

...and... Still In The Meantime

Almost every Sunday, before communion we say:

“Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith.

“Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

Three divisions of time- and we live in the middle one.

We know that Christ has died- We believe that Christ is risen- We believe that Christ will come again. –

and so we spend our time- living in the in-between time.

What should we do? How should we live? What will it be like when we do meet Christ?

We're nervous about it- you can tell by the jokes we make about it that evoke jittery laughter:

“Jesus is coming- look busy.”

“A Baptist minister, an Episcopal priest and a Rabbi meet at the Pearly Gates...”

- and so you know a joke is coming-

On the surface these last few parables we've read- parables of judgement-

don't seem to do a lot to alleviate our nervousness.

After all, why did those poor bridesmaids get shut out of the banquet-

why didn't the others just share a little oil with them.-

And today's story- that poor fellow who only got one talent-

it hardly seems fair that he had it taken away-

after all, he was paralyzed with fear of his master... I can relate to that- can't you!

Have you ever been so paralyzed with fear that you were afraid to do anything at all?

It's like standing at the top of a high ski jump, and being afraid to go down-

or standing on a diving board- when you know how to swim-

but that height makes you freeze...

If you're in luck, something happens that makes you go down that slope- or go off into the pool-

you may not have the greatest form- but you find out you can do it-

The story of the talents is like that-

The error of the one-talent servant was that he didn't even try.

Risk is always a factor when we try to do what God calls us to do- but risk we must.

I'd like to offer another possibility in trying to understand something about this parable.

It's true that the one talent fellow didn't risk his talent-

but his reason is out of sync with the other two workers.

The reason he gives the master for not doing anything doesn't really hold up-

"I knew you were a harsh man", he said- "reaping where you did not sow

and gathering where you did not scatter...and so I went and hid your talent in the ground."

Now- who did he blame for not making any gain...not himself...

notice that he blamed the Master!

He could just have refused the money- but he didn't do that!

He took it- and then he did nothing with it!

And then he had the incredible audacity to blame somebody else for his laziness!

Notice that neither of the other servants said anything about the Master being harsh-

and notice also that the Master said exactly the same thing to both of them-

the amount they'd earned with his initial investment didn't seem to have made any difference

The Master was pleased they'd done what he'd asked them to do.

It was the third servant - the one who hadn't even tried and had tried to pin the failure on the Master

who earned the sharp rebuke.

\*\*Jesus tells this story just before he's arrested- and put to death-

he knows what's coming- and so I think maybe he tells this story

to let his followers know what they're called to do while he's gone- what to do in the meantime!

(and that would be us, too- by the way).

Jesus is about to leave- he'll be arrested- tried- crucified- and then he'll rise-  
and then, at some time- he'll return-

(Christ has died- Christ has risen- Christ will come again)-

This story that he tells is to let us know we're to take the riches he's given us-  
and to use them for the spread of the kingdom- as we wait for him to return.

What are those riches- those "talents"?-

I think the chief one is the knowledge that we- all of us- are loved!

That God loves us- forgives us- that God desires all people live in self giving love.

That knowledge is what we have to share- what we are called to live.

That's the talent he's left us in charge of.

Invest what he has given us! Christ will come again.

*Amen.*