

Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

We are working our way closer to the end of the Gospel of Matthew and our readings turn to messages and parables about what we are to do next, what might things look like when Jesus is gone?

Today's parable, while it is about multiplying money, is about so much more. A talent is worth A LOT of money. For a slave who usually earned 1 denarius a day, it would take 20 years to earn a talent. So our master today is a very generous person and someone who believed in the varied abilities of the slaves, giving each "according to his ability." The first two double what they were given, receiving praise from the master upon his return, '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.' In other words, the master is saying, "you have shown that I can trust you to grow what I have given you, and you have come to understand that was the purpose of the gift I gave you. Come and be a part of my celebration. The third slave, however, was scared of losing the talent, so he hid it and did nothing with it. Upon the master's return, he receives scorn and is called wicked and lazy. This is harsh, and that is on purpose. Jesus is trying to get

across to those hearing the story that they are not supposed to hide and save what God has given them, but rather they are to use what God has given them, growing it so it can be used and have a bigger impact on the world. God does not bless us with things so we can bury them and save them for a specific time. God gives us things so we can cultivate them, nurture them, and develop them into something bigger and more grand. Not doing so, is to squander what God has given us, to waste our gifts and talents.

Theme: Using our Gifts

Before: You will need copies of the Scripture, copies of the tree, and copies of the leaves (possibly in different colors), markers, crayons, scissors, glue, etc. If you think your children may have trouble cutting the leaves, you may want to cut the leaves out ahead of time, but leave the tree on a larger sheet of paper so they can use that as they background. If you are going to act out the story, you will want coins to give to the children as they enter the room.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what kinds of things they like to do.

Opening Prayer: *Gracious God, as we gather today to listen to your teachings, guide us to understand that all that we have been given has come from you. Help us to grow the gifts you have given us so that we may serve you better. Amen.*

The Story: Matthew 25:14-30

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

Note: You may want to act out the story today. You can either do this by selecting one person to be the master and three others to be the servants and they act it out as you read the passage. Alternatively, you can give each

child when they enter 1,2 or 5 coins and as the story progresses, they act according to the coins they were given.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked most about this story?
- I wonder why the master gave the servants money to take care of?
- I wonder what it felt like to be one of the servants who got praised for growing the gift?
- I wonder what it felt like to be the one who did not?
- I wonder if we have gifts we have been given that we can grow into something bigger to serve God?

What Have You Been Given

Take some time and have the children brainstorm things that they are good at doing or that they enjoy doing. (sing, play an instrument, like helping people, organize things well, like making art, like dancing, enjoy writing, love listening to people, good at encouraging others, like to pray each day, love to welcome people and make them feel at home, love to lead, like to help others who are in need)

Once each child has a list of things that they are good at or that they enjoy doing, give each child a copy of the tree image below with a bunch of different colored leaves. On each leaf, have them write one thing that God has given them or a gift that they have (like the ones they brainstormed above). On the tree or around the tree, have them write the things they can do to grow, nurture and cultivate those gifts. They can do this artistically or with words. Have them glue the leaves on in any order they choose. Such as, if they like to sing, can they join a choir? If they enjoy doing art, is there a way they can get better at that or give someone their art as a gift? If they are good at welcoming people, can they learn to usher? Etc.

If time allows, have each person share one or two things they discovered about what they have been given and how they can nurture that gift.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space and gather into the circle. Invite them to share what they created.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to remember to nurture and grow the gifts you have given us so that others might benefit from what you have given us. Be with us as we go into the world, and help us to see others gifts and support us as we use our own. Amen.*

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus said, "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 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.' 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.' 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.' 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.' 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; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 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? 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. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 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. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' “

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly

Giving Tree



