SERMON ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2023

Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents

The Gospel reading today from Matthew follows directly on from last week’s reading – the parable of the 10 bridesmaids, when Jesus told his followers that no one but God knows when Jesus’ second coming in glory will be, so we should always be prepared and ready.

Then Jesus goes on to tell us the Parable of the Talents and how we should live our lives, being prepared.

Talents were not coins as such but weights of precious metal = silver, copper or gold. One talent was approximately 75 lbs or 35 kgs. So the ten thousand talents mentioned towards the end of the parable would have been roughly 204 metric tons of silver, and so incredibly large and valuable.

But this parable is not about money necessarily, but about what each one of us has. Jesus means our gifts and abilities, our personalities and our material possessions. And Jesus challenges our attitudes to the abilities etc that we have and how we use them.

In the parable the servants are given different amounts of talents. We all have different gifts and abilities, maybe different amounts of time at different stages of our lives, and different material circumstances. But the parable does not put importance on the differing amounts, it rather highlights this challenge: Do we use all that we are and have, all our abilities for the service of God? Do we use our gifts to serve God and our neighbours? Where is our focus, our motivation, our priorities?

And I wonder if we always do appreciate all that we have and who we are. It might be helpful to take stock of ourselves, not in a proud or boastful way, but with thanks to God and asking Him how we should use our gifts. Advent is the start of our church year and it feels an appropriate time to ask God what He would like us to do in the year ahead, both as a church and as individuals.

In the parable the servants who try double their talents and if we use our abilities they too will increase. A parent will encourage a child to practice their musical instrument so they can play better. Sports people train and practice to get better. ‘practice makes perfect’ So, when we use our abilities they too get better, the results are better, our service to others and to God increases.

In the parable the servants who do use their talents and increase the amount, are rewarded as ‘good and faithful servants’. But they are rewarded with more work to do and greater responsibility. Are we prepared for that as we serve God? However please remember that the Bible is very clear about the importance of a day of rest every week.

It is the servant, in the parable, who does not try and who does nothing that is judged harshly. This servant does not use their talent to serve their master. So Jesus is giving a clear message to us, as his followers: We must try! We may not always succeed, and we might not be as effective as we would like, but we need to use our abilities and gifts as God wants us to, to serve Him and our neighbours.

We are all different – all different parts of one body as St Paul writes, and there is no comment about some talents being better than others. The body of Christ needs all of us to try our best, we are all unique and we can all serve. We are called, for who we are, to serve God and our neighbours the best we can, prepared and ready for when He comes again.