



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, November 15, 2020

Risky Business!

by Garland F. Pierce

Matthew 25:14-30

25:14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them;

25:15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

25:16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents.

25:17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.

25:18 But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

25:19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

25:20 Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'

25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

25:22 And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.'

25:23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

25:24 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you

were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;

25:25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

25:26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?'

25:27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

25:28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

25:29 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.

25:30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

This parable is yet another harsh sounding teaching to modern ears. One can get the overall message of the story mixed up in these days of prosperity gospel teaching and when some Christians choose to side with the powerful even when the powerful prove to have no real concern for the powerless or to have even outright disregard for those who are not like them. Those who are prone to give authority to this kind of behavior and are willing to keep silence just to get ahead might read words like, "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." Words like worthless, weeping, and gnashing of teeth may catch our attention before words like entrusted, gave, according to ability.

Christian faith is risky business. It is not for the faint of heart, the cowardice, or the lazy. The master entrusted. The master took a risk and gave his property to his slaves. The master risked putting faith in his servants. He based his trust and his giving on the ability of each servant. He didn't assume that they were all the same or that they all had the same gifts and abilities; but, he gave them that of which he thought they could be good stewards. Now it was up to them to invest, multiply—take the risk that what they now possessed could grow and develop. Or they could hid it. Two chose to risk; one chose to hid.

This parable teaches the church and all of the faithful how to wait and how to work until the Master comes. We do not fully understand why; but, the Master chooses to trust us and entrusts us with resources and gifts. Burying them requires the least effort and ultimately does not guarantee safety and security. Growing and developing those resources and gifts is a far more faithful response. Risk is unavoidable. After all, faith is the substance of things hoped for. We risk loving and being rejected or hurt. We risk doing the work to use and develop our gifts and at times failing. We risk speaking truth to power and being persecuted and ostracized. We risk choosing the way of the Master and being ridiculed for being naïve, impractical, or even fanatical. While we wait, we work. While we wait, we believe. While we wait, we risk. And when the waiting is over and the risk-taking comes to an end, may we hear, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—What gift are you using for kingdom-building? What gift from the Master have you hid and buried?

PRAY:

Lord God - we give you thanks for all your gifts to us – for daily food - for health - for each breath we take - for freedom to choose - and for the gifts of your word, your power, and your love. Our hearts are truly overwhelmed, O God, when we consider all that you are and how you have entrusted so much to us. May we be worthy of that trust - may we be a people who are unafraid to live as fully and as richly as you want us to live.

Help us O God, as followers of Jesus, to multiply all that you have given us, to risk spreading your word and perhaps see it misunderstood, to gamble by loving those whom others think worthy only of hate, to take chances by doing good to those who have not done good to us. Help us be faith filled and to desire to increase your glory and your goodness in this world. Make us ones who share in both word and deed that which you have given to us.

We pray, O God, for the church - that it may encourage all its members to discover, develop, and use all their gifts, those of nature and those of grace.

We pray for those who are poor in body or in spirit... for those who are oppressed and heavy laden... for those who are sick or in despair... Minister, O, God, by your Spirit, and by us, to all those for whom we have prayed - and help us walk faithfully in the path of our Lord Jesus Christ – in whose name we pray, AMEN.

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From <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/10/pastoral-prayer-matthew-25-14-30.html>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, examine why you have hid your gift and make a plan to bring it to light, develop it, and use it for the glory of God. What is a way to use your gift at a greater level? Risk a little time and effort to help others by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

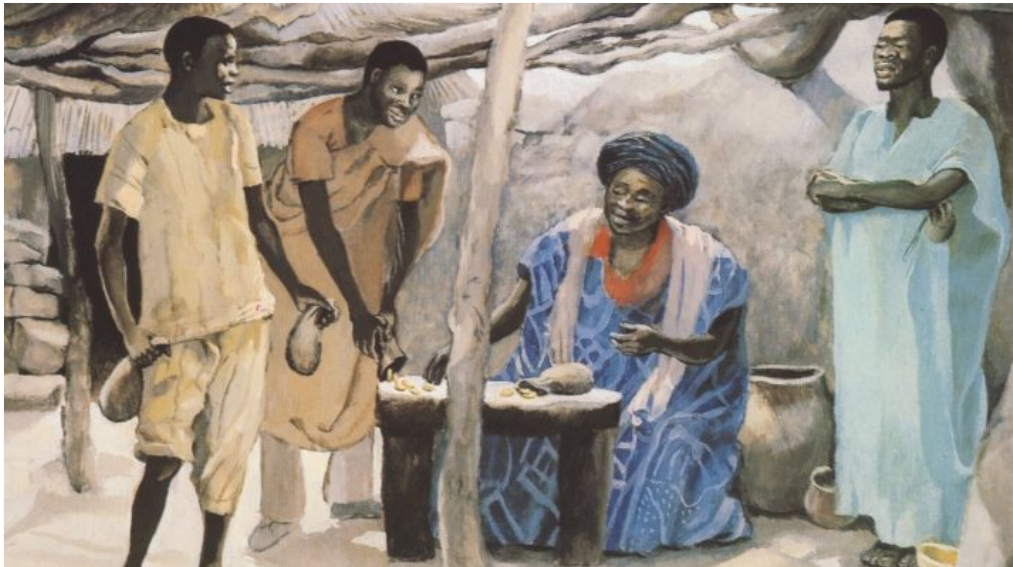
Take My Life, and Let It Be
AMEC Hymnal, #292

1. Take my life, and let it be
Con-se-crat-ed, Lord, to Thee.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the im-pulse of Thy love,
At the im-pulse of Thy love.

2. Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beau-ti-ful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing
Al-ways, on-ly for my King,
Al-ways, on-ly for my King.
3. Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with mes-sag-es for Thee.
Take my sil-ver and my gold;
Not a mite would I with-hold,
Not a mite would I with-hold.
4. Take my love; my God, I pour
At Thy feet its trea-sure-store.
Take my-self, and I will be
Ev-er, on-ly, all for Thee,
Ev-er on-ly, All for Thee. A-men.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.