

Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

GLAUBST DU, HAST DU. GLAUBST DU NICHT, HAST DU NICHT.

YOU BELIEVE, YOU HAVE. YOU DON'T BELIEVE, YOU DON'T HAVE.

Matthew 25:14-30

**Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer**

14"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then 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.' 21His 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.' 22And 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.' 23His 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.’ 24Then 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; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But 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? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For 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. 30As for this worthless slave throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

DIAGNOSIS: What You Do When You Think Someone Is Mad at You

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): *The Ostrich Technique*

This parable is told two days before Jesus is crucified, and is part of Matthew’s emphasis on the end times and the return of the king for the final accounting. Matthew uses the promise of Christ’s return to encourage people who trust Christ to continue to trust Christ. It’s all about what we believe about how the king will treat us. For example, when there is something special in the house that everyone in the family has been told not to touch it so that it doesn’t break, what happens when one of the kids breaks it? Fear. The other kids say, “Wait till Mom finds out. You are in so much trouble!” Maybe the kid who broke that

special item will take it and bury it. That way he can't be blamed for breaking it. Since the kids believe that they will be in trouble, that is the kind of parent they have. "Mom, I knew you were a harsh parent, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your special thing in the ground."

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): *The Demand to Double*

Unfortunately, this kid lives believing that his mom loves that something special more than she loves him. The child was never held in such esteem that his siblings feared to tease him. In addition, all the kids believe they live under the same retribution: They get praised and rewarded and their parents are proud of them when they do something good; and they get yelled at or punished or they are a disappointment when they do something wrong or are not as good as others. Since the world runs on retribution, you best run when you've ruined the extra expensive heirloom. It feels that if you are given five talents and do not make five talents more, then you've failed.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): *We Cannot Love the One Who Judges*

There is no hiding the bag with the broken bauble forever. Mother may have said she was going on a sortie to the store, but sooner or later she will come back and will settle accounts with her kids. But Mother is not merely mad about the pieces of the precious item, she is more disturbed that her child did not trust her—he did not trust her warning and he did not trust her love. The two trusts are connected. You can't have one without the other. The slave who was given one talent did not trust his master to be loving. That slave did not think he was worth more than one talent. The slaves were not given any orders about the talents they were given. They were only entrusted (v. 14) with them. Since this parable is about the kingdom of heaven (a

continuation of Matt. 25:1, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this...."), the parable must be understood from the view point of Jesus on a cross, for that is where Matthew declares Jesus to be king, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37) and to be the Son of God, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Matt. 27:54). The cross is the kingdom of God. The parable is about how the slaves related to their master. The slave who buried the talent that was entrusted to him was afraid of his master, afraid the master was a harsh man. Since he believed his master was a harsh man, that is what he got-the harshness of being thrown into the outer darkness of death.

PROGNOSIS: What Jesus Does to Munificently Manage Mercy

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): *God's Kid on the Cross*

Jesus in his kingdom operates very differently than the way of retribution that the slave and the kid and we live in. He gives his kingdom of mercy and forgiveness (talents) to us. "For God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us" (1 Thess. 5:9-10; Second Reading, 27 Pentecost). God is not to be feared as a "harsh man," reaping where he does not sow, but God gives us Christ on a cross who acts only with mercy and generosity (see Matt. 22, where a banquet is given and the good and the bad are brought in to eat). Christ gives the kingdom to all people, entrusting his mercy and forgiveness to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution): *The Promise Proffers Peace*

Like the first two slaves who "went off at once and traded with them," we too get to trust Christ with his mercy and

forgiveness. We get to trust that man who went on the journey (Jesus' journey to the cross, resurrection, heaven). We get to trust him to be merciful and forgiving to us and to others. That frees us to use his mercy and forgiveness. Even if the two slaves with seven talents between them traded them and lost them, the master would still say, "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." For the kingdom of heaven is a gift, not something we get by how well our investments in the stock market do, or by how well we use the gifts (talents) of our mind or our work or our love. We trust that Jesus, who died for us, will always be merciful.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): *Use It Because You Can't Lose It*

In our baptism we were summoned by Christ and entrusted with his kingdom. We now get to use it. We now get to be merciful and forgiving. We now get to learn to treasure those we love more than we treasure the things we buy. We get to treasure people more than things. We get to ask for forgiveness from our kids when we act harshly instead of mercifully. We get to "encourage one another and build up each other" (1 Thess. 5:11). We get to take our talents of forgiveness and go off at once and invest that forgiveness in our neighbors (rather than purchasing retribution, anger, selfishness, prejudice, greed, and giving people what they deserve). The kingdom of heaven is to live, trusting that Jesus will say, "Enter into the joy of your master." Jesus will say it for no reason. Jesus will say it, not because of what we have done, but because he wants to say it to us, in the very same way he died for us.