

Matthew 25.14 – 30

### **Gifts and Talents with which to serve**

When the concept of church's observing a Stewardship Sunday was a regular annual part of its life, there was the focus on acknowledging people's talents. This was in the context of the giving of people's time, talents, and money for the work of the church. The 'keynote' gospel passage for this was the Gospel story of the **parable of the talents**. Here three persons are given talents (Jewish coinage) and told to use them. Two do so to positive advantage, and one neglects to do so. The lesson is that God expects people to faithfully use that of which they have been entrusted. In the modern context this was taken to refer to people's talents (or abilities) being used in the church, (even though there is a significant difference between talents as in the parable, and of today).

More recent insight has however focussed on different Scripture passages in the realisation of people's faithfully serving God in their Christian commitment. This has come from that described in the early church **about spiritual gifts and ministries**. As St Paul writes on this theme, it is evident he is describing that which was occurring, that indeed the Spirit gave these to the believers for the functioning of the church and for the work of Christian service (Ephesians 4:11 – 13). To the Corinthians he wrote of the 'varieties of gifts, services and activities' and that these were given by the Spirit 'to each one, as he chooses.' Some are specifically mentioned, including encouragement, teaching, compassion, generosity, hospitality, administering, evangelism and service. Others are not mentioned but are valuable in the church today, including music, prayer and craftsmanship (creativity).

There's a further dimension though that we can glean from the parable of the talents, and link this with the spiritual gifts. This is the fact that in some of the gifts above-mentioned, the use of **people's abilities** through training can further build on what they can offer in and beyond the church. Such would include trained musicians, nurses, and in such ministries as teaching and preaching.

Thus it is in the *use* of 'gifts and talents' that the parable does have relevance. The point is strongly made in Scripture that the spiritual gifts and ministries are *God-given*. Thus we are indeed entrusted with that which God has given us, to use faithfully in our work of Christian service. They are also, like the talents, of value, and for the well-being of others. One needs then ask the questions, 'What is my gift (or gifts)? And are they being put to good use in the building up of the church in the work of Christian service in some way?

It is through God's people, each and every believer that the Spirit seeks to work in these days, in the gifts and talents through which we serve. Indeed the phrase from the prayer of St Theresa is a further affirmation of this truth, that 'Christ has no body on earth but ours....'