

16th SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST — 2015

The Very Rev. Steven J. Belonick
© 2015

I. We know well the Parable that we just heard in the Gospel. It is the parable that we used to launch our “Talent Project” at the beginning of the summer. Fifty-four of you accepted the challenge to take the \$10.00 the parish gave you and to use your talent to bring forth interest over the summer months. This was a very successful program for us. We distributed \$540 and at last count, all of you together were able to increase your talent to around \$3,800.00. That was a great success and I think you had some fun participating in the project. It was fascinating to witness the different kinds of talents that all of you possessed. Beside the financial profit, this project was an effective way to put our arms around what Jesus was really trying to teach us.

II. I say that because with all things concerning our Faith, there is always a greater depth to

understanding. Today, we have a better opportunity to understand what Jesus was really trying to communicate in this parable. Instead of increasing a gift of \$10.00, I think we can agree that our Lord desires us to increase two other kinds of talents, which he has given to us. The first we can call "skills". These are skills that we are born with or have learned over our lifetime. These skills may not only provide a career for us, but they have been given to us to help build up God's Church. I am talking about skills like administrative skills, the ability to write effectively, to teach, to organize, to build, to cook, to understand finances, public relation, and so forth. When we apply these gifts to glorify God, He makes them effective and brings about a blessed result. The talent has been increased.

IV. But there is another level of talents that God has given to us. He has not only given us "skills" but the gifts of "virtue." For instance - Do you have the

gift of hospitality (in other words, are others drawn to you because you are able to express warmth and a generous spirit)? Are you by nature patient? Is your God-given gift the ability to truly listen to others and to provide empathy? Does your heart express softness towards those who are troubled, conflicted, or addicted, and are you able to engage with these people without being judgmental or look at them without contempt? Do you have the gift to be a peacemaker and know how to bring resolution to problems? Are you able to share God's Word with others so they may receive counsel, direction, and solace, and you are able to do so because you have discovered the value of it yourself? Has God taught you how to pray so that you may pray with others if they should ask to you? Has God given you the gift of joy even in the midst of tribulation so that you can be an inspiration to others? Are you a person who is an example of faithfulness in the midst of the worldly temptations and are seen

by others who are weak? In today's epistle reading, St Paul says that he and his ministers are examples of those who are God's fellow workers. He says that they suffered many difficulties in their service to God yet always did so in purity, understanding, patience and kindness. He says they were sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything in Christ. Let me remind you that he began his words this morning by saying: "Do not receive the grace of God in vain." In other words, don't receive God's gifts to you and let them sit dormant. Use them, cultivate them, allow them to grow in you, and God will make them grow and become more effective in ways than you can ever imagine.

V. Today's Gospel makes it clear that each one of us has been given talents. And it makes clear that by using the talent God has given, He provides an increase when we use it. And it makes clear that if we decide

NOT to use the talent given to us by God, there is unfavorable consequence to our lives, because it will bring severe judgment. And it makes it clear that because we all have different talents, we need each other. The talents are diverse so that we complement each other. What I am not capable of doing, you are; and what you lack in a talent is made up by me. And in this way, we begin to understand that we brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

VI. So, this summer, we learned the rudimentary lesson of this parable and we saw how God increased the talent. \$540 became \$3,800.00. But let's learn the deeper meaning of this parable by using our God-given "skills" to help build up His Church; and even more importantly, let's discover the God-given "virtue" He has given to each of us and employ it so that He may be glorified. Jesus once said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."