



SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

33rd Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 25: 14-30

It was half time during the match. Our local watering hole has the prominently advertised Sky Sports TV and the place was nearly full. The commentators on screen were reviewing the first half of a crucial game. Stakes were high as were the tensions. Every sitting spectator was a referee superior to the brave one being judged and summarily dismissed while the next round of drinks was being ordered.

When football is the beautiful game, on-form ability, skills and talents are inspiring and sometimes actually beautiful. Occasionally they achieve what seemed hitherto impossible. And though some individuals appear to enter the world with an aptitude giving them a head start in an identified sport or activity, most standards of excellence come through hard graft.

In Matthew's Gospel story today, the word talent denotes a huge sum of money. One talent is equivalent to 15 years wages! Two of the three servants manage to double what they had been given. They both receive the same sumptuous reward for their efforts. The unproductive third person is dismissed and rejected. Like the bridesmaids in last Sunday's Gospel story, we're not meant to only coast along. Our time is time for us to be active. When Matthew was writing, it was thought that the Second Coming of Jesus was not far off. Time was to be used effectively according to each person's ability. It's the way abilities grow into what we refer to as talents.

In this story, given for us not just to listen, but to take to heart and reflect upon, the Master comes over as a very generous and demanding person. We're meant to be productive, to use the capacity and talents we have been given. We're not about just running on the spot. So what are we to be doing? What is being expected of us? In a real sense we're living on borrowed time.

What we hear in the Gospel today leads into an account of the Final Judgement. Our chosen lifestyle is more than a snapshot of what we did yesterday; more like a running commentary on how we choose to play the game. Being inactive is unacceptable. We're runners in the human race, required to be constant and consistent contributors to making life possible for others. We're born servants.

Each of us is here having been shaped by the love and care of others or the lack of it. The interaction, the teamwork, is how love ought to express itself, weaving our own personal brands with other players to help those in need.

As we rely on God's mercy to us, others rely on our increasing compassion and solidarity with our sisters and brothers to flesh out what mercy means in the here and now. That's real talent. It cannot lie dormant.



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Further words from Pope Francis on Climate Change

In an attempt to simplify reality, there are those who would place responsibility on the poor, since they have many children, and even attempt to resolve the problem by mutilating women in less developed countries. As usual, it would seem that everything is the fault of the poor. Yet the reality is that a low, richer percentage of the planet contaminates more than the poorest 50% of the total world population, and that per capita emissions of the richer countries are much greater than those of the poorer ones. How can we forget that Africa, home to more than half the world's poorest people, is responsible for a minimal portion of historic emissions?

It is often heard also that efforts to mitigate climate change by reducing the use of fossil fuels and developing cleaner energy sources will lead to a reduction in the number of jobs. What is happening is that millions of people are losing their jobs due to different effects of climate change: rising sea levels, droughts and other phenomena affecting the planet have left many people adrift. Conversely, the transition to renewable forms of energy, properly managed, as well as efforts to adapt to the damage cause by climate change, are capable of generating countless jobs in different sectors. This demands that politicians and business leaders should even now be concerning themselves with it.

- *Laudate Deum paras 9 and 10*