

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)
TWENTY FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENETCOST (YEAR A)
15 NOVEMBER 2020**

**READINGS: JUDGES 4:1-7// PSALM 123// 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11//
MATTHEW 25:14-30**

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*God you speak to us as a Loving Father
Help us to be open as you reveal our gifts to us
So that we can use it to the furtherance of your Kingdom
We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN*

Our Gospel reading is the parable of the talents which is among the most abused texts in the New Testament.

Contrary to what might be modelled by some best-selling evangelists, the parable does not justify a gospel of economic prosperity. Instead, it challenges Christians to imitate Christ by using all that God has given us for the sake of the kingdom. Jesus told this parable in the last few days of his life. He knew he would not be with them much longer, and when he was gone, he wanted his followers to use their talents to increase God's kingdom.

I want to highlight a few aspects from this parable

1. This parable tells us that God has given each one of us has a gift or talent

In v14 and 15 of our Gospel reading we read *“Again it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability.*

They were each given “talents.” The Greek word *talanta* literally means “weights.” In those days, a talent or weight was valued according to the kind of metal of which the weight consisted. It could be a talent of copper, gold, or silver.

But the word *talent* is broader than silver or gold or wealth (money.) A talent can also refer to a broad range of things, your gifts, your spiritual abilities and what you are good at. If God has given you money—and He given some to all of us—then we must receive it as a trust from Him. If He has given us talents—

as in some kind of special ability—then we must use that for Him. And if He has given us a spiritual gift—and every Christian has at least one—then we must use that for His kingdom. And similarly, each day the Lord gives us opportunities—with our family, at work, at play, in the community. Even challenges, problems can be opportunities the Lord puts into our life for some reason that we can use our gifts to advance God’s kingdom.

This year we experienced one of the greatest pandemic COVID 19 which affected the whole world irrespective of colour, financial or social status, age or religion.

As a Church we were challenged to do Church differently –and we discovered and used our gifts that we never thought we had. Who would have thought that we would do online preaching and services or some of you to do voice recording prayers?

We had people using their gifts and talents to reach out to the poor and the vulnerable

So my dear friends as servants of our Lord Jesus—the members of His Church—all of us have received talents from Jesus. There’s not one member here in the church to whom Jesus has not given some kind of talent//gift. *(Young or old//servers// side people//lay ministers/maintenance committee/ pastoral care team// workers//gardener//secretary/ parish Council // Clergy)*

The talents our Lord provides to us are gifts that He has determined we can handle, according to our ability says v.15, and if we use them properly they will be a blessing to us and to others as well as to God. I want you to note not every servant was entrusted with the same number of talents. One was given five talents, another two, and the third servant was given only one. What we discover is that God makes us managers according to our “manage-ability.”

The master in this parable is not only wealthy; he is also wise. He knew that his servants did not have equal ability. Likewise, God never gives to us more than we can handle. He knows our strengths and He knows our weaknesses. As one writer has said, “God never demands from a person abilities which he has not got; but he does demand that a man should use to the full the abilities which he possess.”

2. This parable challenges us to take risks

Let us reflect on the responses of the servants to the talents they received.

The first two servants respond to the master in the same way. They accept what he gives them and took the risk to invest it.

They have gained a one hundred percent return. They made full use of his opportunities, not for their own advancement but for the Lord's

But Servant number three however responded differently. He was given only one talent to invest. We're told in verse 18 that upon receiving his talent, "**he went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money**

My brothers and sisters how many of us are not like the third servant?

The person who believes he/she has nothing to offer is the person who believes God has nothing to give. Many have the attitude that they have no gifts. To say, "I don't think I have a gift" is to say, "I don't think I have a function in the Body of Christ." The NT teaches us God has a task for every believer.

Sometimes fear overtakes our desire and ability to do the things we know are good and right. We don't speak up when things don't seem right because we don't want to create waves.

We hesitate to volunteer because we aren't sure if we have the abilities, or are selfish with our time and afraid it will take away from the other things we want to do. We don't want to be inconvenienced.

In our Old Testament we have the story of Deborah who was a prophetess and was appointed as a judge, but she was also seen as a military leader, leading a large army against the strongest military force throughout the country. This was something unheard of during that time in Israelites history, because women practically had no voice in society. But Deborah used her gifts and talents took the risk and responded on God's call and she showed wisdom and strength of a true hero.

One of our own students Thsiamiso has been awarded as one of the Inspiring-Fifty women in SA (inspiring 50 recognizes women in Science Technology

Engineering and mathematic (STEM)). She stepped out take the risk and used her talents that God has given to make a difference and inspire other women.

And what about Kamala Harris – USA new vice president a woman who stepped out and took the risk

So many of us miss opportunities to do something significant with their gifts or talents or possessions simply because they fear failure. You may have been blessed with a natural ability to sing, but much of this talent has gone to waste because you fear you not good enough – but you know what the choir needs you. Some of you have been given a naturally warm and loving personality. Yet you've never allowed yourself to get close to anyone because of the fear of rejection. And so you've buried a treasure. It's buried so deep that most people don't even know that you have it. Instead of warmth and love, they see you as cold or shy. Only you know that deep down inside there is something in your possession of great worth. Some of you have been given a marvellous gift of communication. But because you think that you might say the wrong thing, you freeze up, you lock your lips, and you're paralyzed because of fear. How many of us, because we fear to step out and invest the gifts and abilities God has given us, are missing opportunities to use and develop our talents to their full potential? We leave the treasure lying buried in the dirt.

3. What will happen if we don't use our gifts

When his master returned and found that the servant had been negligent and had buried his talent, he was angry. He said in verse 28 that the talent should be taken from him and given to the servant who had 10 talents. Now in this parable Jesus is not justifying taking from the poor and giving to the rich. What Jesus is doing is teaching a simple principle of life: If you don't use it, you will lose it.

CONCLUSION

*My brothers and sisters we all have been given certain talents and abilities that God wants us to utilize to advance the kingdom of God

*Let us be good stewards of our abilities let us use it or lose it.

*Don't be afraid to try.

*Never say, "I have so little, my contribution won't matter." Every little bit helps.

* People may not be equal in talent but they can sure be equal in effort.
What are some of the resources God has given to you to accomplish God's goals in your life?

How can you use your gifts and talents to help St Paul's grow?

Next week we have our Dedication and Thanksgiving service. We will give you your dedication card where you have to fill in what you plan to gift next year. But I also want you to reflect on your gifts and talents and commit yourself to be part of one of the ministries or organisations in the Church of St Paul's