Reflection on Sunday 15 November 2026 by Adrian Walter, Lay Leader of Worship

Gospel: Matthew 25. 14–30

Faithful with what we have been given

In the tradition I grew up in, a great emphasis was put on work. Oh, we firmly believed we were saved by God's grace and not by our own hard work but after coming to faith in Christ a great emphasis was put on doing; everyone had a job, or preferably two or three. So I grew up reading the parable of the talents as a lesson about productivity: use what I have, work hard, and produce a good return. It was not until I had been a Christian for almost 50 years that I suddenly realised that Jesus' parable is much deeper. It asks us what we believe about God, how we respond to what has been entrusted to us, and whether we are willing to live faithfully while we wait for His return.

Before setting out on his journey, the master entrusts his property to three servants. Although the amounts are different, every servant is trusted with something

valuable, according to his ability. That detail is important because don’t we often find ourselves looking at what other people have been given—their opportunities, confidence, influence, resources, health, or gifts—and then measure our lives against theirs? Jesus directs attention elsewhere. The question we should be asking is not whether we’ve received the same as someone else, it’s what will I do with what has been placed in my hands?

It all begins with trust. The servants do not own the talents; they receive them in trust. In the same way, my life is not a possession I created for myself. Our time, abilities, relationships, work, money, experience, and opportunities are gifts. Even the difficult parts of our story can become places where compassion, wisdom, endurance, or courage grow. Nothing is wasted when it is offered back to God.

This should change the way we understand responsibility. Stewardship is not anxious ownership. We do not have to prove our worth by achieving more than everyone else. We are asked to be faithful with

what we have actually received. Some times of our lives offer broad possibilities; others are narrowed by illness, grief, caring responsibilities, uncertainty, or simple tiredness. Faithfulness may look dramatic in one season and almost hidden in another. It may mean beginning a new work, or it may mean keeping a promise, making a phone call, listening patiently, apologising, praying, or doing an ordinary task with love.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, What has God entrusted to me at this point in my life? Which gifts have I been using with gratitude? Which responsibilities have I neglected? Is there a person, opportunity, or ability I have treated as insignificant simply because it does not look impressive? The parable invites us to live our lives according to our abilities rather than trying to live an imagined, more glamorous life, because living as God intended us to live is the place where faithfulness begins.

And faithfulness is one major point of this parable. The first two servants receive different amounts and

produce different returns, yet the master gives them the same commendation and the same reward. Their reward is not based on comparison but on their faithfulness. This is liberating because it emphasises the point that God does not compare us with anyone else. We do not need another person's temperament, education, ability or experience in order to obey. We need willingness: the courage to place what we have into God's service rather than keeping it untouched.

The second significant point is that the two faithful servants act "at once." They respond with energy and trust. They accept that using the master's property involves action, uncertainty, and risk. They cannot know every outcome before they begin. And isn't that often in stark contrast to our own tendencies: How often do we wait for complete clarity before taking a faithful step. We tell ourselves that we are being careful, when in reality, we're probably avoiding vulnerability. We want assurance that we will succeed, be understood, or avoid embarrassment. But in the Christian life obedience invariably begins before certainty arrives.

A faithful step does not have to be large. I can use a gift by practising it. I can serve by noticing just one person. I can be generous with a manageable amount. I can speak encouragement instead of assuming someone already knows it. I can begin the task I have delayed, ask for help where I am inexperienced, or make room for someone else to grow. Small acts are not small when they are given to God. What matters is that trust becomes action.

In contrast, the third servant is different. He does not lose the talent through reckless living; he buries it. Outwardly, that can look safe and responsible. Yet his explanation reveals the problem: he is afraid, and his fear is tied to the way he sees his master. Because he expects harshness, he chooses self-protection over faithful participation.

Do you recognise this pattern in yourself? I do. Fear can bury more than money. It can bury a kind word that feels awkward to say, an idea that might fail, a calling that seems too demanding, or a truth that

requires courage to speak. Perfectionism can be the shovel that digs the hole which buries the gift. So can comparison, resentment, shame, or the belief that it is already too late. I may call my hesitation humility, but genuine humility does not deny that a gift exists; it receives the gift without claiming ownership and offers it for the good of others.

The parable therefore presses me to examine my picture of God. Do I approach God mainly as a demanding judge, waiting for me to get things wrong? Or do I remember God as revealed in Jesus: holy and just, yet generous, merciful, and willing to entrust real responsibility to ordinary people. A distorted view of God makes us hide. Trust in God's goodness enables us to step forward, admit weakness, learn from mistakes, and keep serving.

But there's one final point - this story contains a serious warning. What we have been given matters, and there will be an accounting. Jesus does not present discipleship as passive admiration. Grace draws us into a life of response. Yet the answer is not frantic

busyness. The faithful servants are welcomed into their master's joy. Their service leads toward shared joy, deeper trust, and greater communion. The goal is not exhaustion for its own sake; it is participation in the life and work of God.

Understanding this helps us distinguish fruitfulness from mere activity. I can be busy and still be hiding—from silence, from prayer, from a difficult relationship, or from the one task that truly requires obedience. Fruitfulness grows from attentiveness to God. It asks, "What, not how much am I doing?" and more importantly, "Am I doing what God requires? Am I becoming more generous, truthful, patient, courageous, and available to God?" Because, to put it bluntly, if we're not doing what God wants us to do, we're wasting our time.

The master's return also reminds us that our days are not endless. This need not produce panic; it should produce clarity. I cannot do everything, but I can do the next faithful thing. I can stop postponing what my conscience has made clear I need to do. I can release

the need to control the outcome and just offer God my honest effort. The final measure of my life will not be visibility or applause, but faithfulness.

So, in conclusion, can I ask you to do something? I want to name one “talent” God has placed in your care. It may be an ability, a relationship, a responsibility, a resource, or an opportunity and I want to thank God for it specifically. Then I want to identify what fear has made you bury or delay using it. Naming that fear reduces its power. Finally, will you choose one act of faithfulness you can take - not someday, but soon.

I’m not going to promise spectacular results. The servants were only responsible for their faithfulness, not for controlling the outcome.

In closing, I’m going to pray a simple response. It’s a personal response but perhaps you can pray it with me in your heart.

Lord, what you have given me, I will not despise.
What you ask of me, I will not postpone.
Where I am afraid, teach me to trust you,
and show me the next faithful step.

Amen

