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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
24th Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 28/Year A
November 19, 2017
Text: Matthew 25: 14-30

There is a song that I learned back in the day; a song that was occasionally sung on Sundays. Its music and lyrics are simple:

*He has done great things for me
Great things! Great things!
He has done great things for me!*

*He has made a way for me
Made a way! Made a way!
He has made a way for me!*

There were other verses that were often improvised but the ending verses always the same; pointing from what God has done in a personal way toward what we can do with and for others:

*I'm gonna be a witness for Him!
Witness! Witness!
I'm gonna be a witness for Him!*

*I'm gonna let my little light shine!
Light shine! Light shine!
I'm gonna let my little light shine!*

We know today's gospel story well.

A wealthy man planned to go away but before he did, he entrusted some of his property to three of his most trusted slaves. Now in those days a "talent" referred to a large sum of money, a ginormous amount of money! The value of a single talent was worth roughly 15-20 years' worth of wages. This was not chump change. So the man parceled out his talents according to each one's ability. One servant received five talents, another two, and to the last, one. The wealthy man then went on his journey.

The first two slaves made good on their master's trust. They took risks, investing the money they each had been given. Both did extremely well by doubling their master's money. When the wealthy man returned from his travels he was extremely pleased with them. The master commended them for being good and faithful and entrusted them with more authority. "*Well done, good and faithful slave...enter into the joy of your master!*" he said to both of them. But the third slave did not fare as well. The third slave had played it safe. He had not gone out and invested the talent he had been given. He had, instead, dug a hole and buried his master's money.

Now, we might criticize what the third slave had done but put yourselves in his place. He was cautious with the one talent he was given. He didn't want to lose it. There was no way to replace it so he became too afraid to take a risk. What would happen to him or his family if he came up empty handed upon the man's return? So he decided to keep his one talent safe and sound. No worries, right? But this was not what the master expected. He expected the slave to do something with his money. So he became furious and instructed that the third slave be punished: banished into the outer darkness.

We can't help but wonder how different this story would be if all three had been as cautious as the third slave or if the first two slaves had failed and lost their talents. But the parable that Jesus told was not really about money but about taking risks, being responsible, trusting that God has and will supply all our needs and that God will give us enough. It's about living our lives to the fullest and recognizing God's abundant love, and sharing the myriad gifts we each are given to be used for the glory of God. It's about following in the footsteps of Jesus. Else we wind up like that third person-too afraid to live, to love, to care, to trust, to hope, to dream, to make mistakes.

Toward the end of Jesus' parable he added: "*For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*"

What might that mean for us and for St. Barnabas on this In-gathering Sunday? I think message is pretty much the same. God entrusts this parish, this gathering of believers, with an abundance of blessings and gifts. Blessings and gifts (even amidst deficits) meant to be shared among us and not hidden or hoarded within these walls, *buried*, and also shared with the people of God here in the heart of Florissant and beyond. It means trusting that as we are giving that God will give back more than we can ever ask or imagine for his glory. It means all of us being

open to taking risks and stepping out in faith, daring, perhaps, to step outside our comfort zone and outside the box from time to time so that we can be about the work of the Gospel; unafraid to live, to love, to care, to serve, to trust, to hope, to vision, and yeah, to make mistakes.

God has given us great things. We need to *trust* that we can do great things to the glory of God with the little or much that we have. We are the beacon on the hill in this little corner of the world. And we can continue to be so or not. It really is up to us.

The master in today's story was beyond generous. He took risks with those whom he trusted. The first two slaves also took risks. And each of them was able to do something with what they had been entrusted with. Thereby they were able to enjoy the bounty and blessings and invitations that came their way. So it is with us and our God for we serve a God who is beyond generous, who trusts that we will share our blessings and respond to his invitation to live lives filled with grace, ready to enter into joy upon the master's return, Christ's return. To hear him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Well done. Come enter into my joy!'

*(Yes) God has done great things for me (for us)
Great things! Great things!
God has done great things for (you and) me!*

Our response is to *be a witness for him and to let our little lights shine!*

Amen!