God Gives, God Trusts, God Waits (Matthew 25:14–30; November 15, 2026)

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As I prepared for my interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry, I was asked to write a theological autobiography explaining how I understood God's call to ministry. One question asked me to identify the gifts and talents God had given me.

I began counting my gifts. I soon realized that teaching was one of the greatest gifts God had given me. Teaching brought me joy, satisfaction, and energy. It shaped my identity and gave meaning to my professional life for thirty-five years. But I also recognized that my gifts did not come from me alone. My family nurtured them, my community shaped them, and education and experience developed them.

Writing that autobiography helped me understand something important: God's gifts are not possessions to be kept for ourselves. He entrusts them to us so we may become instruments of God's love and service.

This brings us to today's Gospel reading, the parable of the talents.

A wealthy master prepares to travel and entrusts his property to three servants. He gives five talents to one, two to another, and one to the third, each according to their ability. The first two servants put their talents to work and doubled what they received. The third servant, however, buries his talent in the ground.

When the master returns, he praises the first two servants equally: "Well done, good and faithful servant." But he condemns the third servant.

We often understand this parable as a lesson about using our abilities wisely. That is certainly important. But there is something deeper here.

Notice that the third servant does not lose the money. He does not steal it or spend it on himself. He simply buries it. Why? Because he is afraid. He tells his master, "I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground."

Fear becomes the central problem.

The third servant sees his master as harsh and demanding. His fear shapes his understanding of the master and determines how he responds to the gift entrusted to him. Instead of trusting the relationship, he chooses to protect himself.

The first two servants respond differently. They take risks because they trust their master. Their faithfulness is demonstrated not simply by the money they earn, but by their willingness to act courageously.

There is another important dimension to this parable. Jesus tells it in the context of his teaching about the end times, when he speaks about his return and the fulfillment of God's purposes. Therefore, this is not simply a lesson about financial investment, productivity, or individual achievement. It is about how we live in the time between Christ's departure and his promised return.

The master represents an authority whose return is certain, although its timing is unknown. The servants are entrusted with responsibilities during his absence. The question is not whether they know when he will return, but whether they will live faithfully while they wait.

Perhaps the third servant misunderstood the nature of his master's trust. He let fear of judgment keep him from participating in the master's purposes. Jesus invites his disciples to resist that fear and live with courage, confidence, and trust as they await God's final fulfillment.

This speaks directly to our Christian lives. Through baptism, we are not merely welcomed into the church; we are called into the ministry of Jesus Christ. Every baptized Christian is responsible for participating in God's mission through whatever gifts, abilities, and opportunities have been entrusted to them. Ministry is not reserved for ordained pastors. It belongs to the whole people of God.

As I reflect on my theological autobiography and my own call to ordained ministry, I realize that I am not simply being asked to identify my gifts or explain my personal achievements. I am being asked how I will use what God has entrusted to me in serving others. My calling is not about possessing a title or position, but about faithfully responding to God's trust.

Friends, perhaps the question today is not how many talents we have, or whether we have received as much as someone else. The question is: What are we doing with what God has entrusted to us?

God gives. God trusts. God waits.

God gives us gifts through grace. God trusts us to put those gifts into practice. And God waits for us to respond faithfully as we live in hope of Christ's return.

Let us not bury our gifts in fear, insecurity, or hesitation. Let us use them in faith, share them in love, and serve one another with joy. May we be found faithful when Christ comes. **Amen.**