

Pentecost 23, 16/11/2014, Holy Trinity

Matthew 25:14-30

What does God require of us?

There does not seem to be a simple answer to that question.

Much of our answer seems to depend on the kind of God about whom we are speaking.

If we equate God to the master and ourselves as the slaves in this morning's Gospel, the Parable of the Talents, we have God as an enterprising multimillionaire who expects us to be enterprising and to hand over, when the time comes, the capital with something like 100% profit.

This is about growth in the Kingdom of God.

If, on the other hand, we understand God as 'hard..., reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed' then we will be afraid, not be enterprising, not prepared to take risks in case of failure and return to God what we have received in the first place.

This is about stagnation in the Kingdom of God.

In other words, the way we act, our behaviour depends on the way we understand or see God.

Now to get back to the Parable of the Talents and to answer our first question of 'What does God require of us?'

At the time of the writing down of this parable a talent was a considerable amount of money and the slave who received 5, 2 or 1 talent was entrusted with a fortune.

At the present time, we use 'talent' in another context.

One person has a talent for talking; another has a talent for playing the violin, or for cricket, or football or for learning languages, or mathematics.

In any case, whether it is in terms of money or a talent for doing something, each person receives a talent according to his/her own ability.

It is entrusted to her/him and the way in which the person trusts the master and his/her own ability shows that the Parable of the Talents is about trust: how we trust God, God trusts us and we trust ourselves.

The parable, also, shows a master who is generous, a risk-taker and who accepts the three persons.

This is the way two slaves understand the master and they go out and “give it a go”, not afraid of failure and at the same time looking for growth.

They are empowered by the trust the master placed in them and are willing to take risks of their own.

So, if we relate this to God, failure is not the worst thing that can happen to us.

The worst thing that can happen to us is to make God out to be a horrible grouch who rejects us when we fail.

This is the way in which the third slave understands his master.

In this case, the master makes it clear that he would accept anything – even at rock bottom, the interest that a savings account would pay – that was motivated by faith rather than fear.

So before we answer the question “What does God require of us?” we shall ask “What do we require of God?”

We require an absolutely reliable God who accepts us, who trusts us even before we trust ourselves, who takes risks and asks us to take risks also, who is not interested in keeping score and who allows us to take our turn with the bat.

Where, then, does all this leave us in relation to the Parable of the Talents?

First, it leaves us with the concept of trust – trust in God and trust in ourselves that enables us to take risks in order to bring about growth in the kingdom of God.

Secondly, having this trust enables God to move among us, to move through us and, as God moves through us, our lives change as individuals and in this way there is the likelihood of change in the community of this church and the other communities in which we live and work.

Finally, there is the rendering of an account to God for each of us.

Well! How does each of us ‘stack up’? Do you obey? Do you love?