

*Sermon preached by Rev Rachel McDougall*

*St Paul's Canterbury*

*Pentecost 24 OS 33 Proper 27A*

*Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020*

*Living Courageously with confidence in God's blessings*

How we interpret a situation depends on how we see it.

We can either be a glass half full or a glass half empty type of person.

How often are we persuaded by advertising that we do not have enough and that our lives will be happy if we have that brand-new shiny thing.

It is a challenge to live out of a sense of enough, to live from blessing rather than from the fear of what we lack.

How we interpret Jesus' parable depends on how we come at it.

It is easy to hear it from a place of fear and focus on harshness and judgement and the third slave's fear and the hiding of the talent.

Yet the focus of the story is the fact that the master entrusts his property to all three slaves.

He entrusts each of them with vast amounts of money. One talent is equivalent to 20 year's wages of a labourer so even the slave who got one talent got about \$1 million in today's money – not a small amount.

The first got about \$5mill and the second \$3million.

All three then are given a great deal of trust.

They are trusted to do something with it. They are not told how or what to do with it.

They are entrusted with abundance.

Two slaves are creative and double their money.

They are praised for their trustworthiness and enter the joy of their master.

The third buries his talent in the ground out of fear and blames his master. He fails to live out of the blessing and trust placed in him. He does not love his master and is not faithful to him and risks nothing.

He has already decided what the master is like.

Jesus is using this image of money to the disciples about how they are to live in the meantime.

Jesus tells this story to his followers to prepare them for how to live in the time without his physical presence.

For Matthew's community it is a reminder of how they are to live now in the in-between as they await Jesus' return and the coming fulfillment of God's reign.

One might think this story is about talent in terms of ability or gifts God has blessed us with and encouraging us to use them.

It's about something deeper than that – having confidence and courage to live out of the blessings of God.

It is about the life of God that is within us and how we allow that life of God to flow through us.

God has poured upon us so many blessings of peace and love and hope.

This story does warn us about what happens when we live from fear and block God's love within us. It is so easy for us to err on the side of caution and safety. Prudence can easily turn into fear and protectiveness and being safe to the extent that we hide the gift of God that is in us.

There are times when our trust in God is easily corroded by fear and get the mindset that the church is a life-raft that we can cling to and will keep us safe in the midst of change.

A ship is safe in harbour but that is not what ships are for.

It is the same with faith.

I think the parable invites us to live out of the abundant blessings of God.

We have been entrusted with the gospel.

We are to have confidence in the life of God within us and to take the risk to be open about our faith.

We are challenged not to sit on the life of God within us, nor hide it under a mattress.

God's life and love and grace are abundant and we are blessed with them and are to let God's Spirit live and grow and move through us.

It is an invitation to participate in God's adventure, being creative in how we share our faith and the blessings that we have.

In his acceptance speech, Joe Biden said that his grandfather had said to him 'keep the gospel'. His grandmother said no, 'share the gospel'.

As we emerge from this time of lockdown and emerge into the light we are called to have confidence in the blessings that God gives us here and to share them.

We are invited to live in a full and creative way.

I was reminded of a story told in The Age this week of a guy who was prevented from seeing his aged parents in a nursing home during lockdown.

He was aware of how frightened and stressed residents and staff would be. So he took his ukulele down and started to sing all sorts of well known songs outside the home at the time of change of shifts.

Residents looked forward to it every day and in the end he started to invite his muso mates to come down and spread the love of music and they did.

One day as restrictions were easing, a 90 year old bloke was wheeled out of the home and said 'Can I join in? I play the saxophone?' And he did!

I wonder what that might look like here to continue to live into the blessings that God gives us – even if it is playing the ukulele!

Take the risk this week to live into the life of God within you – whatever that might look like for you – share the gift of a smile, of laughter of hope and care.

A local sign outside a restaurant has said: the only thing more contagious than this virus is hope and I would say the hope of God's life within us!

*Lectios:  
Judges 4.1-7  
Psalm 123  
Matthew 25.14-30*