

Emmanuel November 15, 2020

Susan Peyton

Chris, who owns many parcels of land, needed to go visit all of them. He would be gone for a while, and he liked to travel light. He had a few shepherds who had some promise, and decided to, well, see what they could do. He took his wealth, a deep breath, and went to the first man. He was the one he thought had the most promise, so he gave him 5 talents, he didn't give any instructions, just gave him the money. The second man he liked, but he hadn't been with him long, so he gave him two talents. The third man he actually didn't really like, but his oldest daughter did, so he gave him only one talent. He could afford to lose one talent, and if the man forgot where he put it, oh well. After all, he couldn't get into too much trouble while he was gone.

A few months later, Chris came back home, and went to visit each of the three men. He went to the first one, who gave him not just 5 talents, but 10 talents, for he had doubled his money while he was gone. He thanked him and said, You will be rewarded, come see me on Monday. Then he went to the second man, he also had doubled his money, so he gave him not just two talents, but four talents. Again, Chris thanked him, and said, you will be rewarded, come see me on Monday. He took a deep breath, and went to see the third man. And the third man said, come with me and I'll retrieve your talent. Then they went outside to the back of the shed, and he lifted up a few pieces of wood, and dug out Chris' talent. He said, I couldn't decide where to hide it, and I hid it too well at first and lost it, then decided to put it somewhere safe. I've heard the stories about how harsh a master you are, and I kind of like your daughter, so I didn't want to mess this up. So here, exactly what you gave me. Chris could tell it was pointless to talk with him, the fool had no idea what he could have done. He didn't want his daughter anywhere near him, so decided to send him to his brother's land, he could work there. And he took that one talent and gave it to his new assistant.

Gary Inrig, in his book The Parables Understanding what Jesus meant said "We are owners of nothing, stewards of everything. What we possess is to be used to further the Master's purposes and goals. The primary value of earthly wealth is that it is a school, training us to handle "true riches", which must refer to the affairs of the kingdom. "

As an ex-banker, I'm thankful I was not one 200 years ago. One talent, made of silver was worth about \$ 16,500. The negative side to a talent, is that it weighs around 73 pounds. Not lightweight, not portable, and not easily traded. Another way to value one talent is it was worth 6,000 drachmas. One drachma was a soldier's wages for a day. Certainly it wasn't pocket change.

Each of us have talents, some may volunteer, whether for noon lunch or the Verona Food Bank. Others are behind the scenes, counting money, tending to the altar, cleaning up the columbarium garden. For some, it is to pray for others. For there are some talents known only to us and God.

Our diocese turned 100 last year, and turned 75 in 1984. What I do remember, is that each parish was given \$75 to use as they wanted to. Since I don't remember the actual uses, I've used examples that have happened in our parishes, just not necessarily in 1984.

Emmanuel took the \$75 to buy seed, and church members went out to Weyers Cave and tilled and worked the land at the Rapp's farm. They planted tomatoes, corn, cabbage, lettuce, and many other kinds of produce. And there were weekly gathering parties to collect what had ripened. Then the produce was donated to the Verona Area Food Bank for those who needed food. The youth group canned tomatoes, which they sold at the Bizarre Bazaar, and they gave the profits to Valley Mission, to help the homeless.

Trinity used the money toward their annual Christmas outreach dinner. Over the years they have served a wonderful holiday dinner to 100-200 people from the community. And provided a gift for each of them. It is a time that families volunteer together, college students come to see their friends, and for those who may not get anything else for Christmas, have a time to be with others, have a good meal and get a gift.

Buena Vista used their money to paint the inside of their rectory. The rectory became a community clothes closet, where anyone could come in on Saturday mornings, and take clothes needed by their family. All the clothes, books, blankets were given, no money exchanged hands. Not all the factories in their area were doing well, so there were many families in need.

Waynesboro was sponsoring a refugee family, so the \$75 was used to buy gas for the husband to go to work. Their whole parish donated furniture, clothing, pots and pans to furnish their apartment. To help support them their first year here in Waynesboro.

In these examples, the \$75 was used to pass on to others, whether it was food, clothes or gas. And in each case, the parishes donated their time and energy to make it happen. It was not just one person, but the community.

What if a parish had used the \$75 to create a website, so that others would know about their church? Or to buy backpacks to fill with meals for students on the weekend?

It could be said that the parishes used their talents for the glory of God, and to help others in need. Each person would help in different ways, using their own talents. The last 8 months, there have been notes, cards and phone calls made to check on one another. Sarah has gathered incredible talent each Sunday to bring us joy and lift our hearts. The lawn is mowed, the columbarium kept in good shape, our church and its building have continued to move forward. And the community we reach has been much wider than our previous normal service would. In fact, our services have been seen in Colorado, Tennessee, Ithaca NY, northern Virginia, the outer banks, France and England. We can literally use the talents of our congregation and touch people we have never met. We have taken an unusual situation and spread God's word well beyond Staunton.

"Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Amen.