

November 16 2014

Scripture Lessons ~

Psalm 100, No. 95

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

Matthew 25:14-28

Sermon *The Talent Show*

You don't have to raise your hands, if you don't want to, but I would appreciate it if you to consider these questions within yourself. How many of you here this morning invest your money by digging a hole and burying it in the ground? Some of you might do that but is that an investment? How many of you here today who are or have been in business in ranching or in farming or who own a house or car did not have to go into any kind of debt or make any kind of sacrifice to get what you have? How many here are good golfers, gifted musicians or basketball players or whatever you are good at and you did not have to do one ounce of practice to get that way? How many of who are parents of small children or who has been that didn't have to make any kinds of sacrifices in order to raise your children up into adult hood? This one might be scary for you. How many of you visited houses with games of chance a won a jackpot this year without spending a dime in a casino or those who play the lottery, how many of you who won a cash prize without buying a ticket. I want to know who played those games so I can get my 10% in the offering plate is what I want to do. Of course the easy answer to all of the questions is none. None of us bury our money to get a return on the investment. None of us unless we are independently wealthy going into business is going to purchase something new here without either going into debt or making some kind of financial sacrifice. None of us get good at something without investing a lot of practice time .None of us take good care of our children without making some kind of sacrifice in the process. None of us play games of chance to win at least without laying down our money on the line. The common thread links these five questions together can be summed up in this very familiar proverb "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Now the thing is not particularly profound in itself but it does describe in a kind of crude way the point that Jesus is trying to make in this morning lesson from Matthew Gospel. The parable about the unfaithful steward that unless we are willing to risk our time, unless we are willing to risk our skills and talents, unless we are willing to list the financial resources at our disposal for Jesus in this world, we cannot even hope to appreciate the blessings that God has in store for those who have been faithful for what God has given them to watch over and be steward

over and some of those things are tangible and some of those things are not tangible at least at first.

So the story Jesus tells us this morning has a rich man and has three servants which illustrate the point that I am trying to make with you today. I called this story, the talent show. Of course what happens is the first servant is given; how many talents? Five talents which in those financial times would mean 15 years wages for an unskilled worker. How many did the second one get? Two. And the how many the third one? One. The first one invested and doubled it. How about the second one? Invested it. And how about the third one? He did a kind of strange thing he buried what he had in the ground instead of risking to invest it; probably because he was extremely afraid of what might happen with his master. Now you would think that frugal one would be rewarded by the master but that wasn't so because the first one was rewarded and the second was likewise rewarded the third one really got it. He was seriously rebuked for not having the courage necessary to earn a return on the master's investment.

And you know I never I was much of a person to follow the activity of that old evangelist named Oral Roberts but as a kid I remember on being on TV, and I remember him calling this principal that we are discussing today, seed faith and you who done farms or planted gardens are able to recognize the central point immediately. Unless you plant, you do not harvest; unless you invest you are not going to receive a return; unless you lay something of yourself on the line in faith you will never truly appreciate abundance of blessings that God has in store for each one of us as followers of Jesus.

Let's see how it works because it isn't really rocket science. Let's say you are a person who sits at home with all the doors and windows barred all the time. What will you ever know of love or friendship but if you go out and if you risk spending time with others you might get hurt in the process but the chances are you know something of what it means to love an another person and how God loves all people. Or if you put your money in a baby food jar and bury it in the ground, like my grandfather did by the way before he passed away and he left us a treasure map so we could find it, which was in an envelope which said, don't open until Christmas. And we had no idea what he was talking about. What if you make your investment that way in the ground and found it in a baby food jar but if you put out for an investments the things that you have in the financial world or into people with needs like with the Keva program, you could lose it for sure but more likely you are going to see a return on your growth. If you never going to show love to another person, what are going you going to know about love; but if you show care for others they might be there for you in times when you need them; and if you profess to be a follower of Jesus but never never lift a finger to develop your relationship with God and with other people what can you ever hope to know

of the person, Jesus. So when it comes to our faith we followers of Jesus are a generous investors, we are not hoarders we are givers we are not misers we are returners to God of what God has given to us. We are not people who just throw the left over back to God on a Sunday morning.

There are several things that I am not suggesting here and I think you know them as well as I do. I am not suggesting by this that in any way we can earn God's love for us or earn our place in God's heart you know that as well as I do. I'm not suggesting that generosity necessarily guarantees material prosperity, I have mentioned that before nor am I suggesting that we should only give and do these things in order to gain something in return. What I am, here to say this morning is that the principal behind these things makes some sense that there are so many blessing we may never see unless we are a blessing to others in this world around us. So I encourage us then to ask ourselves a question. As we gather our pledges together today for the year 2015; and as we now approach the time in which committees and boards in the church which will reorganize themselves and I am going to put it in the most crass crude bankers terms the possibly can. Where is God calling you to risk some capital this year and 2015? Where is God calling you to invest yourself for God? In answering these questions for yourself remind yourself of the word of Jesus in this parable, "Well done good and faithful servant you have been faithful over little and I will set you over a lot, and enter into the joy of your master." And together we say AMEN