

Howard dies and waits in line for judgment. He notices that some souls go right into heaven, while Satan throws others into a burning pit. But every so often, instead of hurling a poor soul into the fire, the devil tosses it aside. Curious, Howard asks Satan, "Excuse me, but why are you tossing them aside instead of flinging them into hell with the others?" "They're from Seattle," Satan replies. "They're too wet to burn."

Dear Friends,

We are here blessed to be the gifts of God. I quote Pope Francis, "We possess a great wealth that depends not on what we possess but on what we are: The life we have received, the good within us, the indelible beauty God has given us by making us in his image. ... All these things make each of us precious in his eyes, each of us is priceless and unique in history! This is how God looks at us, how God feels towards us."

Today's readings bring us our attention to focus on how we are accountable to our life and faith. Today's gospel invites us to take stock of our strengths and weaknesses – God-given talents – so that we can give a proper account of our lives. Taking stock and submitting accounts are some of the usual exercises we undertake when we come to the end of a year. We are approaching the end of another Liturgical year and hence we are given a chance to reflect on 'submitting an account' of our talents – the parable of the Talents.

When you look at the Gospel, the owner gives a huge amount of money to the servants each according to their ability. Luke Gospel (Luke 19:11-17) says that Ten servants receive ten gold coins. In Luke's Gospel everyone gets equal share and opportunity. Mathew's Gospel shares the reality of today's world. We know that in the real world, talents are not equally distributed to everyone. Even among siblings in a family, one seems loaded with talents, while another seems to lack talents as well as opportunities. Both the Gospel says that the talents that were given would be enough lifetime which means a huge amount.

We are all blessed with so much talent. It is not the same; it is unique and a variety of talents. There are some common talents and some special or unique talents which a lot of times we don't recognize. As human beings, God has given some common roles and responsibilities and some unique roles.

In the Gospel, those two servants came forward to share about their talents multiplied and efforts they put in. The third person, however, did not talk about his talent or his efforts. He talked about the one who gave the talent to him. He blamed the Master as the reason for his own inactivity: "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so, I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." (Mt. 25:24-25) It would be helpful if we could examine ourselves and see how much of this person's attitude has rubbed off on us. How much of our life has been wasted in the 'blame game'?

Let us reflect on our families. What is the role of men and women in the family? How do you bring faith into the family? How do you share the role of a husband/wife, father, and mother to their children?

One thing is clear. We are accountable to God who gave all these blessings and life. It is all a gift to us. There is a new study that shows Children are TEN TIMES More Likely to be Regular Churchgoers When Dad Takes an Active Part in His Faith.

We are all baptized: priest, prophet, and king. Let us be accountable to God and pass it on to the next generation. We are really struggling.

God gives to us our own lives with all their rewards and catastrophes, and he says to us, dive in.