Sunday Homily: The Parable of the Talents

Full Transcript | Timestamps Removed

You know, as we hear this parable of the talents Jesus ends with, to those who are given much more will be given, to those who have little, even that will be taken away. I think there's times that we kind of want to say, Jesus, that's not very Jesus-like of you. But of course, this is Jesus. And so it is right. And if we have an instinct to say, hey, no, well, that's in us. How come? Because this is not just talking about our lot in life, how we are treated in this world that often treats the poor poorly.

This is instead talking about what we do with what the Lord has given us. And even those who have little have much because God, God does not give little gifts. He doesn't say, ah, you don't get much. Because even the one who was given one talent today, no, we don't use talents as a monetary unit anymore. But just as you know, the other day we heard about the workers in the vineyard getting one day's wages, one denarius. So one talent is 15 to 20 years worth of earnings. So in today's money, like $500,000 give or take $100,000 is one talent.

So the one who has given 10 talents That is a ton of money. Even the one who was just given one, that's nothing to sneeze at. If someone gave you $500,000 and said, hey, take care of this, that's a responsibility. That's something to be given. And whether we're talking about the money talent or talents of the gifts, God has given you something worth a lot. Many things worth a lot. And how do we use them? Do we bury them in the ground? Do we use them? Do we misuse them?

You know, one of the most prestigious awards in our world today that is kind of recognized all around is the Nobel Prize. You get a prize for different areas, mathematics, science. The founding of that award is pretty interesting because some might know it was founded by Alfred Nobel. He was actually made his fortune off of inventing dynamite. He found a way to take nitroglycerin, which to that point was very fragile. You couldn't walk around, you couldn't transport it easily, and put it into a stable compound that it could be moved. Of course, there was a lot of good uses for it, of mining, of industrial things.

But where his business really made a lot of money off of dynamite was weapons. Was the waging of war. And so he made a fortune. And as his life went on, there was a day that his brother, Ludwig, much less famous Nobel, passed away. But one of the major newspapers heard Nobel has died and ran with thinking it was Alfred Nobel. And so Nobel, not only suffering the grief of losing his brother, but goes and picks up the newspaper and sees the headline, The Merchant of Death Has Died. Ouch. Don't think any of us would like to see ourselves referred to as the merchant of death when we die.

And it was apparently kind of a wake-up call for him, because not long after he got in touch with someone who had formerly worked with him, who was involved in a lot of peace efforts, and said, hey, I want to use my fortunes, my money, to set up something that lasts for peace, for achievement. for progressing mankind in a good way rather than violence and war. And of course now, if you hear Nobel, you think the Peace Prize. Nobody thinks the Merchant of Death. But it is the same gifts, it is the same mind that waged those weapons of war that also uplifted people in peace.

It's all about how we use, how we focus those gifts. As to what comes of them. I remember probably a little past halfway point in my time in seminary talking to my spiritual director, priest one day, and kind of saying, you know, I grew up all public school, my whole life seminary was the first Catholic school I went to in military communities and stuff like that. I won't say a rough upbringing by any means, but also. not quite as sheltered as a lot of the guys.

And I was talking to the spiritual director saying, you know, sometimes I feel bad in that I know I can kind of get people to do what I want. I can manipulate people, just a word here or there to kind of get them to do what I want them to do. And I know that's not really what I should be doing. My spiritual director said, well, you know, there's another word for that. What? Leadership. I said, oh, that's a dangerous thing to say, He says, of course it's dangerous. Do you think a gift from God could not be used for something badly?

But it can also be used for such great good. It's part of why you're here. And I tried to take that to heart. It's something that stuck with me because, of course, if God, the creator of the universe, is giving you a gift to build his kingdom, of course that gift can be dangerous. Of course those gifts can be misused. Instead of taking care of the world, we can just say, well, I'm gonna take care of myself. Instead of doing what we're supposed to with them, sometimes we can just say, oh, but what if I fail? What if I mess up? I'm just not gonna do anything.

And that's dangerous too, because they are not meant just for us. They are not meant to keep, to bury in the ground. But they are meant to build that kingdom. And it can be scary because oftentimes in this world people are not kind and forgiving and loving and all the things that we should be. They look to the mistakes we make and pounce upon them and say, oh, you messed up. You this, that, the other thing. How could you do this? And so sometimes we think better not to try, better to stay quiet, better to keep to myself.

When we get to those gates of heaven, I want to hear what those good servants heard. Well done, my good and faithful servant. And sometimes all the more scary because of what comes next. Because you've been good in this responsibility, you will be given more responsibility. Trust me, there's days I wake up and I say, I don't want more responsibility, God. You've given me enough. at the same time, to know that to shy from something that I can do, something that God has asked me to do simply because, well, what if I can't? What if I fail? What if I'm not the right person? What if I am?

What if I succeed? What if this is what God wants? So often we jump to that worst case scenario of what happens if it goes wrong that we never stop to think about. best-case scenario of what if it goes right? What if this is what God has put me on this world to do something great? But it does mean stepping into the discomfort. That servant who was given one talent was not willing to step into the discomfort, wasn't willing to take the risk of, what if something goes wrong? To the point he didn't even put it in a bank.

He buried it and said, I'm just gonna leave it here until he comes back so I can give him back just what I was given. God doesn't want back what he gave you. He wouldn't have given it to you if he wanted just that for himself. It is meant to flourish. It is meant to become something more, but for that we have to be

willing to step into a little bit of discomfort. We are stewards in places we feel safe. You know, standing up here, Deacon and I, we get the whole view. I'm never going to, but I could point out, look at those people who don't sing.

Why don't we sing? Is it because, oh, I've got a bad voice? Nobody wants to hear that. Who gave you that voice? God gave you that voice. Let him hear it. If he doesn't like it, he'll change it. But to sing, what does that say? That says to the kid down the row, look, everybody's singing. I can sing too. Look, that guy's really bad. Maybe I can sing and I won't be embarrassed. Your voice is meant to be heard.

And if you can't sing with the community that's singing together here, How do you expect out in the world when you're expected to speak up about your faith to speak up about that? Because nobody here is going to say, hey, can you stop singing? You're really bad. Nobody should say that. out there, yeah, there's a real possibility somebody can say, hey, can you not talk about your faith? Can you not talk about God like that? And yeah, it can hurt. But if we don't talk about our faith out there, that kingdom is never gonna grow.

People will never encounter Christ as he is meant to be if we don't talk about. And we love to point to that St. Francis quote that he probably never said of, preach the gospel at all times when necessary, use words. But it's necessary to use words. That's coming from a man who preached the gospel to birds. If it's necessary to preach the gospel with words to birds, all the more so to people. We don't get to use that excuse of, well, I'm a good person and I take care of people. Great, why? Tell them why. Because the reason is the love of God that we have experienced.

Share that with them. It doesn't come with saying, hey, now you have to go and do this. But it does come with telling why we have these gifts that we have. Because in a community like this, there are so many different gifts. There are so many different things that you all can do that even if I worked for a lifetime, I would never be able to. There are so many people that you will meet that I just will never encounter in this world. And they all deserve to see the love that God has given us, the gifts that he has given you.

And if you are thinking, well, I don't really have any gifts, stop asking yourself. Ask the people around you. Ask the people who love you. They'll tell you gifts. Ask God, God, what are my gifts? Because he gave you some. Some might be more difficult to see, some might not be the gifts that we want. But they're the gifts that you need to do what God put you in this world to do. And they are not meant to be buried in a field. They're not meant to be just turned inward and to do what I wanna do with these gifts. Because that is dangerous.

What is meant is to be used in that mission, to build up the kingdom so that when we see the master, We give him not just what we have, but something more. Last night, we had three people. One coming into the church fully. He professed his faith and came into the church. And two others that while they were baptized as children, they had never received the rest of their sacraments. They came in as adults into that full communion of the church. Why? Because they saw the truth and the love of God. wanted the fullness of that. Where did they see it? Not in me. In the people in their lives.

You can be that example. You can be the one who brings others and their gifts into this kingdom, into this family. And so when you come face to face with the Lord and give him back, this is what you have given me. Suddenly he shows, and that person. that person and these others that you shared your gifts with that now continue to share their gifts. That's from your investment as well. That's how you manage these gifts. Well done, my good and faithful servant. I want to hear those words. I want to hear it for every one of you.

But we don't do it by being safe, by burying our talents, by saying somebody else can do that better than me. We do it. by adding some risk. Each of those investments were a risk. What if I lose it? Well, what if I don't? And they were able to give back more than they received. Take a risk, invest those talents, those gifts that God has given you, and see what comes back. Amen.