

Responsibilities According to Our Abilities

Intro. A promotion is usually a good thing. It is a sign we have accomplished all there is to do at the present level and it is time to move on to learn more, new challenges. In school, we are taught at levels appropriate to our age and growth. No one starts with calculus in first grade or quantum mechanics in high school except the occasional “Sheldon.” In the parable the master clearly understands the different abilities of his servants and gives them work that they can accomplish while he is away. He expects them to be responsible with what they received and be accountable on his return.

I. What each servant received, called “talents” is not our meaning today. A talent was a weight of precious metal, usually gold or silver. The exact amount is not important; for the purpose of the

parable it just means a whole lot of money. The amounts given to each one reflects what the master thinks each can handle. The third unfortunately proved his master’s assessment of him: he did nothing with it. He lost any chance for more responsibilities *and*, in the meaning of the parable, lost the joy of everlasting life. The other two were industrious and used what they received well. As their reward they received more responsibilities, plus they entered into the master’s joy, heaven. What we have received from God is proportionate to our abilities. We can’t measure our accomplishments precisely to each other. The woman who discovered how to use radiation to cure diseases like cancer is an amazing woman. The man who invented refrigeration and thus the air conditioner, is for me, an amazing man. Without it, I bet many of us would

not be living in Florida. I don't have their knowledge and ingenuity, but I have other gifts as each of us does. We have to *apply* our gifts the way they did to improve people, their lives and God's kingdom in which we live.

Concl. Shoppers: The end of the calendar year is just *six weeks* away. We are *two weeks* away from the end of the church year and the beginning of Advent. Summer refuses to go and sends at least one more hurricane. The scriptures of last week, this week and the next, remind us a more important end is coming. The Thessalonians had only waited twenty years for the Lord's return and they were anxious for it to come. In our liturgical cycle, before we begin again with the Lord's birth, we conclude with the stark reminder of the end of things – the world and ourselves. As usual, some people see

signs and see fear and anxiety, rather than a reminder to stay awake. These final weeks we contemplate what we are doing and what we *ought* to be doing until the Lord's return. One of our options is to do nothing, bury what God has given us. Another is to be responsible and use what we have received, each according to our abilities, to develop God's creation "with interest." To say we can't, is to ignore the Lord's knowledge of our abilities and the realistic expectations he has for each of us. Our purpose as we await the Lord's return is to share our gifts with one another and ultimately, our Master's joy.

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