

Abundance:
November 15, 2020

[Video: Willy Wonka] [1 Golden Ticket]

I've always loved that scene.
The fact that Charlie has something...
IN HIS HANDS.

That is so unique...
And powerful...
And valuable.

And more importantly...
Something that gives him...
SUCH JOY.

And he was willing to exchange that JOY...
For the concerns of the day.
The worries of the moment.
The burdens of his heart.

But thank God...
For Grandpa George.
Who set the boy straight.
And reminded him...
That he was not a dummy.
And reminded him...
Of the value of what he had been given.

This all reminds me of... **[2 Lost Coin]**
A story that Jesus told...
That was a little confusing.

About a woman...
Who had 10 coins.
She lost 1 of the 10...
And what did she do?

She lit a lamp... and searched
She used an amount of oil...
Which was a limited resource.

She swept the entire floor.
Which was a dirt floor.
And expended an inordinate...
Amount of time and energy...
Which are both limited resources.

And then.
In the most beautiful moment...
In the parable of Jesus.
She finds the coin.

And she doesn't put it in a safe place.
She doesn't hoard it...
So she won't lose it again.

She doesn't cover the corner...
Petting the coin...
And calling it...
My Precious.

No! She rejoices.
And not only does she rejoice...
She called to her friends...
And neighbors...
And says...
REJOICE WITH ME!

And she throws a party.

Probably spends more...
Than the coin was worth.

But that's not the point.
The point is...
She understands the value...
Of what she has...
What she has found.
What she has been given.

When we read the gospel lesson... **[3 Talents]**
The Parable of the Talents...
Where do you see yourself in this story?

Before you answer...
Let's eliminate that first servant...
The one who was given five talents...
And does every perfect little thing...
And makes five more.

Obviously... this guy...
Was a suck up.
An overachiever.
A goody two shoes.
A bit smug... if you ask me.

Kind of hard to like...
And definitely hard to identify with.

So let's narrow the choice...
Down to just two different people.

Are you...
The normal average person...

Who understands what they have been given...
The gift with which they have been entrusted.

Who received the two talents...
And used those talents...
Put those talents to work...
And ended up with two more?

Or are you...
The other guy.
The one who didn't understand.
What he was supposed to do...
The one who didn't appreciate the value...
Of the gift he had been given.

And buried his one single talent...
Deep into the bowels of the earth.
Where sure... it could not be stolen...

But it also could not be used.
Could not be seen.
Could not be shared.

Basically... it became useless....
And ineffective...
Under the ground.

So. My premise today...
Based on the teaching of Jesus...
IS just this:

How we view...
What we have been given...
Makes a huge difference...
In how we use...
What we have been given.

And I'm not just talking about money. **[4 Coin]**
Even though literally...
A talent was a unit of currency...
That was worth about 6,000 denarii...
Or 6,000 days of work.

So one talent was right around...
16 years worth...
Of money.

One talent was a whole honking lot of money.
A boatload of money...
An incredibly valuable sum.

But let's assume...
That Jesus wasn't...

Just talking about money.

Let's say... Jesus...
And you and I today... **[5 The Giver]**
Are talking about...
All the resources...
We have been given by God.

Life.
And breath.
And daily bread.

And every resource...
We have at our disposal.

Every good gift.

Every little thing...
Given to us by God.

If we look at it this way...
And say...
That these servants...
Were entrusted...
With talents...
And gifts...
And abilities...
And life.

And the one...
Takes what he has been given...
And buries it...
Into the ground...
What does that mean?

It means...
He didn't value...
What he had been given.

He didn't use it...
The way... the master intended him...
To use the resources...
With which he had been entrusted.

He didn't see any possibilities...
He didn't see any JOY or HOPE or LIFE...
In what he had been given.

He didn't feel excited and happy...
That the master trusted him.

There was nothing there...

Instead.
He looked at this talent.
And he saw a burden.

He said.
Because he knew the master was a HARSH MAN...
He hid what he had been given. **[6 Fear]**
Out of fear.

What kind of fear?
Fear of risk?
Fear of loss?
Fear of punishment?
Fear of looking foolish?
Whatever it was.

He was afraid.
And so that fear caused him...
To clamp down...
To tighten up...
On what he had been given.

And to not see it as a blessing anymore.
He saw it as a burden.
As a test.

So he decided...

To not use it.
To not risk it.
To not see the JOY...
And the VALUE...
And the POWER...
Of the gift.

That's what fear does.
It makes us afraid...
That things might change.
Or we might lose what we have.
Or we might not have enough for ourselves.

The idea of scarcity.
That we don't have enough...
For ourselves...
Leads to fear.

And that leads me... to ask you all...
What is it that you're not getting enough of... right now.

I mean.
Maybe some of you are lonely.
Because this has been a lonely time.

You aren't getting enough...
Social interaction.

Well... I'm telling you...
Even though it's not perfect...
And it's not a handshake or a hug.

Someone in our community...
Has been given the gift...
Of visitation.

The Holy Spirit has given someone...
Or maybe many people...
Not only the ability...
But the desire... to visit with other people.

There is someone...
Who out of a sense of JOY...
Wants to talk to you.
Wants to check in with you.
Wants to make sure....
You're doing ok.

And that's what God has given them.

Maybe some of you...
Aren't getting enough food.

Well... I want you to know...
Someone in this community...
Has been given the gift of generosity.
Someone wants to help you.

Someone wants to make sure...
You have enough to eat.
That your body is strong...
And healthy...
In this time of uncertainty.

Someone has more than enough...
To eat... and wants to share with you.

And that's what God has given them.

Maybe someone out there...
Participating in worship...
Right this very minute.
Doesn't have enough...
To make ends meet.

Maybe the reality...
Of a lost job...
And lost resources...
Has become too much to bear.

And maybe you or someone you know...
Is sincerely... afraid.

I'm telling you.
Someone in our community of faith.
IN this church.
In the midst of the people of God...
Does not want you to be afraid.

Someone has been given the gift...
Of compassion...
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And they are suffering with you.

And they want to figure out...
A way to help.

And that's what God has given them.

My point is...
In our moments of need...
There are resources...
That have been given to God's people...
Within the context of our community...

There are people...
Who can help.

There are things that can be done.

There are ways...
That we can rejoice in the gifts...
That we have been given...

BY SHARING THEM...
WITH ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE...

What I'm saying is...
If we take the sum value...
Of all the resources that we all have been given.
There is absolutely no reason...
That any single one... should have to live in fear.

Of course... it still happens. **[7 Toilet Paper]**
For example... the recent... ridiculous...
TOILET PAPER fiasco.

The idea that we wouldn't have enough...
Charmin or Angel Soft or Cottonelle...
For our precious little derrieres.
Made us act like idiots and animals...

And by our actions...
We were showing the whole world...
That we are living out of fear.

But really think about this.

Don't you know.
Don't you believe...
That if you were in sincere need...
That you could call...
On the community of faith.
The people of God.

And someone...
Could have spared a square.

Fear stems from a sense of scarcity.
A sense that I won't have enough.

And boy howdy...
Doesn't that attitude just fly...
Right in the face of God.

Who has promised to love us... **[8 God Provides]**
And provide for us.

Who has blessed us.
Who has given us...
What we need...
Even during difficult times.

Who has given us...
A community of faith...
To hold us together...
When we are falling apart.

Who has given us...
A vast multitude of gifts...
Designed to fill our hearts...
And this world...
With a sense...
Of WONDER and JOY!

I mean... aren't we supposed to look at our lives...
And says... thank you God.
Thank you God.

And in return...
God says to us...
Over and over again.

You are MY child.
You are precious to ME.

You are called.
You are empowered.
You are gifted.
You have talents...

But not to keep to yourself.
They belong to me.
Everything you have...
Belongs to me.

Someday...
Your journey on this world...
Will come to an end.

But MY kingdom.
MY resources.
MY life.
MY hope...
IS ETERNAL.

So... what I have given you...
Is a trust.
To be used.
For the sake of the world.

And I'm not talking about money today.
I'm talking about life.
And joy.
And hope.

Sisters and brothers...
IN CHRIST...
Do WE have these things...
Or not.

We have been entrusted...
With all the good things...
That God has to offer.

We have been given...
More than...
We have ever hoped for.

Even in the face of...
The temporary ups and downs...
Of this world.

We have been given...
The eternal things.
That come from God.
To you. To me.
As a gift of life.

This is a matter of perspective.

Are you a child of God...
With access to the eternal riches...
Of the Kingdom of God?
Or not?

See... the only way **[9 Abundance]**
To have the right perspective...
On our resources...
Is if we have the right focus...
On the SOURCE...
Of those resources.

They do not belong to us.
Ultimately.

We are using them.
We are caring for them.
We are stewards...
Of all the gifts that God has given us.

And God intends...
That we use those gifts...

To share the abundance.
That we have been given.

The abundance of hope.
The abundance of community.
The abundance of love.

The abundance of providing...
For those who are teetering...
On the edge of need.

And please don't forget...
God intends that we live...
In an abundance of JOY...

In the here and now.
And in the life to come.
Now and forever.
Amen.