



Grain

“Brer Rabbit’s ears shivered, ‘That’s alright Brer Fox, it’ll hurt something awful, but go ahead and skin me. Scratch out my eyeballs, tear out my ears by the roots, cut off my legs, do whatsoever [sic] you want to with me, but please, please, please, don’t throw me in that briar patch.’” as told by Julius Lester in “Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby”

Field

¹⁴“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave...’ ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground...’ ²⁶But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave!’ Mt 25:14-20 & 24-26

Thoughts written by Rev. Peter Heide, Baraboo, Wisconsin

How many times have I heard this Matthew text, especially the master’s praise, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”, and aspired to be the meritorious slave with five talents or two? How many times has this text been used as a stewardship text, admonishing people against burying their talents, or metaphorically calling the congregation to share the many spiritual gifts each has been given for the sake of the congregation? But, when we tell the story this way, we forget that the story of Christ is countercultural. We sidestep the context of the place where the parable was told. We forget that this parable is only one in a series that challenge our God-relationship understandings.

In former parables, remember the question concerning taxes and the one without a wedding robe at the wedding feast. With these recollections, we begin to suspect that this series of parables contain anti-heroes and a worldly image of the kingdom of heaven which is antithetical to the kingdom.

After all, the slave with one talent has followed Jesus’ teaching. He has given to the master what belongs to the master, and, for his faithfulness, he is cast into the place of God’s own, into the world’s outer darkness, into that place of death from which resurrection comes. This place of outer darkness with its weeping and gnashing of teeth is the place of sorrow and discontent, of social rejection, and of reformation potential. It is the creation place of new life—the place from which new ways of living are imagined. It is the “briar patch” place from which we come where compassion and loving accompaniment arises. It is the place to which we have been called all along.

Even as the world of acquisition continues to reward the amassing of wealth, let us remember that Jesus blesses the poor in spirit and others who are marginalized - people who are weeping and gnashing their teeth. It is where we begin living in the new community of “on earth as in heaven.” Wherever we are cast, we are among the people of God—part of the body of Christ. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,
Pastor Peter