

Barre Congregational Church Outdoor Service

November 15, 2020: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Twenty fourth Sunday After Pentecost~

“Talents and Gains”

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25 verses 14 - 30

I. Introduction:

There are many people who know how to work with money, how to invest well, and get good returns on their investments, then there are those who have some knowledge and would say, we're doing all right with our money, and then there are others who do not even have enough to invest at all. Whether it is about saving and investing money, or investing one's time to create something, like a garden, planting seeds or bulbs, and see the result of what we planted, or a carpenter, planning and building a beautiful staircase or cabinets, or parents and caregivers raising our kids with certain values, and see how they turn out later on in life, a lot of what we do in life is about what we put in, and getting back, so to speak. It is also about the impact of that investment on our lives or the lives of our families and others.

II. Talents and gains

Our passage here in Matthew has to do with money. While in the English language we would use the word talents as the natural gifts or skills we have, the Greek word talanton refers to a large amount of money, in gold or silver. It is about an employer who gave three of his workers different amounts of money. He then left to go on a long journey. We see how the first two of these workers, traded with their money, and received more money back, and the third worker decided for reasons he explained to the employer, that he would rather bury his money in a hole, and of course did not use it to make more money.

Then, when the man returned, he checked in on them, and they reported what they had done with their money. It is not that the first two workers were better than the other one, it is just that they used their resources to their advantage, they increased what they had been given. The third one did not waste his money; he just did not do anything with it.

It does appear, however that there was an expectation from the employer that these workers would take responsibility for what they were given. He even showed excitement for the achievements for the first two workers, and as a reward he promised them that they will be given even more responsibilities. They will be put in charge of many things, he says. Now, these first two individuals did not receive the same amount of money, and that does not seem to be the issue, but rather what they were able to do with what they were given. We do not know whether they knew how much the other one was getting, and maybe there was some ill feeling about it? Either way, it was not little money, but large sums of money.

They were also given time to do business and trade as much as they could, to show something with the money they received. The employer was gone for a long time, the parable says, so they had all the time to invest their money.

III. We are Disciples of the Kingdom of Heaven

Now, we know that all these parables Jesus told, have a moral to the story. In verse 14, He says, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who goes on a journey and left these amounts of money with his workers. Jesus obviously knew quite a lot about trading practices of the day, because what is being described in this parable is about how things were done, and the expectations of the inner circles about money making.

The Kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, is like this story. As disciples and followers of Me, you all receive what is given to you through the gift of the Spirit, and you are all different in your abilities, but you have the resources coming from God to you, with the hope that you will take responsibility for what you received, while being on this earth. He is essentially letting them know through this symbolic language that He will be going away, and will return at the end of time, and will see what has been done with the gifts that have been given to all His followers, how they have spent their time and resources with what they received. Where are the fruits of their labor?

The first two workers we see are very enthusiastic to show their gains to their employer. They must have looked at the money, and thought, we cannot let this money just sit around. They will not gain much in our purses. Let us go and trade. Similarly, discipleship does not come with little resources, no, money dries up, but the gifts given to you, my disciples do not dry up. You have it all the time with you, in different amounts and shapes, but you also have the Giver of

those gifts with you to sustain, bless and guide you as you live your lives till the end of time. If upon my return, someone cannot show me the fruits of your labor, then I will place judgment on you then. But please remember, there is enough time on your side to be good and effective disciples. I need you in this world to be that for Me. Then I want you to be ready when I come again at the end of time. I want to see how you have been and how you have acted. I want to see the love for God and one another, because you have the love of God inside of you. I want to see your enthusiasm for how you have used your gifts, and I will bless you manifold.

IV. Conclusion

Dear members and friends of Barre Congregational Church. This is a message for you and for me. As children of God, and members of this church, we have been called to be God's children and disciples; we have been given different gifts and resources according to our abilities by God through Christ, with the Holy Spirit living inside of us. We must discern always what those gifts are that are given to us personally. They are not the same from one to the other person. We are all different, but we are all children of God, and we must live accordingly while we are living during this time on earth before He comes again. We are going through a difficult time during this pandemic, but as a church, and individuals, we must carry on in our different capacities to serve God and our people. We are called to love God and one another. That is the life of children of the Kingdom of heaven. We are shown a third person who made excuses for why he did not use his money productively, and he gets scolded harshly. Let us not be like this third worker, burying our heads in the sand, giving up, because we do not do God's work through our own power, but through the power of God with and in us. I appeal to all of us to hold on, to stay together, and as we enter this Thanksgiving period and Advent during a time like this, not to give up, but to prayerfully find ways to get through this difficult time, because we have our Living Hope within us.

May God help and bless us all as Disciples of Christ, called by God.

Amen