

## **BUCC's Got Talent!**

[Text - Matthew 25:14-30]

Pastor Dave Shackle  
November 19, 2017

I begin by apologizing to those who read my sermon title and thought that we'd be presenting another BUCC Talent Show - this time, during morning worship. I realize that watching me juggle and yodel while hopping on one foot, may be entertaining; but that's not the kind of "talent" to which I'm referring. While we use the word "talent" to mean someone's ability or skills, in Jesus' parable the word actually means a phenomenal amount of money. Back then, a "talent" was a measure of weight - approximately 100 pounds. So each "talent" those servants receive, is most likely 100 pounds of pure silver or gold! I don't know about you, but if I suddenly had 100 pounds of precious metal to invest or spend, I'd be yodeling and hopping for joy! The point is, this master generously provides an enormous amount of wealth for his servants to use in positive and productive ways. And the only thing he cares about upon his return, is that they've done *something* worthwhile with it - that they've taken advantage of the tremendous resources they have at their disposal.

Jesus tells this parable to help us think about the tremendous generosity of our Divine, Creative Source; and to consider our response to that generosity. It's a story that invites us to recognize that all of us have been given a remarkable treasure - the precious gift of Life! And just as a treasure is given to each servant so that he or she can make the most of it, our lives are given to us so that we might live them to the fullest; that we might delight in the fantastic opportunities which are ours to experience, and to share. Of course, this parable also reminds us of some of the pitfalls that can hinder, or ruin, our living full and meaningful lives.

The fundamental mistake of that third servant, is his failure to grasp the fact that this great treasure is his to use as he sees fit. Therefore rather than using it, or even *misusing* it, he simply buries it in the ground and walks away. He's afraid to take any risks or any action, and therefore misses-out on all the marvelous possibilities that are his to experience and enjoy. And while it might be easy to fault him for his lack of courage, I'm certainly in no position to cast that first stone. When I think about my own life, I realize that the thing that most often keeps me from living fully, freely, and joyfully, is basic *fear*. Therefore, my first step toward genuine purpose, fulfillment, and joy, is a step of basic *faith*. I need to trust that *whatever* I do, Divine Love will sustain me, and Divine Grace will ultimately see me through my failures and my successes. For example, it wasn't until I truly trusted that my Divine Source made me, loves me, and embraces me just as I am, that I could finally risk being honest with myself and others about being gay. I realized that in order to live my life fully and authentically, I couldn't be afraid to accept the uniquely peculiar gift of who I am. I had to respect it, treasure it, nurture it, and make the most of it.

As long as I kept my true self buried and hidden-away from the light of day, I remained captive to my fears - unable to fully connect with others, for fear of rejection; unable to draw closer to my Divine Source, for fear of judgement. Yet when I finally realized that the Holy One gave me this particular life to *live*, I felt a tremendous sense of freedom and joy, wholeness and peace. And in time, I was able to forge new and better relationships with most of the people in my life - relationships based on honesty, openness and genuine love, rather than some false perception of who I really was, and the paralyzing fear of being found-out and rejected.

I think our fears keep a lot of us just as bound and paralyzed as that third servant in Jesus' parable. It can be the fear of somehow

displeasing God, or disappointing others; the fear of not measuring-up, or even the fear of success! If we do poorly, others might not approve. If we do exceptionally well, others may expect a lot more from us. [Which can be scary as well!] But if we keep a low profile and do nothing at all, what harm can come of that?...except when we realize that we've missed-out on so much that Life has to offer, and we end up "weeping and gnashing our teeth." It's not because God punishes us, but because we ourselves deeply regret having lived our lives in that outer darkness of our fear, rather than walking in the Light of Divine love and grace, wholeness and joy.

It seems kind of strange, that the third servant acknowledges that he *knew* his master had a passion for Life and adventure, risk-taking and creative investing; yet he himself does nothing to emulate that lifestyle. It's kind of like people who say they believe in a God of love and grace, yet fail to live their lives in a loving and gracious manner. It's like we Christians who claim the name of the Risen Christ, yet remain trapped in tightly shut tombs of our own making. A couple questions that we might ask ourselves are these: Do we truly trust that our Creative Source gives us this wonderful gift of Life so that we might live it to the fullest; or do we really think that by playing it safe and sitting on the sidelines we make God happy, or can find true happiness for ourselves? I suspect we know the answer. So perhaps the better question is this: "What in the world are we waiting for?"

This tremendous treasure, these bountiful blessings of Life are ours to use, to nurture, to celebrate, *and* to share! And today is a perfectly fine day to let go of our fears, and take hold of our faith; to marvel at, and make the most of all our amazing talents and gifts! Living our lives to the fullest is not a selfish thing to do. What matters, is that we use our blessings in ways that are creative and positive, gracious and generous. Each of us here today has been blessed in so many ways! And while our Divine Creator delights in

blessing us all, God's true delight is in seeing us use our blessings to *be* a blessing in the lives of others. I don't know if Yahweh yodels and jumps for joy when this happens, but I do believe that God is extremely pleased when we use our gifts for the greater good; when we step out of the shadow of fear, and walk in the light of faith.