AN ACCOUNTING:
November 15, 2026

A couple weeks ago…
When I was beginning to prepare…
For the sermon today…
I received an email…
From our synod office…

No. I wasn't being reprimanded. **[1 Roger Fjeld]**

It was about the death…
Of someone I knew…
And respected.

His name was Roger Fjeld.
And back when I was going to…
Wartburg Theological Seminary…
In Dubuque Iowa…

He was the President.
The big guy…
The person in charge…
Of Life Together…
At the seminary.

Now. I have a few stories…
About my interactions with Roger.

But for now… let this one suffice.
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One day… when I had my hands full…
Raising two young daughters…
Overwhelmed by the normal stress…
Of raising ankle biters.

There was a knock at the door.
About that time of day…
There was another seminary student…
Who would come over…
Knock on the door…
And lounge on my couch…
While I was busy… being busy.

His name was Al.

So. I yelled…
Al… I can't come to the door right now.
I have my hands full of kids…
Go away.

And the voice from the other side of the door said…
Rod… This is Roger Fjeld.

I knew who Roger was…
But I also knew…
The quality of my friends…
And how they were prone…
To fabricate… make things up…
And flat out lie.

So… I yelled back…
Shut up Al.
Go away…
I'm busy.

A somewhat stunned voice…
Came from the other side of the door…
And it said…

No Rod - This really IS Roger Fjeld.
Could you please open the door.
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Now. The President of the Seminary… **[2 WTS]**
Doesn't typically make house calls…
So I immediately ran through my mind…
What did I do???

Well. It turns out…
He was investigating a problem…
On the seminary campus.

There was a group that formed…
Called the Dead Theologians' Society.

This was a group of male students…
Who met in the limestone caves…
Underneath the seminary.
At night.

VERY CLOAK AND DAGGER.
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Now… I have to tell you…
The truth is… many times…
I went spelunking in those caves…
Below the seminary.

In fact… one time… I went so deep…
Into the caves… that I was stuck… kinda like this:
[VIDEO - POOH]. [3 Tightness]

I was a Wedged Bear in a Great Tightness.

I pretty much resigned myself to the fact…
That 100 years from that moment…
A group of archeologists…
Would find my bones…

In my rayon running shorts…
And my Jesus themed t-shirt…
Stuck in a narrow tunnel…
Underneath the seminary.

Apparently… somehow… I wiggled free.
I don't remember that part.
But I lived!
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Sorry. I digress. **[4 Dead Theologians Society]**
Back to the Dead Theologians' Society.
They gathered beneath the seminary…
In the darkness… to hatch negative ideas…
Against the ordination of women.

THIS WAS NOT SOMETHING I BELIEVED.
As a matter of fact…
You all should know…
That I sincerely believe… that God…
Can do whatever God wants to do.
That's what makes God… God.

And the Holy Spirit can call WHOMEVER…
The Holy Spirit decides to use.

That is the prerogative of our God. Not me.
Not subversive seminary students.
Not even you.

Now the reason Roger Fjeld thought I was involved…
Is because I had a friend… named Skip.
Who was from Midland Texas…
As you can imagine…
Skip was thought to be… politically conservative…
Roger assumed… I would be of the same ilk.

But it didn't matter…
My buddy was NOT part of the…
Dead Theologians' Society…
He was not that kind of person…
And neither was I.
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However… I appreciated Roger's directness.
He didn't go behind my back.
He was straightforward and honest…
And ready to hold me accountable. **[5 Accountability]**

I believe in Accountability.
That's what this gospel lesson is all about.
We read the word **Talen**t…
And we think it has to do with our abilities…
Or skills…
Or God-given talents…

But that's not what it means…
In this particular story.

The word Talent…
Is a denomination of money.
And it's the LARGEST denomination…
Mentioned in the New Testament.

It's hard for us to understand,,, how much this was worth.

Let's have a quiz… shall we?
What is the largest denomination of currency…
Ever printed in the United States?

Anyone know?
This was a question in a coffee shop I visited recently….
So I had to look the answer up. **[6 US Bill]**

It's the $100,000 bill.
Do any of you happen to have one of these at home?
No. You better say no.
Because they are illegal…
For individuals to possess.

They were gold certificates…
And used between Federal Reserve Banks…
To transfer large quantities of gold…
Without actually moving the gold.

There are only 12 $100,000 bills in existence…
In Federal Reserve Museums.
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Anyway… the Talent in the New Testament…. **[7 Money]**
Was even more than that. It was a big old pile of money.
One Talent was equal to about 15 to 20 years…
Worth of employment.

It's estimated that in modern terms…
One Talent would be between…
600,000 and 1 Million Dollars.

So the servants of that man…
Were entrusted with an enormous…
Amount of wealth.

They were given 5, 2, and 1 Talents.
But even the servant…
Who only got 1…
Well… it was still… a fortune.
An incredible responsibility.

And at the same time…
An incredible honor…

To know… the man…
Trusted them so much.
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But with that trust…
There came an expectation…
That the Talent would be used…
In a way… that served…
The interests of the master.

AND… they knew…
That one day…
The master would return…

There would be…
A Day Of Accountability…
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And of course… **[8 Parable]**
The parable focuses on…
The first two servants…

Using what the man…
Had given them…
And bringing more back.

An increase in his wealth.
So that when he came back…
He said to them…

Well done…
Good and faithful servant…
You have been trustworthy…
In a little… and now I know…
I can trust you to have more…
To do more.
To be more.

More and more.
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But the third servant.
The one who was given one Talent.
It was a WAY different story.
It was not a good day… for him.

Did you notice what stopped him…
For doing and being everything…
That the man intended him to do and be? **[9 Fear]**

FEAR. He was afraid.

The words he said were…
Master… I knew that you were a harsh man…
Reaping where you did not sow…
Gathering where you did not scatter…

So I was afraid.
And I buried what you had given me.
In the ground. Under the dirt…
So that no one would find it.

Unfortunately… that also meant…
No one could use it….
Not even the servant…

No one would benefit…
Not even the master.
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Needless to say.
The man was not happy.
No well done.
No good and faithful servant.

Instead. This is what he said.
You wicked and lazy slave.
What did you think would happen.
When I came home?

Do the math.

And then… what he was given…
His responsibility…
His entrusted authority…
Everything.

Was taken away… from him.
And given to the servant…
Who originally had 5 Talents…
And was rewarded with 5 more Talents…
Plus one more.
He ended up with 11 Talents.

Which is a sign of…
Who the master trusts…
And who the master does not trust. **[10 Parable]**
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So I don't think this parable is really about money.
And I know it's NOT about our talents and abilities…
Even though that how we misused this parable…
At summer Bible camp…
To motivate young people.

It's about something really important to Jesus.
Remember he was talking directly to his disciples.
This is something he wanted them to know…
And to understand.

So. A question. What is the most valuable thing…
We have been given by God?

Our resources?
Our life?
Our time?

How about this… **[11 The Gospel]**
The Gospel.

That we… you and I…
And everyone else…
Who confesses that God is God…
And Jesus is the Savior of the World…
And the Holy Spirit is at work in us.

We all have an inherent responsibility…
A God-given responsibility…

To take the Truth that we have been given…
To take the promises of life and hope…
To take this community of love and faith…
To take our very lives…
And our time…

And use all that…
For the sake of Gospel.
For the sake of letting the world know… what we know.
For the sake of giving sight… to the blind…
Of helping God find… those who are lost.
Of raising the dead… to new life.

To spread hope and love…
To radiate goodness…
To be the People of God…
In a world that needs…
Hope and Love.
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I mean… we are what we eat.
We are what we consume on a daily basis.

We watch the news…
Or listen to podcasts…
Or do what we do…

And I hear the conclusion…
Over and over again…

That the world is going to Hell in hand basket…
Or the world is in the worst condition… it has ever been…
Or whatever gloom and doom… it is…
We see on the horizon.

But the truth is…
The world is no different than it has ever been.

And those who are feeding us a daily dose…
Of bad news…

They do not get to define reality.

The Truth is… God is still God.
Not us.
Not AI.
Not information.
Not wealth.
Not power.
Not anything else.

God is God.
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We have been entrusted…
With the most valuable thing…
In the entire world…
In the entire Universe.

God is alive.
God is love.
God is hope.

Even in the darkest times.

Isn't that why… Jesus came in the first place.

To bring light to the darkness.
To bring hope to the hopeless.
To bring life in the face of death.

To proclaim… that the Kingdom of God…
Is in our midst.
Right here.
Right now.
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And the most amazing things has happened.

WE have been entrusted with the Good news.
WE have been given the antidote…
To hate and despair and fear and anger…
To all the poisons in the world.

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE TRUTH.
And that is greatest gift… of all time.
More valuable… than 1 or 2 or 5 Talents.

So the final question is…
What are we doing with what we have been given?

How can we invest… the treasure we have been given…
How can we use… all of this…

To bring Glory to our God.
To bring love to our community.
To bring hope to the world?

It's up to us now.
We are the servants.
We are the ones who are trusted by our God.
We have everything we need.

It's time to get to work.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!