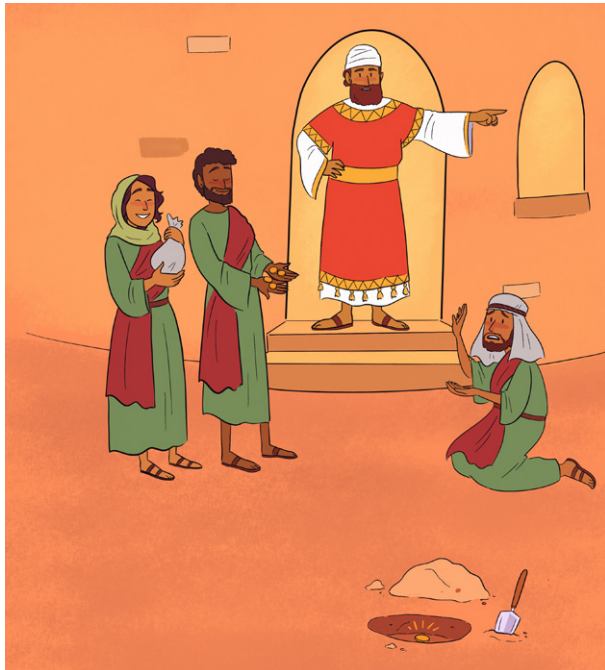


Matthew 25:14-30

Using well what God gives to us

Jesus tells a parable of a man who, before going away, gives his slaves talents (i.e. money). When he returns, he holds his slaves accountable for what they have done with the talents. Two have used them wisely, but one has done nothing – and is strongly condemned.



Bible notes



This parable is about what readiness means. But what does the word 'talent' mean? In the original Greek, the word simply meant a substantial sum of money. Here it deliberately and ambiguously means something broader. Talents represent not so much individual abilities, but all the privileges and opportunities of God's kingdom. The failure of the third slave is not that he lost money, but rather he failed to make the most of that money for his master in his absence. Note that the first slave is eager to do his best (v.16); the second may not have been quite so opportunistic but still made a good return (v.17). It is the inactivity borne of the caution and anxiety of the 'wicked and lazy' slave (v.26) that is condemned in the parable. Note that the master's absence is prolonged, so it was easy to forget him in day-to-day matters. Indeed, the master may not even have been likeable.

Some may find the story difficult because it is about slaves. In the modern world, slavery is simply wrong. But in the Gospels, slavery was widespread and accepted. And remember too that slaves are the property of their owner. So too, according to Scripture, are we – we are God's creatures, owned by God. This relationship is renewed in Jesus. These concepts of ownership might be difficult for us, but the point being made is that we cannot truly exist as independent beings; rather we exist for the glory of God. How can we use what God gives us to serve him?

First impressions

- What do you like about this artwork?
- What gifts has God given you that might be used to do something special?
- How might the gifts of creation be used, or better used, or reused?



Write

Write a love poem to creation using the haiku format. A haiku is a short-form poem originating in Japan. It has only three lines: the first line has 5 syllables, the second line 7, and the third line 5. In Japan, they are nearly always about nature. God has given us a beautiful world, a gift to all living things, plant, animal and human, entrusted to our safekeeping, like the talents in today's reading.

Sing

To the tune: *I'm a little teapot*
I'm a little signpost pointing up:
Up to Jesus, up to God.
Any time a stranger, neighbour, friend,
needs a hand, I'll point them up!

LISTEN



Play the song 'Do Something', by Mathew West on *Into the Light*, and reflect on the talents and gifts God has given you. How you could put them to work for good?
<https://open.spotify.com/search/'Do%20Something'%2C%20Mathew%20West%20on%20Into%20the%20Light>

A prayer of confession

Dear God,
we are sorry when we let our fear of failing stop us from trying;
when we get distracted, and miss an opportunity to use our gifts;
when we settle for less, when we could manage more.
Help us to never give up.
Amen.

Pray



COP28 will be held this month in Dubai. Pray for the leaders attending and the decisions taking place there.
<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/worship-and-learning-support/discovering-god/creation>