

St. Marks Episcopal Church – November 19, 2023

Pentecost 25 A – Track 2

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Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

### Use Your Talents

From our Epistle Lesson today, “<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. “ (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-2)

This passage reinforces the Gospel story we heard last week about the bridesmaids that did not take extra oil for their lamps. When they fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom, they used up all of their oil and had to go get more. By the time they got back to the wedding feast, they were late and locked out. They were not ready.

It also reinforces today’s Gospel reading in that it shows we need to be using our talents to the support of God. I read that the word talanta (plural) is the Greek of the New Testament writers, and represented fifteen years’ wages of one person’s labor. So, for his time, Jesus uses a huge amount to denote the gift of the master to his servants.

The word talent has also taken on the attributes of ability and giftedness. Many athletes and performers are said to be talented. Some people we say are very talented. Of others we might say they never lived up to their talent.

All of us have talents. How do we choose to use them? Some people are more talented than others just as some people are stronger, faster or better looking than others. Regardless of the level of talent we are each given, we have a responsibility to use them for good. If we do nothing with the talents given to us, they are just squandered or hidden just like the third servant.

Now is not the time for us to waste or squander our talents. We should be using them to prepare ourselves for the second coming of Jesus. Since we don’t know when that will be, we need to prepare ourselves now – while we can.

In today’s Gospel, it says that the master was away for a long time. He gave his servants time to use the talents given to them to use them to their fullest worth. In a similar fashion, God is giving us time and opportunity to best use our talents.

We don't want to be like those bridesmaids of last week's parable – we do not want to be locked out of this party - which will last for eternity. And we don't want to be like the third slave and waste our talents.

If we keep our final destination in the forefront of our mind, it will affect each moment as we travel our life's journey. We must stay vigilant and use our talent to the fullest.

Our expectation of the coming of the Lord should be that which urges us to move forward, to step out across all of the road blocks that seek to delay or reroute our journey. This is what enables us to step toward the future for which all creation has been prepared.

I have said a lot of words while standing up here speaking with you about the Gospel. But to tell you the truth, I do not feel prepared. I feel more related to the maidens that did not bring extra oil than with those that did bring extra oil.

I have asked myself, “How can I use my talents to prepare for meeting God and Jesus?” Here are some thoughts for me:

- Offer my time and self to the church and Jesus in any aspect or need of the church – whether it is serving here, in the pulpit, assisting other worship leaders, meeting with church members, helping to manage the finances of the church, being on Vestry, or just helping to clean the church or any other task.
- Offer my time and assistance to the Diocese and/or the Bishop to help where needed or where I can best serve.
- Speaking to people outside the church about Jesus and the Bible. Sharing the faith with others. (I tend to be introverted and personally find this one to be difficult.)
- Helping the elderly with things they need done but have trouble doing themselves.
- Helping out at the food pantry or soup kitchen.
- Addressing injustice where ever it might be found in our lives or community.

Consider, what are some ways you can prepare and use your talents?

On this, the next-to-the-last Sunday of the church year, we hear one resounding theme in all our readings: “Stay awake. Be alert. Be prepared.”

As our days come to a conclusion, I hope we are found working for God with the talents we have been given.

Let us pray.

Heavenly father, you are all knowing and can see into our souls. Please guide us to find our way to prepare for our eventual meeting with you. Help us to recognize and use the talents

you have given us to do those things you have prepared for us to do. Thank you for all you have done for us over the course of our lives and we ask you to please continue to watch over us and keep us safe. We ask for all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen