

The Parable of the Talents is one of best known of our Lord's parables.

It is so well known that it has helped us coin the phrase:

“burying your talent” into our language

as a way of saying one is wasting an opportunity that God has given him/her.

In some ways the parable is a troubling one,

because all of us have, at one time or another,

buried some talent, some ability, some gift or some influence.

No one who reads or hears this parable gets off easy.

So knowing that a little bit,

maybe we can re-visit the parable to find some good news in it.

To do so, I want to focus on three words: Generosity, Confidence, and Expectation.

To get started, let's focus on the word **generosity**.

Like the parable of the prodigal son,

this parable of the talents portrays a powerful person

who is in love with the idea of being generous.

Like the father of the prodigal son, the master in this parable has no problem entrusting to three of his servants an extravagant amount of money.

In Jesus' day, a talent was equivalent to over 5 million of today's dollars.

To have given a servant 5 talents, another 2 talents, and a third 1 talent,

was to have entrusted to hired hands some 40 million dollars.

No doubt this master was generous.

The second word is **confidence**.

The master certainly had confidence.

Never is there an instant of doubt in what he is doing.

He is confident that he can entrust this money to his servants.

The third word is **expectation**.

When the master returns, he receives both the talents entrusted to his servants,

and with two of them, he receives a 100 percent return on his money.

The master's rage against the third servant, the one who buried his talent

is only magnified because of his expectations.

He expected the servant to do something with his money

so as to receive some return on his money.

So what can we make of these three words?

Generosity, confidence, and expectation apply not only to the master in the parable,
But they also apply to the servants.

The servants entrusted with the five and two talents
both saw life through the lens of generosity.

They were freely given a huge sum of their master's money
to hold in trust until he returned.

Rather than seeing this treasure as their own, or worse, spending it on themselves,
they generously invested the money in ventures that rewarded their master's trust.
The generosity of these two servants matched the generosity of their master.

But not so much with the third servant.

He was frightened; he was afraid.

He's the classic example of a "glass-half-empty" kind of guy.

He has convinced himself that generosity leads to poverty.

He believes that the more generous he is, the less he will have.

In much the same way, **confidence** certainly describes the first two servants.

They know who they are and who their master is.

They know their master is a shrewd and successful businessman,
Because of that they want to please him...by being like him.

And they believe they can be because if their master trusts them, they reason,
They must be worthy of that trust.

The third servant, however, has lost that confidence...

He has no confidence in his ability and his master's confidence in him,
he believes, is surely misplaced.

Finally, there are expectations.

The first two expect a good return on their investment,
they expect their master to hold them accountable,
and they expect to be praised for being resourceful.

The third servant expects no success....he expects only failure...

And he is not disappointed.

When he confesses, "I was afraid," he as good as said, I live my life in fear.

So that is them....what about us?

What are we to do with these three words in our own life?

First, we are invited to drink deeply from the stream of generosity.

No one ever loses at life by being a giver.

Give of your praise, give your influence, give your enthusiasm,
and yes, your financial resources.

Be people known by how open you make your hands,
not by how closed you keep your heart.

Know that the One we serve, who has entrusted to us this treasure of grace,
longs for us to be generous.

Second, have confidence in God's investment in you.

It does little good to look around and see the talents of others,
weighing our varied abilities against those of our colleagues and friends.

God has given to each of us a combination of gifts, abilities, and talents
that are indeed unique to us.

And God has given us the challenge to use them for his glory.

Finally, live life with outrageous expectation.

What would happen if we awoke each and every day expecting

God to use us in some life-changing way, not for ourselves but for someone else.

Why muddle our way through another week with little expectation

that what we do today will make a difference in our world?

Instead, live this coming week with the expectation that your life makes a difference,
not only for you but for others as well.

And so there they are....three words....generous....confidence....expectation...

Words certainly that apply to our master...

But words that need also apply to us, so that one day we might hear:

Well done, my good and faithful servant...