Last Sunday, we were reading the parable about the 10 bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to arrive for the wedding banquet celebration. The 5 “wise” ones came prepared with extra oil for their lamps as they waited, but the other 5 “foolish” ones didn’t. When the bridegroom arrived unexpectedly late, they had no choice but to go out and buy more oil for their lamps. But by the time they came back it was already too late…the bridegroom had come and the door was shut and they were left out in the dark.

This week Jesus followed up with yet another parable about our state of preparedness upon the Jesus’s imminent return and how shall we prepare ourselves for that day when it does come. What are we supposed to be doing during this “in-between” time? We cannot just sit and stare at each other and wait.

The parable of the talents today reminded us of how we are to be good stewards of our gifts and our resources - not just in terms of material goods but a stewardship of our heart as well as the time that we are allotted to in life.

In our story today, the master put out a pretty significant amount of money and divided up a portion of his wealth among his servants, each according to their abilities. Then he told them that he would go on a journey but will be back after his trip to settle the account with them. To one, he was given 5 talents, the other 2 and another just 1. Now we must understand the magnitude of what a talent is in order to understand more fully of this parable.

Contrary to the meaning of what a “talent” is in our English vocabulary, it really has nothing to do with whether someone has certain skills or abilities. The English word “talent” as we know it was derived out of the Greek term to describe one’s skill or ability to perform certain task. However, a “talent” was a monetary unit for materials.

Just to give you a perspective of what a talent is. Back in those days, a “talent” was worth equivalent to about 200 lbs. of gold. Well, with the gold price of around $1,200 an ounce these days, you can do the math…that’s A LOT of money we’re talking about. We’re talking about $100,000 for the one receiving the 5 talents of money, and even the one who received only 1 talent, that’s still $20,000. So that’s a pretty significant amount of money that the master is leaving behind to each of his servants. Also during Jesus’s day, one talent was worth approximately 15 years of earning by a day laborer.

Without giving his servants specific instruction as to what he would like them to do with the money, the master simply left it up to his trusted servants. The master demonstrated the level of trust that he has upon his servants. He was not concern that they would run away with the money. The master was in total control with what each servant was given with nothing more and nothing less than what the servants couldn’t handle. The main issue, I think, of this parable was NOT about how much each of the servants were given, or about God’s seeming “favoritism” of one servant over another, but rather it’s about how we optimize our resources that we have been entrusted with. Some are given more, and some are given less. But we were all given something based on our abilities to handle them. **It’s about keeping ourselves resourceful and being of good stewardship during the time when our master is away.**

Both the servants who were entrusted with the 10 talents and 2 talents came back doubling the amount that they were given. Apparently they must’ve taken a course in Financial Risk Management 101. But what about the 3rd servant, can we really blame him for doing what he did? He was just simply playing it safe. Perhaps he was shocked to be handed this large sum of money in his hands and he didn’t know what to do with it. He was afraid that thieves would break into the house in the middle of the night and steal it from him. So he went out and dug a hole in the ground and hid it there until the master returns.

The 3rd servant chose to do nothing with what he was entrusted with from the master. He was afraid that he might lose it upon the master’s return. Perhaps the real issue wasn’t that he was given the least amount compared to others. The real issue was that he lacked **vision** and that he was afraid to take risks.

Sometimes I also wonder, what if the first two servants came back and told their master that they had invested his money but lost them all, but the 3rd one was able to at least keep the principle amount. Would the master have punish them for taking the risks but losing it all? Would the 3rd servant be awarded for playing it safe for doing “nothing” at all?

Obviously this was a parable…but there’s always a lesson that we can learn. Which of these servants do we see ourselves fitting in this parable? Are we willing to take risks with what God has entrusted us with?

We take great risks in our everyday lives! Every time we get on an airplane, get behind the wheel in a car or walk across an intersection, we are taking a huge risk with our well-being. We also take risks whenever we talk to a stranger or to share about our faith with our friends, families and neighbors. We are being asked to take great risks with a bold leap of faith and trusting that the Holy Spirit is leading us along each and every step of the way. God has already equipped each of us with the necessary tools along with many gifts and blessings to share.

As a church, God has given us visions and hopes concerning our futures. In the past couple of weeks, we’ve also been reading about the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. They too were taking a huge risk for defying the order of Pharoah. They left everything behind and went on a journey for 40 years. **The destiny sure rest in the people’s hands but as God dictated to them each step along the way.**

Likewise here at Homecrest, we are grateful for those who came before us and planted the seeds of ministry and nurturing faith. God has continued to give us vision and hope for our future. God expects us to use our God-given gifts and talents accordingly and discover their fullest potentials. Don’t bury them! Use them for the benefits of God’s people and not just for ourselves. Whether we are given much or given little, we are simply the care-takers, not the owners, of God’s abundant resources

Furthermore, this parable also present with us a sense of urgency of the imminent kingdom that is to come. We NEVER know when the master will return and settle the account with us. We know that it is going to come but we just don’t know when, therefore we must be ready and be on the stand-by. As the Apostle Paul described in our other scripture this morning, this sense of uncertainty and unknown was like a woman who was experiencing labor pain of an imminent childbirth. We simply don’t know when that day might come, but we know that that day will come. We just need to have our overnight bag ready by the door, have the doctor’s number on the speed dial, for when it happens, there’s no time to wait or to pack. There’s no time for us to wait or to remain idle as we anticipate for the Lord’s coming. We must stay awake and remain alert by keeping ourselves busy in sharing God’s love and message of grace and mercy with others.

As one of my seminary professors in Princeton commented on this text, Dr. George Parsenios wrote, “*Those who are asleep are those who are lulled into the slumber of a life entirely focused on this world and its goods, while those who are awake are those whose vigilant hope is centered on the return of Christ.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Perhaps the greatest risk of all, is not to take any risk at all….those who live in the present world miss out on God’s missional focus for our future.** Let us not fall asleep, keep awake and remain sober in judgment.[[2]](#footnote-2)

If Jesus were to walk in right now and settle account with us, how would we explain what we have done with the talents that He had invested and entrusted in us? Would we be caught searching for the oil for our lamps when the bridegroom returns or would the master be saying to us ***“Well done, good and trustworthy servant….Enter into the joy of your master!”[[3]](#footnote-3)***

**Being a faithful disciple for Christ is a high-risk venture.**  **The stakes are high but the fruits are rewarding, and it’s all worth the risks.** As God’s *children of light and of the day*, we shall ***“continue to encourage one another, build each other up, as indeed you are doing.”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

With the season of Thanksgiving and Advent upon us, may we invite God once again to challenge us, so that we may imagine and discern what God has installed for us NEXT. With the abundance of talents and resources that God has harvested among us, God has and will continue to provide just what we need, with nothing more and nothing less. We will always have enough of what we need. So there’s no need to worry or to panic of what God is already doing and will continue to do.

Let us, therefore, put on the *“breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”* Stay awake, keep yourself busy as we persevere through this journey of life, be willing to take risks as we anticipate the return of our master and our bridegroom.

In closing, I would like to share with you a famous poem written by **William F. O’Brien**. The title of the poem is ***“Better to try and fail than never to try at all”.*** May this be an encouragement for us all as we journey through the days of darkness and into the light of Christ…..

***Some say risk nothing, try only for the sure thing,  
Others say nothing gambled nothing gained,  
Go all out for your dream.  
Life can be lived either way, but for me,  
I'd rather try and fail, than never try at all, you see.***

***Some say "Don't ever fall in love,  
Play the game of life wide open,  
Burn your candle at both ends."  
But I say "No! It's better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all, my friend."***

***When many moons have gone by,  
And you are alone with your dreams of yesteryear,  
All your memories will bring you cheer.  
You'll be satisfied, succeed or fail, win or lose,  
Knowing the right path you did choose.***

1. Parsenios, George L. *Feasting on the Word* Year A, Volume 4 p.307 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *1 Thessalonians 5:6* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 25:21* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *1 Thessalonians 5:5, 8-11* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)