

Good Morning!

The first car I drove was a 1964 Mercury Comet Cyclone. It was white with red interior, had mag wheels and a tachometer, and a 289 four barrel under the hood. It was my father's car, and he really liked it. Dad wasn't a flashy guy, but this sporty little two door sedan put a smile on his face. Aside from being fun, it was a very important and valuable asset. This car provided my father the transportation he needed to do his job and provide for his family. Not long after I got my drivers license, I wanted to go to my high school's football game. The group of guys I hung out with would be there, for sure. Maybe I could get a ride to the game with one of them? To my surprise, my father handed me his car keys, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Be careful". I couldn't believe it. Dad had a way of looking at you and saying a lot without uttering a word. This was one of those times. With his eyes and just two words, he told me he loved me, he trusted me, and he expected me to take care of his car. It's funny, but I don't remember who won the game or what my buddies had to say about me driving a snazzy '64 Comet. I do remember getting home safely that night ... and on time! I also remember that my father gave me the same offer over and over again ... continuing to love me, trust me, and expecting good things from me. I sure did not want to disappoint him!

Today's Gospel reading is from Matthew and it's the account of Jesus telling the disciples the "Parable of the talents". Before we delve into the story, we should have some idea of what a "talent" is. A talent is a large unit of Roman currency equal to about 80 pounds of silver. One denarius was commonly paid for one day's labor. One tal-

ent was equal to 6,000 denarii, or equivalent in value to over 16 years of labor. **One talent was a lot of money!**

Now, to the parable ...

The “Master” entrusts his property to three slaves by giving them treasure in the form of talents. He gives five talents to one slave, two talents to a second, and one talent to a third. After doing so, the Master goes away, but returns “after a long time” to “settle accounts” with each slave.

The slave with five talents and the slave with two talents had invested their funds and both doubled their money. The Master was most pleased with both of them and said:

***“Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master”.***

The third slave ... the one who had received one talent ... took his gift and buried it. He was afraid of his master, thinking him to be harsh and one who reaps and gathers where he did not plant. This slave wanted to take no chances and presented his master with the very same talent he was originally given. The master was **not at all** pleased with this third slave, and told him that at the very least the one talent he received could have been invested with the bankers so some interest could have been earned. The master took the talent and gave it to the slave who had ten, then called the third slave “wicked and

lazy” and had him cast out “into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”.

Wow! The settlement results for this third slave reminds me of a line in the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* ... “**He chose poorly**”.

As I read through this Gospel, two words keep jumping out at me ... **trust** and **joy**.

Regarding **trust** ...

God entrusts all of us with gifts ... special gifts of time, talent, and treasure that are unique to each of us. In fact, everything we have and will have is provided by God. It’s our responsibility to care and nurture these gifts and share them with those in need. Perhaps ...

- we put money in an orange bucket so to help fight food insecurity
- we share our thoughts and feelings with others in a church book club
- we support Shoes That Fit for children in need
- we supply items for Simply Essentials so to help neighbors in need
- we help produce a live stream video of our service so all can attend
- we support our church and its ministries

In a nutshell, we are to be good stewards of the gifts God has given to us. It’s our call as disciples to carry on Jesus’ ministry. God loves us and this is what he expects from us.

Regarding **joy** ...

***“ ... enter into the joy of your master”.***

Last year I met a gentleman while traveling to Australia and New Zealand. Rev. Steve Bacon and his wife Edna were in our travel group. Steve is a semi-retired pastor, spending his time helping churches with their stewardship campaigns. I told him I would love to visit with him about all of this, so we made a date to meet for breakfast. Over cheese omelets and blueberry muffins, Steve shared with me much of what he knows about stewardship. The one nugget he gave me was the element of JOY.

Steve's face lit up and a big smile formed across his face as he explained to me how stewardship and joy go hand in hand. Steve then told me a story about a young couple in his church and their growth experience with stewardship. After several years of either not participating or barely participating, this couple decided to stretch themselves and get serious about sharing of themselves. Steve said that after the campaign year had ended, they asked to meet with him. Steve heard this young couple explain how their commitment had indeed been a stretch for them, but that they made it work and found such **GREAT JOY** in participating. With genuine excitement, they then asked Steve what new opportunities might there be for them to give of themselves again.

***“I will put you in charge of many things” ...***

As you give, more will be given to you.

As disciples of Christ, we know God loves us, God entrusts us, and God expects us to be good stewards of all he has given us. Jesus will come again to settle our accounts, so make sure you haven't buried your gifts in

some hole in the ground. Share your gifts with the world  
and enter into **His joy!**