

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time “Called to Invest”

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The Gospel may strike many as very strange. However, I find that it offers a short vacation from all of the worries we have today and provides a helpful insight on how to navigate the coming days and weeks. Jesus is giving us a parable based on business practices of his time. Why, we may wonder? The answer may be in part that Jesus was no stranger to the world of business. His father was a *tekton*. A *tekton* is commonly translated as a carpenter. But the word carpenter isn't adequate. A *tekton* was more akin to a skilled worker or craftsman. The word architect comes in part from the word *tekton*. Some scholars have suggested that Joseph may have worked at Sephoris as a *tekton*, a town near Nazareth. Where ever Joseph found work, we can be almost certain that Joseph would have taken Jesus along with him at times to help him with the family trade.

Jesus was not a stranger to the world of business. Indeed, his family depended on good business as do many families today. When Jesus gathered his main disciples around him, notice who he chooses? He chose fishermen for the most part. You had to be good at running a business back then if you were a fisherman. It wasn't a matter of just catching the fish, they had to store their fish, market their fish, sell their fish, deliver the fish and pay salaries. In that area of the world, they would also have needed to be able to speak several languages. These men were a very good choice to become apostles and they would have understood the wisdom behind this parable well.

And so, Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading that God is like an investor who gives five talents to one servant, two talents to a second servant, and one talent to a third. You may be wondering, what is a talent? A talent was a weight of measurement of silver, about 80 pounds, equivalent back then to about 6000 denarii or what a common worker might expect to make if he worked for twenty years. A talent was a lot of money. The first two servants invest well. That third servant, trying to avoid his Master's wrath in fact provoked it by burying his gift. The Master says, you could have at least put it in the bank where I could have at least made some interest. And, the story ends badly for him.

Jesus is using a business principle that is still true today so to make an important point. Just like we have to invest money in order to make money, as disciples of Jesus we have to invest our souls if we want to grow spiritually. We need to invest in our relationship with Jesus by deepening our prayer life. We need to invest in our discipleship so to build up the Kingdom of God in our family, workplace and world. We can't be burying the spiritual gifts God has given us or we could end up losing our way.

I think this message is more important now than ever in the wake of everything going on in our world today. With so much bad news out there, are we investing ourselves right now so to be good news, in our families, workplaces or world? It is an important question to consider because Jesus reminds us that we do not have all the time in the world. When it comes to discipleship we are invited to not to put off to tomorrow what we should be doing today.

Another way of looking at it, Jesus is calling us to be spiritual *tektons*. We are called to participate with God's grace to build up his Kingdom on Earth. And, this is no easy task, as we all know. However, even when we are faced with difficult times, we are still called to invest ourselves so to be good news in a world hungry for God's love. What does that look like for us this coming week?