

33rd Sunday OT
Matthew 25:14-30

Today's gospel from Matthew is another *End of Times* parable, about Christian life between the Resurrection of Jesus and his return. Of course, we are still waiting for the End of Times now, but at the time of Matthew, they really did expect him soon and very soon.

It tells of a man going abroad who gave various numbers of talents to his servants. *Talent has not yet acquired its meaning of **personal abilities***, but refers to the *sum of money a laborer earns in fifteen years*. The three servants were given different sums according to ability. Two traded with them and made as much again. While the third hid his and made nothing. If the parable stopped here, we could admire the care shown for property. No irresponsible behavior here, like that of the servant we heard of before.

The story continues with a shock for the reader. The man who was so prudent in keeping his talent safe, is condemned, as wicked and lazy. Is he not being treated unfairly like the laborers in the vineyard who worked all day in the heat. His excuse shows that ***it was he*** who was unfair to his master. He claimed his master to be a hard man, reaping where he had not sown.

Another surprise is that how could a hard man, the master, have given out such enormous sums of money ***at such a risk?*** Like the laborers in the vineyard and the steward later on, here is another character who *thought he knew* what God is like and how God *ought to act*.

This trading with the talents *has nothing to do with commerce*. This is not in Matthew's interest or style. It is really *to take seriously* the ethical and religious message of the Gospel, *to do the will* of the Father, *to bear fruit* in the life of the kingdom, and *to seek* the greater righteousness.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, our guest writer in today's *Give Us This Day*, bridges the point of talents as money versus talents as personal abilities, when she pushes the reader to consider knowledge of any kind as useful and absolutely necessary, especially spiritual, which she considers the crown of all knowledge. She is assuming, of course, that TALENTS mean ABILITIES or KNOWLEDGE of and about something.

I would like to consider her interpretation of TALENTS in today's gospel as SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE, since she considers this the crown of all knowledge, and

because she ties it together with the sense that *grace works on nature*. She rightly believes that there is nothing secular in the world, since it was created by God. As the book of Genesis reminds us, “And God saw that creation was good,” and after creating humans and living beings, “God saw that it was VERY GOOD!”

And so Catherine encourages us to develop to the fullness our capacities and talents. She says that it is worth everything to enlarge our ***natural horizons*** so as to allow the ***supernatural ones*** to have room to grow and expand. So that, she says, Christ may have room, not only to grow to his full stature in you and me, but to have a place within you to roam as he may wish, a place for him to breathe and stretch.

What might that look like? I will give you a personal example from my own experience. My sister introduced me to ***birdwatching*** when for my birthday, thirty years or more ago, she gave me an excellent pair of binoculars and immediately took me out birdwatching. It was time wonderfully spent and I grew to love and enjoy this art or skill or knowledge, *talent*. It expanded my natural horizon while at the same time the discipline prepared me for ***contemplative prayer***! Birdwatching forced me to be still and to go out of my own world of backyard birdwatching at feeders and birdbaths and into their natural world of this wonderful feathered creature of God. The silence trained me to be still and just watch, just as contemplative prayer trains us to be still and just be with the Lord, not saying a word. The two go together quite well. If you want to read more go to my blog.

One day on a retreat, I spied a monk feeding little chickadees out of his hand. He just stood there still and they came fed on the seeds that he had in his hand. He eventually saw me and motioned me to come over. I came and stood next to him and he put some of his seed in my hand. Eventually the little birds came and landed in my hands to feed on the seed there. Except their little feet tickled my hand and I laughed out loud...scared then away.

Let me end here since we as a community will bless our mural today, created and executed mostly in silence through the talents of our youth to celebrate our greatest love...our children laughing and playing among God’s creation.