

Matthew 25:14-30

November 15, 2020

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do you ever imagine yourself winning the lottery and fanaticize about what you would do with all of that money?

It never fails that when the lottery jack pot gets really big, it becomes a topic of conversation. What would you do with all of that money?

I think the Colorado lottery was at \$9.5 million this weekend. I don't know if anyone won it or not. But, on the radio Friday, BJ and Jamie were talking about it.

So, let's imagine you won the lottery and after all the taxes are taken out you're left with a huge chunk of change. What would you do with it?

Buy a bigger house or a new fancy car? Travel the world or move to Barbados? Buy a family member or members, your mom and dad, your siblings, or your children a house of their own? Quit your job and do whatever you want to do? Invest it for the future? Give it to the Church or another worthy cause?

What would you do if you won the lottery? Would you be set free or would it hold you captive? Would you sleep soundly at night or would you be afraid of losing it all? Would you blow through it as fast as you could or would you tuck it away?

What would you do if you won the lottery?

The slaves in today's parable from the Gospel reading may have felt as if they won the lottery. A talent was worth a lot of money, \$400k by today's standard. So, the slave who got 5 talents got the equivalent of \$2 million! As 21st Century Americans, that might not seem like that big of a deal, but imagine you were only making \$1/day. 1 Talent would be 400k days of work – that's almost 1300 years of work if you took the Sabbath off.

So, maybe that makes the last slave a little more relatable. There is no way he could ever pay back that Talent if he lost it, and he knew it. So, in fear he buried it. That's perhaps why he only got 1 Talent as opposed to the others. The master probably knew the other two wouldn't be so afraid of the task set before them.

So, the one with the least, hides what he receives and pretends as if he's never even seen it before. He acts as if he was not charged to treat the Talent as the master

would have. “Here’s all of this good stuff. Take care of it, as I would have taken care of it.”

The Talent is not a seed. The Talent is a coin. Burying it in the ground does no one any good at all. The Talent is a tool to be used for the good of the master. Who here intentionally buries their lawn mower? It doesn’t happen. You can’t mow your lawn if the mower is buried.

So, why does this slave bury the tool he has been given?

This always reminds me of the German way of not using the good stuff. Does your family do this? It drives me crazy. We heard quite often as kids, don’t use that. It’s the good stuff. We’ll save that for later. But then, it never gets used and it just rots. It never gets used for the purpose for which it was created and then it gets thrown out. What a waste.

Lawn mowers mow the lawn. The good China is meant to be eaten off of. That beautiful necklace is meant to be worn. The piano is meant to be played. The oven is meant to bake. A talent is meant to be used. It’s a tool, not a seed.

Plant seeds, not tools.

And here is the interesting thing about this parable. Jesus, the one telling this parable, is the one who will be buried and rise again on the third day.

So, Jesus is actually the seed, and the tool we have been given, for the sake of the world, is salvation. The Talent, the priceless coin, is our salvation. We could never earn that in 1300 years, but God gives it to us freely!

We have won the lottery! The eternal life lottery! But, what are we doing with it? How do we use our salvation for the sake of the world?

So, let’s reexamine this parable with salvation in mind.

Quite often in the gospels Jesus talks about the fact that those who have been forgiven a lot are more likely to share God’s unconditional love unconditionally. But, those who are self-righteous, who are in no need of a savior, are less likely to share unconditional love with others. Because they think they have to earn salvation, they judge others, but that also leaves them living in fear, because they know they’re really not good enough.

So, the slave with only one talent, is full of dread and assumes the master is harsh and would kill him had he lost the talent. But, the thing about salvation is that it can never be lost!

Love is meant to be shared, not buried in the ground – hence the resurrection.

So, those with two and five talents were probably like the tax collectors and the prostitutes. They carried the most shame, but God lifts them up out of their deep darkness through the gift of forgiveness – the gift of salvation.

Knowing how much they are loved by the master, the slaves with two and five talents rush out immediately to share the love. They understand the master's mission.

And you know what happens when you share love with someone –the love grows. It's like that adage about giving a hug, you give one, and get one back, so right there you have doubled the hugs, you've doubled the love. And that's what we are sent out to do in the world.

So, what are you doing with your talents? Have you buried them in fear or are you sharing them in joy? Is your faith active and alive, or is it dead and buried? Are you just waiting for the end times when Jesus will take care of everything? Or, are you using the good news of your salvation for the good of others? Are you using what you have been given to increase the kingdom of God? Are you loving others as you have been loved yourself so that love will grow?

This will be significant next week when we hear the next parable where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep ask, when did we feed you? The goats ask, when did you come asking for something to eat? The first is an act of love, the second is reflective of earning.

In love, we respond to God's love with love for others. Living in God's love, we want to share our talents with others, the wealth of salvation, something we could never earn, not even in 2000 years, so that they too can see God's light shining here and now.

God loves us all unconditionally. We know that through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, which we never asked for nor ever earned. God did that for us freely, knowing that we needed it, so that we could be set free from all fear!

Salvation is ours. God loves us. There is nothing to fear.

But, how do we approach those who have been given everything, eternal life, but still quake in fear? Those who bury their talent? Those who still worry about using the tool given to them for the sake of the world?

Perhaps that's where we come in, loving them and helping them to slowly use their talent as we accompany them and reassure them they have nothing to lose.

Talents are tools of the kingdom. Love sets us free so that we can freely love others. When we invest talents of love, they multiply!

God has entrusted us with the most extravagant gift ever given – eternal life. Eternal life is to be lived, not left in the tomb. That's why Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. Life has to be lived. Love has to be loved. It's active here and now!

Talents – God's immeasurable love and forgiveness - are not things to be buried, but to be used, shared, and multiplied for the good of all of creation.

So, let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

You're already equipped with all that you need. Salvation is yours.

Thanks be to God. Amen.