

St. Thomas's Episcopal Church  
Newark, DE  
Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost -- November 16, 2014/Year A  
Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18; Psalm 90:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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*May my words reveal the greater glory of God. AMEN*

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The parables in the latter part of Matthew are not always comforting to our souls. These stories of last things ... the radical changes in what we know and how we know ... those who are ready get the gold ... those who are not so ready, not so much.

Today's Gospel may ring in a happier tone for those whose life is lived out in the financial realms. Perhaps we could hear this as the **Parable for the Investment Advisors ... or Hedge Fund Managers ... or IRS Auditors ... or Economic Prognosticators ...or Certified Accountants ... or even Church Treasurers**. Yet as is so often the case with these pesky parables, they tend to act more like a **prism** than clear glass. Just turn a little bit in another direction, and we see a much different view. In this story, the turn to a different view reveals **God-onomics!**

What in the world is **God-onomics** you may ask? **God-onomics** is most clearly understood when lived, and the living is **the more we give, the more we get TO GIVE MORE! God-onomics** show us what an **eternal investment portfolio** truly looks like. By following this faith investment strategy, the return is **priceless!**

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The Parable of the Talents, as this story has come to be known, gives another look of how Jesus draws upon common everyday events that invite us to see what living life as a kingdom builder for God really means, and how it really works. Rather than those *who teach with authority* in Jesus' day, TELLING people what to do, how to do it, and what to believe, Jesus says, **"Let me tell you a story ... how do you see yourself in this story ... think about trying to live a little differently from now on."**

In this parable, the owner leaves on an extended journey. He gives three workers a generous amount of income for the care of their needs and, more importantly, the care of the owner's property and prosperity as the owner gives "... *to each according to his ability.*" After he leaves, each servant does what they feel called to do with their talents for their care and that of the owner. If you have heard the phrase **Use it or lose it**, you know where it begins.

Typically servants of the first century would receive a denarius for a day's work, which roughly translates to about \$400 a year. A **talent** was the largest measure of weight and monetary value in the Roman Empire. It is estimated that a talent was worth about **six thousand times that of a denarius!** Even without whipping out our mobile device calculators, we know each

servant could have a pretty good life with what they received. But that is not the end of the story as we turn the prism just a tad once again.

The owner returns expecting a return on his investment, which he receives from the five talent and two talent servants. The one talent servant has done NOTHING with his talent beyond burying it in the ground. Now this one talent goes to the highest return-on-investment servant as well. Out the door the one-talent wonder goes to the favorite "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*" place that Matthew uses suggesting we might pay attention to this teaching.

This story has nothing to do with God's blessings being proportionate to human worth. We ALL are **five talent creations**. The point is **how we use and do not lose** the talents we do possess for the greater glory of God in our kingdom building work. The parable invites us to look deeply and prayerfully at those talents we bring to life and faith, and audit how we are using the principles of **God-onomics** in our life, or not. Jesus does not expect to hear us declare, "**Look Jesus, everything is the same as it was when you left!**"

**Growth requires change. Change involves risk. Risk requires trust.** This parable calls us to be **multipliers of the Gospel** that will change people's lives! **Multiplier** in our giving our all for God ... **Multiplier** in witnessing the life saving truth ... **Multiplier** in serving the needs of our world ... **Multiplier** in our trusting that God is ALWAYS working through us more than we can ask or imagine. The truth as I hear it is that we are called as disciples of the Risen Jesus to **manifest** the power and presence of God in our world that **grows exponentially through our faithful living.**

There are a few characteristics I have known in my life and ministry that best describes how talented people live the call of God in Jesus Christ each and every day. They **use it and do not lose it** because they seek to live ...

- **Faithfully** in their trust of the gifts of God poured upon them, trusting God will help to multiply in sharing their talents with all they do and all they have, always!
- **Extravagantly** living and believing that **the more we give, the more we get TO GIVE MORE** in the abundant life and spirit of our living and loving God. I have NEVER met a person who did not have any talents to share in this life for God's glory. I have met MANY who have a plethora of talents NEVER shared.
- **Passionately** they witness the love of God like a star-struck lover, captured by **wholly and holy possession** to reach out in Christ's passion and compassion for our world. On All Saints Day, I shared the story of the Reverend Bonnie Perry whose life calling as priest in God's church was "**to bear witness to the love of God I have known, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that I can change people's lives.**"

- **Prayerfully** we replenish our talents of wisdom, strength, and witness by regular time of prayer and contemplative discernment. Some years ago I led a retreat day on contemplative living called **Wasting Time with God**. I have come to believe in seeking to live out my talents that it may be called **INVESTING Time with God** at a future session.

These characteristics are by no means all encompassing. They are just the experience of people I have been blessed to know who live their best following the **God-onomics principles -- the more we give, the more we get TO GIVE MORE** in the abundant life and spirit of our living and loving God.

This is what an **eternal investment portfolio** truly looks like. By following this faith investment strategy, the results are truly **priceless!**

*AMEN*