

“Blessed by the Opportunity”

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

At the end of a service, a rather particular elderly gentleman came up to Dwight L. Moody and said: “By the way, I noticed that you made eleven mistakes in grammar during your sermon tonight.” Moody acknowledged that the man probably was right and that his early education was faulty and that he wished he had more education. He said to the man: “I am using all the grammar I know in the service of Christ.”

It is easy to excuse ourselves from serving God with such remarks as: “If I were as gifted as someone else I would certainly make myself more useful in our church.” “If I had all the spare time that she has, I would teach Sunday school.” “What I wouldn’t do if I had all the money that they have!”

Our text shows that God is not so much concerned about what we would do if circumstances were different, but rather about what we are doing with the five, two or one talents that He has given to us. St. Paul writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:4) Regardless of what we have been given we are called to faithfully use what has been given to us. We can’t use what we don’t have; only what we do have, this is faithful stewardship.

Scripture reminds us: “And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (II Corinthians 5:15) This is what God has given to us freely by his grace as we use his gifts to us we are-

BLESSED BY THE OPPORTUNITY

I. Which God freely gives to us

II. Our faith responds to His giving

I.

A.1. Talents were originally a measure of weight, about seventy five pounds and later a monetary unit. Today we think of them as talents or abilities. Regardless of the definition the application is the same: They come as a gift from God and we are to put them to use in service to Him and others.

One commentator I read stated that it was interesting that we do not use this parable to teach about financial stewardship. Our stewardship is much larger than what we place in the offering plate. It is really about our lives, when our lives are dedicated to the Lord's service then our offerings will follow.

2. St. Peter wrote: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves as the one who serves by the strength God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 4:10-11)

When the famous missionary David Livingstone was buried at Westminster Abbey there was a servant who stood at the head of the casket. This was the Zanzibar servant who brought his master's body from the African swamp, asking that he only be allowed to attend Livingstone's body on its sad journey home. What a contrast—two men of different abilities, but both united in purpose of serving God with their gifts from him.

B.1. Jesus told the story about a master who left on a journey and left his servants with gifts that were his own.

They were to take care of these gifts until he returned again.

These gifts were valuable to the master, but so were his servants. He we hit upon the true nature of stewardship. All that we have is not really ours, but rather they are gifts from God.

Verse 19 says: “Now after a long time the master of the servants came and settled accounts with them.” There would be an accounting of how they had used what he had given to them. He would be interested in what they did with what really belonged to him. The application of a master leaving and then returning should be obvious to us. Jesus ascended and the disciples were told that he would return in the way that they saw him leave.

2. Each servant was given gifts according to their ability. As the story goes, the first two did very well; they gained an equal amount to what they had been given. The third servant didn’t even try. He was afraid of making a mistake perhaps. Maybe his disregarded his master’s instructions. The bottom line is that he did nothing with the gift given to him.

This says much to us today. God never expects us to do what we are unable to do. We are called to be faithful with what we have been given not with what we haven’t been given. All that we have comes from God, it is a gift. He know us well and what we can do, he calls us to faithfulness, not to be who we aren’t, but he expects that we will use what we have been given. It’s all about faith!

II.

A.1. Two of the servants were eager to use what they had been given. That is a great lesson for us today. Sometimes we think that there isn’t much for us to do. We may not be a great author, for instance, but who would have heard of Shakespeare’s play without some one printing them? You may not preach, but unless people

bring others into hear the message what is the point. David Livingstone, mentioned earlier, was a failure in his first attempt at preaching, but instead was sent to a people where polished preaching wasn't important. Andrew wrote no gospel, but he brought his brother Peter to Jesus and without that there would have been no great sermon at Pentecost where 3,000 were converted.

2. The first two servants went to work and so can we. We have varying gifts from God, but they are gifts nonetheless. They are all necessary in the work of this congregation and the church at large. God sees to that and blesses our efforts. We can't live in fear like the third servant, but rather imitate the faith and work of the other two servants.

B.1. As we await the return of our master and Savior Jesus Christ, how will we respond to his gifts to us? Will we be willing servants, or fearful and particular. Will we see some service as below our dignity? There is an old story of a man who faithfully fed a beggar at his gate each day.

One day he was in extreme difficulty and needed the beggar to run and errand for him. Since he had done so much for the man, he thought that the beggar would certainly run this errand for him. He summoned the man and asked him to do this task for him. Proudly the beggar responded, "I ask alms, I don't run errands!"

Jesus himself reminds us: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28) Jesus gives the example of faithful service and because of what he has done, we too can follow.

2. The master responded: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." That is

where we want to be. We have been given the gift the opportunity is present, God moves us to respond in thanks and faithfulness. Amen.