off and thrown out by his master, and the money which he has just preserved is given to the others. His attitude

wasn't that he wanted to serve his master in any way he could, but instead to do what he could to keep himself out of trouble.

This is another one of those parables that sometimes we don't really know what to do with. Let's go back to near the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, in chapter five and the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said, "You are the salt of the Earth... You are the light of the world. A city on the hill cannot be hid." (Matthew 5:13-14) In many ways this saying of Jesus gives us the attitude which this parable calls us to show. God has given each one of us talents and abilities not to hide them away, but to use them to His glory. And remember again, He has gifted each one of us in the ways that He knows we could handle. Apparently having great sporting or musical ability was something which God either didn't think I would handle well, or it just wasn't in his plan for me. It's a bit of that grass is greener thing again, isn't it? Instead of looking at what we don't have, we can ask God to help us to look at what we do, and to use that to the best of our God-given ability.

So many of the ordinary talents of the everyday get lost because we as people don't value them enough. God has gifted each one of us to work for Him, each of us have talents which are just as important and special as any other. Let's have a look in the mirror, and let's ask ourselves the honest question, 'what are my talents, and how do I use them for God'?

Without naming names, I can think of people in our congregation and elsewhere who have a talent for talking with others, with helping people to feel welcome and included in our church family. I know people who have a gift of sharing their faith, either formally in words or in the way their faith comes out in their lives, and also doing this with to people who are currently outside of the Church. People who have a gift of music and how that is used. There are people here who are gifted in organisation and administration, and who use these talents to keep both our congregation and our school running. A number of people here are gifted with being willing to help others, both inside and outside of our church family, whether that's with a kind word, friendship, making or fixing something, or taking care of what needs to be taken care

of. Numerous people here are gifted in teaching, of all ages, both in formal settings but also informal. There are people here who always see those jobs which need doing which others of us might just look past. Each one of us has been gifted. The gift of caring for the young, or the old. The gift of hospitality. The gift of generosity. Each one of us has special talents, in these and so many other ways. You might be too humble to express what they are out loud, but inside you can thank God for them, and ask him to help you to use them for Him.

This is the second last Sunday of the Church year, and the second of the three 'end times' parables Matthew gives us in chapter 25. It gives us a reason to pause, and to think, about the many gifts and talents God gives each one us, and how we do and can use them. We all have many talents, and God has gifted us in the ways that we can serve Him. God help us to recognise the gifts we have, and to use them to help others and to serve Him each day. Amen.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

All Gifted

As children of God, each one us being a unique creation, God has gifted us all in many different ways.

- What are the gifts/strengths/abilities/talents God has gifted you with? Even if you don't want to name them out loud, go through them yourself.
- Are there gifts/strengths/abilities/talents which you have which you could try to develop and strengthen more?
- Think how you are, and how you could be, using these gifts/strengths/abilities/talents in serving God by bringing praise and glory to Him and serving others.

Faithful Servants

The point of this parable is the Master knew his servants and gifted them in the ways he knew they could handle. Two of them responded to his call to service, one of them did not.

- Consider the situations you are in in your life. How is God calling you? How are you serving Him? Are there other things also He may be calling you to do?
- Pray that God will help you to see every gift/strength/ability/talent you have as an opportunity to serve Him. Pray that you will always be able to see the opportunities which are placed before you.
- Thank God that He has gifted you as one of His children. Praise Him for the opportunity to be a worker in His kingdom.

*Pastor Andrew Koehler
15.11.2020*