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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
October 5, 2014  
17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: 1 Kings 17:17-24 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24  
Hymns: 24; 243; 496; 644 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 25:14-30

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

20 “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ 21 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ 23 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

24 “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was

afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

26 “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

29 ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Trusting someone with something important

When our children were young my wife and I had a real serious discussion about who should raise our children if something would happen to us. Who would we trust with something that important to us? There aren’t many things that we would ever think about more important than that. Thankfully it never can to be a necessity for that couple we selected to care for our children. They were pretty blown away by the idea that we would chose them when I talked to them. They wondered why we would ask them. They wondered if we were serious. They wondered if they were really worthy of such a trust, a sacred trust, for it was our greatest consideration that our children would be raised in a true spiritual home. Then how should we respond to being -

**THEME: Stewards of a Sacred Trust from the Lord?**

Our text is a parable Jesus taught close to the end of His ministry, a parable that was intended to prepare the disciples for that which was to come. It reminds us of how and why it came about that –

## **I. The Lord Jesus Trusts Us to Serve Him during His Absence.**

**Matthew 25:14** For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

Jesus is that man in the parable who would be traveling to a far country. The time was rapidly approaching when the climax of His ministry and service on earth would be coming. Jesus would allow Himself to be taken by His enemies, and suffer many things at their hands, and be crucified. He would endure all this because of the greatness of His love for us. He would endure all this to secure the Kingdom of heaven. He suffered death in our place that we might be freed from the curse of the law. He was buried, because the grave lies before us all, and Jesus would rise triumphant from the grave so that we might know the reality of the resurrection and surety of everlasting life. Then He went away to that distant land; He ascended to heaven to the right hand of the Father. This was not a matter of desertion, but rather of completion of His mission. At God's right hand He not only makes intercession for us before the throne of God, but He also rules over all things for the good of His Church and establishes His spiritual presence with us all, for He alone is the One who fills all things. But with His visible presence removed from the earth Jesus called His servants to Him and delivered His goods to them.

That of course began with the disciples who were blessed with gifts by the Lord as they went about fulfilling the mission He had given them. However it didn't stop with the disciples. Jesus' visible presence is still in that far country, and the stewardship of gifts and ministry has been passed down to the believers of successive generations, all the way down to our day. Now Jesus trusts us to serve Him with the proper administration of His goods during our earthly lives.

**Jesus trusts us.** We often talk about how we are supposed to trust Jesus. We talk about His faithfulness and His power and His grace as reasons for us to trust Him. He speaks and we can be assured that His Word is true. He promises and we know it shall be done. And yet we struggle with trust issues with the Lord! How can it be

that He trusts us? We sure don't have any kind of track record that should cause the Lord to trust us. We sin every day. We promise and then fail to follow through. What's worse, we don't let it bother us that much. And yet the Lord has entrusted us with His goods! He trusts us because of what He has done for us, because of what He has made us. We are new creatures. We are His children. He has given us a variety of gifts and abilities and material goods that we like to think of as our own, but we should know better than that. They are the Lord's, and He has entrusted them to us along with that wondrous treasure of the gospel and the gracious gift of our faith in Him as Redeemer and Lord.

In this parable there are differences of gifts, differences in the amount of the goods entrusted to the various servants. It is still that way with us also. Not only do we have a variety of gifts, but even though we are all God's children God in His wisdom has endowed us with various levels of gifts and abilities and blessings, and so also responsibilities.

## **II. We Are to be Faithful Stewards of His Gifts.**

**Matthew 25:16-18** Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

Now Jesus is getting to the point of the parable. **In His grace and wisdom He has trusted us. Are we going to prove ourselves worthy of that trust?** After all He has invested in us to make us His own, (He bought us with His holy precious blood!) doesn't He have a right, shouldn't He expect us to be trustworthy? Shouldn't we be eager to have an opportunity to serve Him with His own goods?

In the parable Jesus set forth examples of those who were faithful and worked with the goods given them and received an equitable return on the Lord's goods. There was also the one to whom not so much was entrusted, and so from whom not so much was expected, the one who didn't bother making good use of the lord's goods. He simply hid his lord's goods in hole.

Couple of things need to be thought about. The Lord's trust was extended to this man just as it was to the others. And we should be able to identify with this man. We are all quick to see others in a better position to serve the Lord; we see others as having greater gifts than we have. The Lord has blessed us all. Even if we see ourselves as being given lesser gifts we still must acknowledge that the Lord has trusted us with His goods. The Lord has every right to expect us to be good stewards of the goods He has given us, with the faith, with the Word, with the abilities we do have, even if we do see ours as being less or having less than others. That is simply no excuse for us to unfaithful, lazy, or self-centered in life.

It is such an honor, such a privilege to serve the Lord Jesus in this life that it shouldn't matter to us that others might be blessed with greater gifts. We have the opportunity to serve the Lord and glorify His name before the world. By all means don't bury what the Lord has presented to you as a sacred trust! Serve the Lord with gladness!

And, yes --

### **III. There will be an Accounting of Our Stewardship.**

The Lord shall return. He will come in glory with all His holy angels with Him. We automatically think of that as Judgment Day when the unbelievers shall be separated from the believers. This gives us a little different view of that day. There will be an opportunity for us to give an account of our service to the Lord, and how we lived up to His trust. The parable presents the picture of the one who was blessed most and entrusted with the greatest responsibility as being happy to report to his master that he had gained five more talents. He had doubled the lord's goods entrusted to his care. The same may be said of the servant who was given two talents. He was also happy to report that he had doubled his lord's goods entrusted to his care. Both of these individuals received commendation from their master. **“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord”** (v.23).

Finally the last servant reported, and just the tone of the response to his lord and how he regards his lord as being harsh and greedy and selfish reveals the nature of this man's heart. His actions were consistent with his words. He didn't want his lord to secure any gain from him. His own words condemned him. The goods entrusted to him were taken away and given to another who demonstrated that the lord's trust was not misplaced. The unfaithful servant was condemned as wicked. He was cast away from the presence of the lord of the land. He was cast away to where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Surely this should impact us with the seriousness of this trust given to us by our Lord. We should not take it lightly or dismissively that the Lord has entrusted us with HIS goods. On the contrary we should see this as a **sacred** trust. We should see this as a high **honor** and great responsibility. And it doesn't matter if the Lord has given much into our care or little. Even in the matter of faith, if we see our faith as being small compared to others, the fact remains that the Lord has trusted us. That Lord has trusted **YOU** to do something for **Him!** Faith's response is to eagerly do all that we can for the Lord with whatever He has given us. If it is not as much as what another is doing that's not what matters. What matters is that we be found faithful. Let's just do what we can with what the Lord has given us. Let us glorify the Lord with sanctified Christian lives, avoiding what is evil, promoting what is good. Let's exercise our faith, and put to use all the material gifts and physical and mental abilities which the Lord has given us. As we do this service to the Lord we will grow in our anticipation of the day when the master shall return, and we will be able to report the modest gain we have secured to the praise and glory of His name. Whatever your gift may be, use it to praise Him who redeemed you from sin and death, and has secured a place for you in His kingdom. Look forward to that day when by His grace we shall hear: "**Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**"

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.