

SERMON ~ BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 25:14-30

The parable of the talents is a familiar one – perhaps an all too familiar one. The normal interpretation is that we should be developing our ‘talents’ to good ends and putting our ‘talents’ to good use. And how challenging that is! But the normal interpretation leaves this question unanswered: ‘Why did the unfaithful servant let his master down?’; and we’ll miss out if we fail to grasp why he did what he did – or didn’t do. The fact that he misunderstood his master’s intentions is the key to unlocking and understanding his actions – or lack of them!

Jonah is another good example of someone who, though he begrudgingly obeyed God, had not grasped God’s good intentions both for the people of Nineveh, and himself.

Understanding our Father’s intentions will be vital for us, his children, if we are to embrace what he has for us and if our service is to be effective. Another principle of effective service is that of knowing the God whom we serve – and to know God is to love him, and love him to bits. Service should be motivated by love for God and his good intentions in our world.

When our confidence is rooted and established in God, we are free to take risks and do extraordinary things instead of sitting in front of the telly and treating life as if it goes on forever the way it is.

In the same way that children who know that they have the support of loving parents are free to make mistakes as part of growing up, we, too, ought to feel empowered by our Father to grow in to our gifts – making mistakes as we do – but assured that it is better to try and fail than never to try and knowing that it is far better than sitting in front of the telly and wasting away.

Discovering, exploring and enjoying our gifts should be an incredible journey for any church community. We should encourage and enjoy each other’s unique talents and gifts for the building up of the community and beyond!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

‘It seems to me that people have vast potential. Most people can do extraordinary things if they have the confidence or take the risks. Yet most people don’t. They sit in front of the telly and treat life as if it goes on forever.’ (Philip Adams)

‘If you don’t risk anything you risk even more.’ (Erica Jong)

‘What you risk reveals what you value.’ (Jeanette Winterton)

GOING DEEPER

Questions on the Bible passage and sermon for you to think about during the week, either on your own or in a small group:

1. To what extent do you feel that you know and use your gifts and talents for serving God? Have they been encouraged or hindered? To what extent is knowing and loving God the motivating factor in your service?
2. How do you define ‘service’? Do you think in terms of church life, community service, your vocation, your whole-life calling? In what area of your life do you feel most used and fulfilled?