

Sermon – January 27, 2008 35th Sunday after Pentecost

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

While this parable of the Talents brings joy and peace, it also confronts us with a challenge – the great challenge of our life: to live in harmony with God’s Kingdom and bring an increase unto the Lord. Each one of us has been sent by God into the domain of this world, where time passes very quickly and we will not be able to complete what is left undone at the end of our days here. Therefore, the Church urges us, in the words of St. Herman of Alaska, “Let us love God, every day, every hour, every minute, and hasten to fulfill His holy will.”

Each one of us has been given by God 5 measures, or 2 or one. It is of no great importance what this measure is, because with each talent, each gift, comes the commission to increase it. Each one of us is called to build upon the talent we are given, to extend it, to teach it, to share it, to give thanks to God for it, to reproduce it, to fully develop it and to remember it belongs to God.

We can see the living of this in our life in the church. We are given the ministry of hospitality and we extend it in the First Saturday Breakfast, in trapeza, the bookstore, study and prayer groups and welcoming, as our sign says, “All”. We have been welcomed into Christ, into His church. Therefore, we have been given a great talent, which we have been called upon to extend to all those who are seeking, even to all the nations of the world, which certainly includes this mission-field of America. We have been given much, and much is expected of us.

The vision has been with me since the beginning of this church that we should be a place and a community where our talents are vigorously shared and the will to do good is engaged. It is natural to expect that the benefit of what we have been given be passed on to a new generation. And the talent that God gives to us will be increased in them. That is why we have a backyard, a playground, a new building in the backyard. Whether we are parents or grandparents or friends, we can pass on what we have been given. The time we live in is increasingly coarse, vulgar and dehumanizing. But it need not define who we are and how we live.

We are the ones that have been given power to put a paintbrush into a little tykes hand, to give clay and teach how to mold, to give flowers and show how to arrange, to take wool and spin and knit. We are the ones who are given metal, glass, wood, fabric, and all the crafts. The church is a dynamic, organic unity where we labor to address the needs of the whole person. We need good plays produced, good literature read, good music sung and performed. We need sports where personal excellence is achieved and team spirit is learned. Therefore, we have encouraged volleyball, soccer, baseball, dancing and other activities. In every endeavor, we are called upon to increase our talents, to develop them, extend them, and reproduce them.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich wrote, “Of anyone who inherits lands it is expected that he extend them; of anyone who has acquired fields, it is expected that he work them; of anyone who has learned a skill, it is expected that he use it, both for his own profit and that of his neighbor; of anyone who has a craft, it is expected that he pass it on to others; of anyone who has invested money in commerce, it is expected that he increase it. Men move, work, beautify things, collect, exchange, buy and sell. Each strives to acquire what is necessary for bodily life, and each strive to improve his health, to take care of his daily needs and to ensure his physical well being in the longer term. And this is only a rough sketch of what a man must do for his soul, for the soul is the more important. All our external needs are an image of our spiritual needs, and a reminder and teaching that we must exert ourselves on behalf of the hungry and thirsty, the naked and sick, the impure and the miserable, both in body and soul.”

Every liturgy we partake of Christ’s Body and Blood. In this, we also receive a great talent. Let us treasure what we have been given. Let us extend it in blessing to our neighbor, the just and the unjust. Let us be careful not to waste it in the beguilement of the world or in fear, to bury it in the mud of worldliness. As we hold fast to the keystone of our spiritual life, every other gift we are given is illumined and revealed in its power to transform the souls we are entrusted with, those with whom we are blessed to share our talents and see them increased.