

“Talents” in English are things like being able to juggle or balance a spoon on your nose. Maybe you are a talented musician or an actor. But Talents are largely the sort of thing you demonstrate at a “Talent Night” entertainment.

We get the word from this parable, but a Talent in Jesus’ time was a weighted piece of metal, like a coin, that was worth a quarter of a farm laborer’s annual wage. About \$10,000 of our money.

One person got \$50,000, another \$20,000 and another \$10,000.
This must have been breathtaking! If Bishop Patrick summoned me to his office and said, “I’m going to Hong Kong for a bit, weeks or months maybe. Here, David, I’m giving you \$20,000 of unused grant funds I happen to have. I’ll call you when I get back.” I think I would be very anxious.

What should I do with it?

Let’s see. As the priest at Grace Church, what should I do with \$20,000? What would we do?

David invites suggestions from the congregation.....

We could bank it in a special account and get maybe 4% income a year. Say \$150 in a month. Not bad.

We could put it into a massive advertising campaign for Grace Church, and see if the congregation doubles.

We could give it all to the poor in the neighbourhood, or run a weekly free-food give-away and hot meals every Saturday night.

We could hire a team of trained evangelists to knock on every door in the area and have them tell the good news of Jesus to everyone in South Scarborough and invite them all to the church.

We could sponsor a Christian family seeking refuge from Syria to come to Canada and help them find safety and freedom of faith.

There are a lot you could do with \$20,000.

But when Bp. Patrick comes back which one will have been the *right thing* to have done?

I think the answer is, “We don’t know.”

That is the trouble with God. God rarely tells you, just as the master didn’t give the slaves any direction. But we are to do the *Will of God* with what we have been given.

I think this story is about doing the will of God with what you have been given. So, what are your talents? What are the things of great worth that have been entrusted to you?

David invites suggestions from the congregation.....

I am quite smart. I say this humbly, but honestly. I am not brilliant, but quite smart and my brain is my best asset. What do I do with my intelligence? I think I can say with truth that most of my thinking energy goes in to Grace Church. So I would be happy to report the use of that Talent to God. But, I am a priest, and I am employed to do that, so it is not such a shocking commitment really!

I have three children. I think they are actually the Most Valuable Talents entrusted to me by God. I have to say that I like them all. They are thoughtful, responsible, kind and aware. They are good young adults. Two of them are scientific rationalist atheists. The third is deeply spiritual, but none

of them are Christians. I, however, love them in the honesty they have about their convictions. Will the Master be pleased with that? Much of the Bible suggests No. But I am pleased that they are people who care passionately about truth, justice and love. I hope that will be counted for some gain.

Being Lucy's husband is the Third Talent I have been given. We have been married 35 years and we love each other and delight in each other's company. I feel that has been a good return on divine investment!

But the largest of the entrusted gifts I have from God is the faith I have in his love, which was given to me through Jesus, the man in the Gospels. Again, being a priest makes it professionally necessary to share that faith and help it grow in others. But I wonder what I would say if He asked, "And what about the faith that is secret within you? In the secret place where you pray to me in secret?" Then I think I would say that my faith grew large and wide and broad, like a lake. But then over the years it has changed. Now it is not so wide, so broad, so large. It is now more like a well. It is deep, but has less width of certainties, theologies and words. Much more quiet depth and coolness.

I do not know what God will say to me about all that, just as none of the slaves knew what the Master would have said. The difference between the two who were rewarded and the one who really got it bad was that the first two took chances. They stepped out and did something with the money they got. Their investments and financial gambles could have gone horribly wrong. (Who knew Research in Motion (RIM) would go bad? Who ever saw Eatons as a bad bet? Who doesn't believe that house prices will rise forever?) What if one had used the money to buy all the slaves their freedom and now the Master had employees? We don't know. What we do know is that God gives us both gifts and the freedom to use them.

The guidelines for use are what we are challenged in this parable to discern.

Here are my guidelines...

Is what I am about to do true to who I am, the peculiar *me* that God made only one of?
Is what I am about to do aligned with the kind of thing I think *Jesus* would do in my situation?
Is what I am about to do something I can *be proud of*, and have no need to hide from others?
Is what I am about to do something that will *not* be all about ME?
Is what I am about to do going to bring *honour* to the God I serve?
Is what I am about to do going to be a *blessing* to others?

The parables of Jesus are usually making only one point.

I am not interested in either the financial rewards or the dreadful punitive parts of this parable, which, frankly, I wish were not included. We should, as followers of Jesus, be motivated by his love, not by carrots or sticks.

The Central Point is that we can bring gladness to God's heart by engaging with the opportunities God puts in front of us. Here today, that speaks both to you as an individual, and to us all as a congregation, the Body of Christ.

The parable points us forwards and asks, "What will you do for God next?"