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REV. DR. DEBRA J. HANSON

Welcome

Hymn “Take My Life, and Let It Be” (UMH #399)

Scripture Matthew 25:19-24 (CEB)

“Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained five more.’” His master replied, ‘Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’” The second servant also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I’ve gained two more.’” His master replied, ‘Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a little. I’ll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.’” Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven’t sown. You gather crops where you haven’t spread seed.’”

Message “Managing What We are Given”

Deb: Today’s scripture is about the Parable of the Talents. A wealthy man goes away and asks three of his servants to manage an amount of money. Each one receives whatever the man believes they can manage well.

Dave: I was thinking about how we could put the parable into a modern situation.

Deb: Oh? Like what?

Dave: What if we called it the “Parable of the Sports Cars”

Deb: (pause with surprise) “The Parable of the Sports Cars?”

Dave: Sure! Put it into a 21st century context.

Deb: Okay. Let’s hear this.

Dave: Imagine that a man is going on a journey and called his three drivers, entrusting his property to them. To the first one he says, “I’m giving you five sports cars.”

Dave: (grinning) Okay - to the second one he gives two sports cars, and to the third one, one sports car.

Deb: Each according to their ability to care for them wisely.

Dave: Right! Then the man left on his long business trip.

Deb: Okay, so I know the parable from Matthew, the first man with the five sports cars, uh. . . does what?

Dave: He figures he can sell them for a profit and buy more. And if that works, he would do it again.

Deb: (pause and waits) Well, did it work?

Dave: Not so fast, we still have two to go!

Deb: Okay, okay, continue!

Dave: The second driver figures out the same thing.

Deb: He sells them so he can gain two more.

Dave: Right! But the third guy . . .

Deb: I know - the third guy digs a huge hole and buries the car!

Dave: That would be a little challenging, don't you think?

Deb: Sure, but that's what the third servant in the parable that Jesus told did.

Dave: Right, but we are putting this into a modern context.

Deb: All right, well, tell me what the third guy did.

Dave: He put the car in a parking lot so it would be safe and not damaged in any way. That way he would preserve it for when the boss returned.

Deb: And they didn't really know how long it would be, but eventually the boss of those three drivers did return.

Dave: Right. What do you think happened when the boss met with the three drivers?

Deb: I can't imagine - tell me!

Dave: The first driver said, "Boss, you entrusted me with five sports cars. Look at this! I have gained five more. I bought and sold them and then bought more, and I worked hard. You now have a dealership with your name on it and 100 cars on the lot."

Deb: Holy Cow! That's amazing!

Dave: Yes, the boss was really pleased, and he put the driver in charge of the dealership!

Deb: I'll bet he had job security for life!

Dave: Yup. As long as he continued to use what he was given wisely and was able to keep multiplying his investments

Deb: The next guy - the one with two sports cars - how did he do?

Dave: He was successful in earning two more, so the boss was really happy with the way he invested in his two sports cars.

Deb: How was he rewarded?

Dave: The boss made him a general manager at one of the dealerships.

Deb: From watching you while you were in the car business, I know that the managers have a lot of responsibility and oversee everything. That's a pretty great reward!

Dave: Yes it is! It's hard work, but the driver with the two sports cars had turned it into four, so he showed that he could handle the job.

Deb: And then came the last driver.

Dave: Right! The last driver arrived, handed the boss his car keys, and said, "I knew that you are a hard bargaining man, so I was afraid and went out and parked your car in a parking lot to keep it safe.

Unfortunately, a couple of bad hailstorms came through and dented up the roof and broke the windshield. But I did what I could, so here is what belongs to you.

Deb: Ouch! Like the third servant in the parable, he sort of did bury the treasure that had been entrusted to him.

Dave: Obviously, the boss wasn't happy about that. He said, "You lazy driver! So you knew that I was a hard bargaining man? Well then, you should have put my shiny sports car in a garage at least to keep it safe. Now it's ruined."

Deb: If we follow the parable from Matthew, the boss would have taken the sports car from the last guy and gave it to the one who had earned the dealership, the parking lot and let him get hailed on."

Deb: Wow! No rewards for him.

Dave: Nope. I guess we can learn a lot about using the gifts God has given us when we think about this parable.

Deb: Yes, we can. The parable of the talents – or “sports cars” – isn’t just about money and material possessions, it’s also about how we live our lives with generosity, taking care of what we have been given. God provides us with resources, talents, and abilities to use in order to share the love of God with others.

Dave: Each of us is given what we are able to manage well.

Deb: The key is to MANAGE what we have been given. It’s also about keeping our eyes, ears, minds, and hearts open to God’s guidance.

Dave: Being God’s managers comes with responsibility.

Deb: By using our time wisely, and taking time to pray, study, and listen for God’s voice.

Dave: By figuring out what our talents are and sharing them with others through outreach, support, kindness, and caring for each other.

Deb: And by putting God first and working to make a difference in other people’s lives through the sharing of our time, talent and treasure.

Dave: We are given what we can manage.

Deb: Right! We just need to figure how we will use the gifts we have and then how we will grow in God’s grace in order to share with others.

Dave: We live life to the fullest as we walk with God.

Deb: We learn how to be disciples for Christ in the ways we live, work, play, and interact with others.

Dave: Stewardship of life.

Deb: Stewardship, or to put it into a more modern context (grins at him): “whole life living.”

Dave: Nice! “Whole Life Living!” (to camera) How are you managing what God has given you?

Deb: (to camera) How will you continue to manage your time, talent, and treasure as we partner with God and each other in our call to minister to others?

Today's dialogue was adapted from a reader's theater dialogue found at <https://www.puppetresources.com/documents/script2243.txt>.

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Prayer

Giving and generous God, you loved us so much that you sent Jesus to teach us, heal us, lead us, and save us. You claimed us as your own children, and gave us many gifts and blessings. As we strive to be faithful followers of Jesus, empower us to share the Good News of life in Christ through our generosity and care for each other and others. May we wisely invest and manage those gifts in order to make a difference in our world. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Retranslation from the Aramaic)

O Breathing Life, your Name shines everywhere! Release a space to plant your Presence here. Imagine your possibilities now. Embody your desire in every light and form. Grow through us this moment's bread and wisdom. Untie the knots of failure binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' faults. Help us not forget our Source, yl m et free us from not being in the Present. From you arises every Vision, Power and Song from gathering to gathering. Amen.

May our future actions grow from here!

Hymn "O God, We Yearn for Safety" by Carol Winfrey Gillette
(tune Angels' Story - O Jesus, I Have Promised)

Sending Forth



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Josh Jones
Jenn

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Donna Smith
Sophia
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook
Marion Collishaw

Christine & her parents
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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