

To Live by Trust

Sermon for the 9th Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Matthew 25:14-30

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Not long ago, I anxiously stood in front of the house door and looked after my 17 year old son who proudly went to the bakery with a wallet and shopping list. Philipp, who was born with Down Syndrome, had received his first important mission. Philipp understood very well what was expected of him. And it was a great joy for him to have earned such trust. That’s why he went on his way proudly and with a steady gaze... all by himself! And yet, I also had my doubts. Would he also think about looking both ways before he had to cross the street? On the one hand, I wanted to run after him, just to make sure he was doing everything right. But that would spoil his fun. This was exactly what he found so special, that he was really given the responsibility and freedom to do something all by himself for once.

In our parable today, we are introduced to people who have also been given great responsibility. The numbers that are mentioned here were, at that time in the world, a small fortune. Two of these people did what was expected of them with firm confidence. They even took a high risk and invested the money. In the end, they received a great reward. Only the third man does things very differently. He plays it safe. He was afraid of the risk and to make sure nothing went wrong, he hid his talent in the ground. The parable that Jesus tells us here is a parable for the Church. It's not about advice on how to run a business better, but it’s about the basic attitude of Christians in the Church. Something like this can only be learned from our Lord Himself. And we get to know our Lord Jesus Christ as just such a person who takes risks. Without regard for losses, He comes into the world and risks everything, even His own life. He only ever has us in mind as His goal! He wants us to be saved. He wants many people to

be saved and therefore spares no effort... not even His own life. Jesus' ministry to us is finished and it is successfully finished! Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and the devil! No one can add to it or take away from it! What Jesus purchased for us has also paid off billions of times in a rich harvest over the whole world and among many nations. All three servants from our parable receive the gift that Jesus won. Two of them learned from their master and went into the field with gusto and great commitment. They don't seem to have any fear at all. They can do all of this only because they know so well that the harvest is secured by the hand of the great Lord Himself. They also know that their Master reaps where He didn't sow. The only reason they can be so brave is because they know their Master so well and know that the crops are guaranteed no matter what. With the example of the third servant, Jesus shows us what we shouldn't do. The third servant simply didn't believe in his Master. One can even say that the third servant is of the opinion that his Master is an unjust, stingy man. That's why he acts timidly and overcautiously. He goes to work with great fear and prefers to do nothing so that later, no one would have to accuse him of making a mistake. This man commits a big mistake. Out of fear of losing, he still loses what he has. The man understood correctly one part already. He knew that his Master reaped where He didn't sow. But this very realization should have freed him to invest without fear and with vigor. Instead, he made everything about himself. And when we are so fixated on ourselves, we can't draw from the fullness of our God but only from the poverty of the human spirit. We also see the outcome from the parable. This third servant now points a finger at God to accuse Him. God had expected too much from him! It could have gone much differently. He could have been free from the riches of his Master and drawn from all the abundance of his Lord's bounty to produce even more fruit! Dear congregation, this third servant is a warning for us. The treasure that we received is the Church and everything that is within it. Jesus wants the victory that comes from Him to bear fruit. The Church should not stop with us. We may calmly ask here: Do we live without giving? Do we rejoice together to enjoy the fruits of Jesus' work and not think about the people we don't know who live at the edge of our community? Are we simply too lazy to go to the others who desperately need the Gospel and unfortunately haven't heard it because we haven't passed it on to them? Are we shy and nervous? Are we so little rehearsed in the Gospel that we can't even share it with our children? Are we just happy to be saved ourselves? And let the other person do things his own way? And even accuse our Lord that the situation is simply too hard or rather too impossible?

With this parable, Jesus wants to free us from being anxious. When Jesus sends His disciples into the world, it doesn't sound at all like a grouchy, stingy man who wants to get even more out of his employees. When Jesus commissions His disciples, then it is always with great promise and trust. "I am with you always to the very end of the age," Jesus says to us and makes clear that we must have absolutely no more fear. What a joy when I can finally understand that He gives me everything that I don't have. When I can see that He stands behind me and next to me, I can take courage and go out with joy. I can believe again. Just like Philipp with his backpack and wallet... Just like the first two servants – at full risk without fear and with joy. Amen.