

Provoked by the Parables at Brentwood Presbyterian

The Gold Coins

August 21, 2011

**Psalm 138 and Luke 19:11-27
(Hymns – 34, 722, 712, 671)**

This morning we have read Luke's version
of the parable of the talents,
the three gold coins.
It's very similar to the parable we considered last week
from Matthew about the three servants.

In that sermon, we considered the impact
that an inappropriate fear of God might have on our faith.
This week, I want to focus on the impact
appropriate courage can have on our faith.
Last week, we looked at what could get in the way
of a flourishing intimacy with God.
This week, we'll look at what leads to that intimacy
and what flows from it.

The key focus of this parable is faithfulness
in the context of the present and future kingdom.
What does it mean to flourish faithfully,
to live in intimate relationship to Jesus Christ,
to give thanks for what has been entrusted to us in that relationship,
and to use it courageously and wisely for the sake of the kingdom?

What does it mean, in other words, to be a Christian in and for the world
in these in-between times,
between the time the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated by Jesus
and the time the kingdom will have its final impact?
We don't know the time when that will happen.
But God has revealed for us what it means
to be Christians in this in-between times.

It means, quite simply according to these parables,
to accept the kingdom and its gift of salvation as a trust,
as a responsibility to be an agent of salvation's joy and contentment.
That responsibility comes as a gift from a loving lord
to be accepted and used wisely with courage
to further the purposes and intent of that lord.

The gift we have been given is our lives.
God's intent in giving us that gift
is that we flourish in it
in ways that are a blessing to all those we influence.

When Jesus was asked what the teacher of the Law must do
to inherit eternal life, to be saved, to be redeemed, to live and flourish fully,
he coached that person into realizing afresh
what he already knew from the depths of his soul:

*“ Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’
And ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ ”*
(Luke 10:27)

Do this, Jesus affirms once the man has voiced it, and you will live.
Do this and you will enjoy the contentment of God's gift of life.
Do this and you will be a faithful friend,
using that which is entrusted to you
in God's service.

The more we discover about how God has made us,
how wonderfully complex and capable human beings are,
the more we realize that we have been entrusted with
the loving energy of the Holy Spirit,
an energy that pulses through and infuses the whole of our beings.

We can choose to ignore the source of that energy,
as apparently did 7 of the 10 servants entrusted with it
in our parable this morning.
They simply took what they had been given and disappeared.
They took the gift,
but ignored the relationship and responsibilities that came with it.
Many do that in these in-between times.

One servant received the gift
but was overcome with the anxiety of displeasing his lord.
He hid the gift and did not use it for good.
His fear led to miserabel failure.
Some do that in these in-between times.

The faithful servants used their gifts to increase their positive impact.
When their master became king,
when the kingdom finally came in its fullness,
they were deeply appreciated and given greater responsibilities.
And some do that in these in-between times.

Those who do please the Lord.

They respond with courage and wisdom.
They give back more that they have received.
They are blessings to God's creation.

It doesn't really matter what you do with your life,
as long as take responsibility for using your energy in God's service.

You may serve a congregation as their pastor,
provide music that stirs the soul,
engage in medical research to save lives,
be a loving parent or grandparent, coach,
serve meals, administer an office, garden,
resolve conflicts, study, clean, nurse, teach,
supervise employees, stock racks, clear cargo, ...

It isn't so much about what you do as who you see yourself to be.

Do you know in the depths of your soul
that you are a beloved friend of God,
in an intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ
through the power of the Holy Spirit?

That gift is yours and mine.
There is no need for the anxiety of gaining acceptance.
Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us,
and what the Holy Spirit has done within us,
that gift is yours and mine.

The question this parable poses to all of us is simple.
What do I do with the courage that comes with the gift of life?
The answer is pretty clear as well.
Use it to be a blessing in these in-between times.

Lots of people won't for lots of reasons.
But you will flourish in joyful living if you do.