

Sermon November 15th, 2020

God Is Trustworthy!

In our gospel this morning, Jesus shares a parable with us to encourage us to see that God has given everyone of us gifts to share with the people we meet. Gifts that help us be Christ's hands and feet in our world.

Now some gifts we receive are gifts we all possess like the Holy Spirit that we receive in our baptism. Other gifts that we receive like the ones Jesus is talking about in this parable are gifts that we carry within us that are different from other people's gifts.

I compare this type of gift to a puzzle piece. Every piece of the puzzle is important if you want to see the whole picture. If one piece is missing the picture remains incomplete (**Image**). Distorted.

Like the puzzle pieces of the many self isolation puzzles we are putting together during this pandemic, every gift we have is valuable in revealing Christ's love to the people we meet.

People who are living right now with a lot of anxiety, fear, and loneliness (**Image**). People who are longing to hear a message of hope, peace, inclusion.

So, whether, we are given five talents, two talents, or even one talent. We all have value as God's people. We all have gifts to share to reveal God's kingdom come to others. When we all share our gifts, we give people a fuller picture of this kingdom come.

Now, with that being said, I know it is more of a struggle for us to share these gifts with others during this pandemic. As we have become a community that gathers more remotely (**Image**). As we have become individuals who live more isolated lives. We have had to step back from the things we were doing before to share our gifts with the people we meet. We have had to become more creative on how to continue sharing our gifts with the people we meet.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus points us to another problem we run into when trying to share our gifts with the people we meet. Fear. Being afraid. A problem that we struggled with before the pandemic. A problem that has become exacerbated during the pandemic. And a problem that will unfortunately, continue to follow us after the pandemic.

For example, many of us live with insecurity. We doubt being good enough. Good enough parents. Good enough children. Good enough workers. Good enough students. Good enough spouses. Good enough partners. Good enough friends. Good enough Christians. We doubt being good enough.

What happens when we start to fear our ability to be good enough, is that we can become paralyzed. Our fears can stop us from living. From investing time and energy into the relationships we are in. Whether it is being a parent to our child. Or being emotionally present with our spouse/partner. Or volunteering to participate in a ministry to help other people. Our fear on not being good enough can end up making it harder for us to share our gifts with others.

Another example is that many of us fear not having enough, especially during these times. What happens when we live with this fear is that we can end up clinging to everything we have. We end up looking more inward than outward. Focusing on our own needs. Struggling to share what God has given us to meet the needs of others.

Then there is the example that many of us fear rejection (**Image**). How will people treat us if we share everything about ourselves? Even that quirky Christian part of ourselves? It hurts to be made fun of for something we believe in. It hurts to be turned away. It hurts to feel lonely. "Why should I share my gift with someone if they are just going to throw it back in my face?"

So, if we look at all the ways fear stops us from sharing our gifts with others. If we see how this pandemic has made it harder for us to share our gifts with others. We can see why Jesus needs to give us a little pep talk from time to time.

Like a coach during half time (**Image**) that is trying to rejuvenate the spirit of their players by giving a speech that both tries to lift them up for the gifts they have been given, but also challenges them to use those gifts to come back in the second half. Laying out the consequences if they don't end up tapping into those gifts.

In this parable, Jesus reminds us of what happens when we share these gifts with others. We have a positive impact on the people we meet, and on our world. People experience the love of Christ through our words and actions. They receive hope during times like these. Lots of good comes from our ability to get past our fears and share the gifts God has given us.

And though this parable seems very harsh as we hear that the person who was paralyzed by fear, and didn't share their talent, is thrown out of the kingdom. I hear Jesus' warning this morning more so as pointing us to the natural consequences that come when we don't share our gifts with the people we meet. When fear stops us from living out the kingdom of God, then the people we meet including ourselves don't experience this kingdom. We don't experience the love of God through our words and actions, because we are not living it out.

Another detail of this parable that sticks out for me is that the person who is entrusted with one talent sees the master as a wrathful person. So, the master doesn't

disappoint. What I hear from Jesus in this part of the parable is that Jesus is encouraging us to see God as trustworthy. To trust in God's mercy. To believe that God created us to be good. Not perfect. Good. And so, God will find a way for us to use the gifts God has given us to shine in people's lives. Even when we stumble when trying to share these gifts with the people we meet. As Paul says to the Thessalonians, God has destined us not for wrath, but for salvation.

Paul goes on to invite us to spend our time building each other up. To support one another as we try to share our gifts with the people we meet. To help each other create new and imaginative ways of sharing our gifts during this pandemic time (**Image**). To be present with one another when fears get the best of us. Not judging someone for struggling to share their gifts. But helping them find what they need, so they can share their gifts with others.

And so, as we hear this parable today, feel reassured in God's trustworthiness and grace. God loves us, and would rather have us dwell in the kingdom of God than be recipients of God's wrath. Trust that God has given you the tools and supports you need, including your sisters and brothers in Christ, to share your gifts with the people you meet.

Let us pray, gracious God, help us overcome our fears so that we can share our gifts with the people we meet. When we stumble forgive us. When we fall. Lift us up. As a community encourage us to support one another. Work with in us O God, so that our neighbors experience your love through our words and our actions. **Amen.**

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