

Talented

16 11 14

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and glory
we may be like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom.

Our text this morning may be found in Matthew 25 and verse 21 and forms part of 'The Parable of the Talents':

'Well done good and faithful servant.'

Do you have verses from the Bible that you treasure, verses that over the years are important to you, verses that encapsulate a truth, a sentiment that gives you hope and encouragement? For me, today's verse from Matthew, words of approbation from the Parable of the Talents, is one such verse for me.

Why are these words important to me? Because they embody the notion of recognition of hard work, of due reward for hard work and sustained effort. They embody a value system where people put in the necessary time and effort to achieve proper goals and their labour is properly acknowledged. For me, this is

the right order of things – the good life. The word ‘talent’, if TV shows are to be believed, normally suggests being gifted, using the innate skill and intelligence with which we’ve been blessed but in the Parable in question the word talent refers to a large sum of money. The exact value is uncertain since the weight of the talent was variable and it would also depend on what metal was being weighed out (gold, silver, bronze).

As part Dame Alice Owen’s School efforts to raise money for its Quatercentenary appeal to build a new Science Block, the students were invited to take part in a scheme in which each was given ten pounds and invited to try to increase its value by what they did. Some £30,000 was raised: concerts, sponsored activities, hair shavings, Valentine’s presents, old clothes recycling, cuddly toys, cards, cake sales. Let me just highlight two: A Calendar and Blazer Boys. The Blazer Boys (a Lower School music band) as buskers performed in three different venues, finishing at Platform 9¾ at Kings Cross station (musical magic – not so much Harry Potter, more out of Potters Bar), their musical talent scoring £615.49. The calendar was the brain child of a Year 7 student who created it, gaining sponsorship from local shops and businesses to the tune of £1,000 and then selling the calendars for £2 each. The real virtue of the whole exercise was that students were actively engaged through their own efforts in earning money for a worthy target. The Head Master, Dr Alan Davison, wisely observed that ‘one of the most important consequences was that students felt they had contributed to the 400th Appeal and that most would directly benefit from being taught in the new Science Building.’ Ownership through effort – an excellent lesson!

The details of the Parable are familiar and well known. A master gives three of his servants various sums of money entrusting them to make good use of the money in his absence. Two do; one does not. The two who do are rewarded; the one who did not is unceremoniously dismissed !

So what can we learn from the story ? Essentially, that it is right and proper to work hard and, to the best of our abilities, to live a properly informed Christian life. To live such a truly useful and productive life requires three things: to want to will; to do. 'To want' means to desire to do something, to accept that this is truly what I want to do. 'To will' means to be determined, to have the resolve, the grit to put something into practice. 'To do' is to enact, to work at what you've set your mind to do. 'To want; to will; to do.' And the reward for so doing is the recognition of our labour in the words I'd love to hear addressed to me: **'Well done good and faithful servant'**. Sadly, the reward is not universal: for the one who failed to do anything with what he's been given is an unpleasant prospect of being kicked out into the cold and the dark !

I have spoken in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

16th November, 2014

