

SUNDAY ORDINARY 33 A

Based on Matthew 25:14-30

FOR NOVEMBER 13, 2011 – CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

It sounds kind of tempting, doesn't it?

I mean,

 given what we have seen in the stock market
 and heard on the news in the past months,
digging a hole
and burying some cash in the back pasture
doesn't sound so crazy,
now, does it?

Everyone who laughed at Uncle Charlie—
 *(you remember Uncle Charlie--
 he stashed all of his money
 in an old lard can under a loose floorboard)*

Everyone who laughed at him,
may be having second thoughts today.

Maybe Uncle Charlie had the right idea,
all along.

Maybe taking risks—
 with banks,
 with investments,
 with demanding bosses,
 with life itself—

is just too sketchy...
too uncertain...
too dangerous.

After all,
if you hide your treasure in a lard can
 or a cigar box,
 or in a deep, deep hole behind the wood pile,
you know exactly what you've got
and where you stand.

You may not double your investment;
you may not impress your relatives;
you may not astonish your boss—
In fact,
the entire world may treat you
as their very own Uncle Charlie...

but at least it's **safe**.

And in a world where
many people harvest what they do not plant
and gather what they do not scatter;
In a world filled with perilous opportunities,
uncertain markets
and demanding masters—

Safety
can sometimes feel like the biggest prize of all.

But this story we heard today from the Gospel of Matthew,
like so many of Jesus' parables,
challenges us to turn our expectations
upside down.

This story invites us to see that
people who play the percentages—
people who hedge their bets,
who hide their treasures—
people who are fearful and risk nothing,
actually
risk everything.

Like the servants in this story,
God offers each of us a partnership.

The 5-talent and 2-talent servants
saw that partnership as an opportunity—
an adventure to be explored.
They knew that what the Master gave them
could easily be lost,
stolen,
invested badly—
but they took the risk anyway.

The one-talent servant
saw the partnership as a problem—
a potential landmine to be feared.
He also knew that what the Master gave him
could easily be lost,
stolen,
invested badly—
so he opted for **damage control**.

That servant avoided the challenge of partnership,
only to find that playing it safe

can be the biggest risk of all.

Preachers many times use this parable
as a launching pad
to discuss stewardship;
the concept of sharing gifts and talents,
and making the most
of what God has given us.

And when they do,
our minds
immediately
turn toward money - the “bottom line”.

But stewardship is not just about money,
or pledges,
or building campaigns.
It's not just a program,
or an event,
or a theme for a particular Sunday of the year.

Somewhere along the way,
we have allowed the idea of stewardship
to be too narrowly defined.

It became a word that we use
when the roof needs repairs
or the gym needs air conditioning.

But stewardship,
like discipleship,
is a way of life.
It is a way of testifying;
celebrating;
and living each day in gratitude.

It is a lifestyle of receiving,
of multiplying,
of letting go,
and yes,
of actually taking risks!

We've seen an inspiring example of this,
here in our Cathedral parish,
just this past week!

Stewardship is a way of remembering
that we live in a world we did not create;
we receive blessings we did not earn;

we use resources we do not own
and our response to this generosity
can either be a profession of *faith*
or a profession of *fear*.

This parable reminds us that we worship a God
who is willing to invest in us.
A God, a Master, who is willing to make a bet --
and take a risk.

This parable reminds us
that if we play it safe and risk nothing in return,
we actually risk
everything.

- Adapted from a work by Susan Fleming McGurgan - 2008