

“WHO, ME?”

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God’s Word: Exodus 3:1-12; 4:1-5, 10-13

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

I’m sure many of us have heard people excuse themselves from upholding the church by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service and their witness by appealing to what they do

not have... “I’m too old.” ...“I’m too young.” ...“I’m not educated.” ...“I’m too busy.” ...“I’m not good enough.” ...“I could never do that.”

When God asked Moses to tell Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, Moses used a number of phrases to complain about what he did not have: “Who am I that I should go...? “Suppose they do not believe me....” ...“I have never been eloquent...” ...“O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”

After listening to Moses’ complaints, God said to him:

“What is that in your hand?” In essence, God was saying: “Moses, I am not interested in what you do not have; I am only interested in what you do have....reach out your hand...and certainly I will be with you.”

And that is the key, is it not? “I will be with you.” “I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

For years an army recruitment advertisement has been challenging young men and women to “Be all that you can be.” As a Christian the challenge is: “Be all that God meant you to be!”

The call of Moses and the parable of the talents tells us that God creates and that God calls us to be co-workers for the unfolding of history. And we are not alone in this endeavor.

But this does not mean that God does not invest in us and expect a return on that investment. God provides us with all we need in order to fulfill God’s work.

“What about the fact that I am no speaker?” Moses asks. And God points out that this is irrelevant. Moses is called to be God’s servant. Moses doesn’t have to come up with the message nor does Moses have to come up with the plans.

Moses only needs to repeat what God says, and lead by following and trusting in God and God alone!!!

Moses is not called by God on the basis of his experience, his past initiative or his leadership credentials. What counts is God’s “I will be with you.” And that is what God is saying to you and to me today!

In the parable of the talents, a man set out on a journey, entrusting his property to his servants. He has put a lot in their hands. It is important that we recognize from the outset that this man represents God. It is God who owns the world. We are His servants.

The word “talent” has come into our language from this parable. Rather than money, however, it has come to mean abilities and special gifts. Now, we must be careful not to interpret the parable of the talents simply on the meaning of the word “talent” that has evolved over the years. Instead, the question that each of us must ask is: “What did Jesus mean by the talent?”

I would say that everything we have and everything we are comprise the talents entrusted to us by God. This includes our abilities...each precious moment of every day, every week, every

month, and every year given to us...our material and financial resources...our relationships with loved ones and friends...the gift of God's salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ...in short—our very lives!!!

All of this is entrusted to us by God, and we are called to be God's stewards! Now, the work of the Kingdom is so great that many people may wonder why God left it to us....but God has...and we must keep that in mind because people's souls are at stake! But just think of how exciting this makes the Christian life!!!

Yet how often are we like the one-talent man? Our faith, instead of being an adventure, becomes a heavy chain of obligations. We cling to the status quo...hoping we can get by without too many crises or challenges.

We are content with the usual routine. The one-talent Christian fails to see how much he or she is needed....and the result is deadly.

In actuality, no Christian is one-talented. We are all many-talented!

We can pray...we can be present at church and invite others to come with us...we can share our faith...we can share our gifts...we can help with the big events...and we can serve.

God calls all of us to realize the potential of our lives...to maximize the years of our lives! And this is exciting!!! There is an urgent purpose that God has given to each of one of us, and this purpose demands the very best that we can believe and give.

In our Gospel Lesson, one servant gets five talents...one servant gets two talents...and the other receives just one talent.

When the time came for an accounting, they were not judged on an absolute scale...they were judged in accordance to what they had been allotted. So, the important factor is not what we have or what we have gained....What is important is what we have done in relation to what we have been given. Basically, have we trusted God with our lives? Have we believed God when God tells us, "All that counts is 'I will be with you.'"

Now the first two servants had a completely different view of the master than the one-talent servant. They saw him as a person who would appreciate bold and daring action. He liked to give a great deal of freedom to his servants. If they give it their best shot and fail...he would be fair and understanding....for even some of his own ventures garnered no profit either.

The one-talented fellow viewed the master as hard and calloused. Should he lose the talent, the master would be unmerciful, because he is a stingy and exacting man.

What image do we have of God that guides our behavior? Sometimes our perceptions are distorted...and this leads to self-defeating behavior! The master in this parable is Christ and we are those to whom He has entrusted His substance.

We are richly endowed with all that is His! What a chance God is taking! Quite a gamble! But that seems to be Christ's way.

During His earthly journey Jesus invested His love in those whose lives were out of control...such as prostitutes and tax collectors. He scattered the Seed of the gospel wildly, letting it fall where it may take root-- where it was able.

And the Cross...the Cross was the biggest gamble of all!!!....as the devil whispered in His ear: "They aren't worth it!"

Some of those wagers paid off and others did not....But to those who have caught the gambling fever and know the excitement and joy of wagering their lives for the redemption of the world....Well, God will say to them: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

Remember that what counts is God's promise "I will be with you." This is not merely a promise that we will feel God is with us but a promise that God will be with us actively whether we feel it or not.

In Moses' case, he will see the sign that God is with him when the Exodus is all over. He will have to go through the crisis and the challenges on the basis of trust in God's promise to him, but he will be able to look back and reflect, "God said 'I am going to do this,' and it happened."

The truth is that the person who ventures with God's talents will always reap a return! So, the challenge for us is: How can we use our resources of time and talent for God? What is the special thing you can do that nobody else in the world can do in quite the same way? Is it a laugh?...a smile?...Is it an ability to encourage and enthuse?...is it an ability to earnestly pray?...is it a loving tone people hear in your voice?...is it a skill in music or art or teaching or managing or....or....the possibilities are almost limitless!

What are those things that the Owner of all things has entrusted to you? How are you responding to that trust? How are you doing as a steward of Jesus Christ?

Let us pray: Lord Christ, You have shown us that the road to stewardship is never easy or safe. Your commitment to the Father led to a cross. Give us the boldness to fully invest ourselves and our abilities in the cause of Your kingdom, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.