



The Swiss watchmaker Patek Philippe, known for their luxury watches, has had one of the world's cleverest and iconic advertising campaigns for over twenty-five years. Its slogan: "You Never Actually Own A Patek Philippe, You Merely Look After It For The Next Generation."

("Generations" 1996-present)

That's the same kind of attitude that we are to have. We are merely caring for someone else's resources. And when we realize that, it changes the way we manage those assets.

So it is with what we "own": money, gifts, ministries, time, and our lives. (from "Be Part of the Revolution" contributed by Andy Payne 2009, sermoncentral.com)

This morning's Gospel parable contains an important life lesson for every Christian; that it is a privilege to be entrusted with talents, resources, and opportunities to work toward God's purposes in the world. The implication of the parable is that we if we do so, we take our place among all the faithful, trustworthy servants of God, no matter how big or small our accomplishments may seem.

Professor Richard Tow notes that "Jesus had an awesome ability to speak volumes in a simple story. He revealed the heart of God by telling the story of the Prodigal Son. He showed us how to treat each other with the story of the Good Samaritan. And in our story today He tells us what life is all about. What will you do with your life? How will you invest your time? How will you manage your money? What career choices will you consider? Every decision we make should be made in the light of what Jesus teaches us in the Parable of the Talents. This is life's meaning in a nutshell!" (from "What's Life All About?" 2009 sermoncentral.com)

Have you ever wondered what a talent is worth today? As a unit of currency in Jesus' time, a talent was worth about fifteen years of labour (assuming a six-day work week, because no one would work on the Sabbath). It's hard to know for sure, but, whatever its exact value, in our parable today, a talent is a very sum of money, and the amount given to each servant was considerable. The point is this: each of these servants was entrusted with something very valuable. Although we are tempted to feel sorry for the servant who received only one talent, in reality he received as much as a million dollars from the master and buried it in his back yard. He was given more than enough to meet the master's expectations. (various sources including John R. Donovan's article "The Parable and the Talents: The Bible and Entrepreneurs," 1994, Foundation for Economic Talent)

The second meaning is symbolic: The English word "talent," meaning our natural abilities, is derived from this parable. We must use our talents and abilities in service to God. If we don't use our gifts wisely, God will consider us to be wicked and lazy like the third servant.

This parable teaches us that success is a product of our work.

But it seems many Christians today see their salvation as simply a "bus ticket to heaven."

They believe it doesn't matter what they do while they "wait for the bus."

We are called to steward all that we have been given, and God expects us to generate a return by using our talents towards productive ends ~ serving the common good and furthering God's Kingdom. The servants were given enough to produce more ~ it is the same with the gifts God has given us.

The Parable of the Talents teaches that we are not all created equal. The master gives to each servant talents, "...each according to his ability." He understood that the one-talent servant was not capable of producing as much as the five-talent servant. We want to protest this as unfair; yet we know this is true from our own experience.

Concentrate on strengths, not weaknesses:

There was once a poor and illiterate young Greek who applied for a job as a caretaker at a company in Athens. Being an amiable young man he soon found himself on a shortlist with just one other person for a new position. For a time he was the favourite candidate but he lost out when it was discovered that he couldn't read or write. Completely demoralized by the experience and wanting to flee as far away as possible, the young man managed to secure passage on board a ship bound for England.

Picking up the story many years later, the now rich and successful Greek was a shipping tycoon who was being interviewed by a reporter who suggested that he should write his autobiography. The wealthy businessman replied, "I'm afraid that wouldn't be possible. You see, I cannot read or write!" The reporter was dumbfounded and responded, "If that's true, then just imagine how much more you would have achieved if you could!" The affluent man shook his head and retorted, "If I could read and write, I'd have been a caretaker in Athens!"

(adapted excerpt from Discover Your True Potential by R. Ian Seymour, Pelican Publishing Company, 2002)

We also learn from The Parable of the Talents that we work for God, not for our own selfish purposes. The money that is given to the servants is not their own and what they earn is not theirs to keep. As only stewards of the master's investment, it is the quality of their stewardship that the master seeks to measure. For us, it is about our attitude, the motivation that lives in our hearts.

Finally, The Parable of the Talents shows that we will be held accountable. This story is not about salvation or righteous deeds, but about how we use our talents to fulfill our callings, our life stewardship.

One of the simplest lessons is that it is not immoral to profit from our resources, intelligence, and labour. The opposite of profit is loss, and surely the loss of wealth, especially when due to a lack of initiative, does not constitute good stewardship.

The unfaithful steward in this parable didn't so much waste the master's money ~ he wasted an opportunity! As a result, he was judged wicked and lazy. We are responsible for what we do for God with what we have been given, and one day we will be held accountable. (excerpts above from "Five Lessons for Our Lives from the Parable of the Talents" by Hugh Whelchel, Faith Magazine, March 14, 2013)

Pastor Rick Warren uses an acronym to summarize God's gift to us: SHAPE – S-H-A-P-E

S - spiritual gifts, H - heart, A - abilities, P – personality, E - experiences.

God has given you this bundle of talents... that makes you who you are and sets you apart from other people.

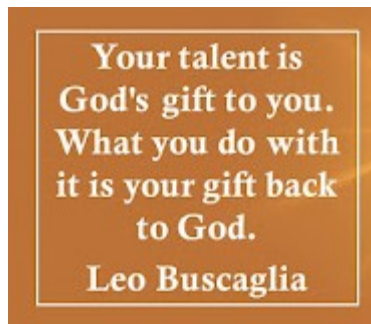
You are shaped to serve God, and he is testing you to see how you are going to use the talents he gave you. If you think your talents are simply for you to make a lot of money, retire, and die, you've missed the point of your life. God gave you talents to benefit others, not yourself. If you don't use what God has given you, he will take it away. And this leads to "weeping and gnashing of teeth," ~ sorrow and depression. (adapted from "Your SHAPE Shows Your Purpose" by Rick Warren, April 13, 2021, pastorrick.com)

**You** are the manager of the gifts God has given to **you**. They may be great or small in your eyes, but they matter to God; and think about this: Wouldn't "the woods be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best?" (adapted quote by Henry Van Dyke)

When you are at the end of your life, what would you tell God? What will you tell yourself? Those are the only two that matter. Your God and Yourself. (from 'Goal Getting Podcast,' November 15, 2015)

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and I could say to Him, 'I used everything you gave me'." (Erma Bombeck)

Amen



***"Just as 'if' is in the middle of the word 'life,' many people in midlife lament, 'if I could only find my real purpose in life.'"***

***~ R. Ian Seymour***