

The Chance of a Lifetime

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Date: 11 February 2018

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[0 : 00] Well, this is the last sermon in our sermon series that we're covering. It talks about being the heart of a good stewardship, about doing what God wants us to do. And in Matthew's Gospel today, it's one of those bits where you can feel extremely encouraged or you can feel extremely guilty.

Now, if you're one of those Christians that really get off on feeling guilty, there's a little room at the back and please go put on your sackcloth and ashes. But don't do it yet. Just hold off for a moment because I pray that this scripture this morning will really encourage you and save you from being a bit itchy and scratchy for the rest of Lent. So, as we enter Lent, a time for us to reflect and renew, we're going to focus on the huge opportunity that Jesus gives us because that's what this scripture is all about.

But first of all, we're going to rewind back to 2009 if we're talking about talents. If, like me, you were sat down, you were there on a Sunday evening, you were just watching some mindless TV that happened to be Britain's Got Talent, and there was a lady who came onto the stage. You could tell from her gait that she probably had some form of issue in her life and additional need.

And as she walked onto that stage, her name was Susan Boyle. And you saw in the people that were gathered this sense of writing her off, even before she'd had the opportunity to do what she'd been called to do. I'm just going to remind you of that moment. Bless you.

Thank you. What's the dream? I'm trying to be a professional singer. And why hasn't it worked out so far, Susan? I've never been given the chance before, but here's hoping it'll change.

[1 : 55] I'm going to sing. I'm going to sing. I'm going to sing. I dreamed a dream from the Miserables. Okay. Big song. Yeah? Yes.

Yes. I dreamed a dream in time gone by. I went for this time, I left the day. Did you? No.

I dreamed a dream of love would never die. I never thought would be forgiven.

I was young and darn afraid. When dreams were made and used and wasted.

When dreams were made and was the ones to be made. No sun and snow, no wine. I'm trying to be a professional singer, but nobody gave me the chance.

[3 : 15] It's her line. And Susan Boyle now one of the most successful recording artists, a lady who at the age of 49 had had her demons in her life, who had been a long practicing and heartfelt Christian, who had been told by other people that she just had brain damage and written her off instead of having a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome and rejoicing in that.

You know, God gave talent. God gives us talents to use and to invest into growing. And in our mindset, as we read this scripture this morning, as we read in our sort of cultural mindset of this thing of somebody's been given ten talents, another one's been given two, maybe five, whatever they've been given, and I've been given one.

And you think, oh, why have I only been given one? I want to shift your mindset this morning that never mind what other talents have been given.

What is the one with the talent that we've been given that we're going to do with it? Because Jesus had some harsh words to say, quite rightly, for the person who just went and buried it and did nothing with it. And that's my challenge this morning in our consumeristic culture is, yes, it's absolutely right that we should have more, that God would stir up the gifts in us.

But don't get hung up if this is your moment to use your one talent that God has given you, amongst other things. And this is why the man gave up. And it says he was lazy, maybe he was jealous, maybe he was envious.

[5 : 05] But actually, on a one-to-one, God has got such great things to do with each and every one of us within this amazing thing called the body of Christ. And so why hasn't God given me this

great talent to play worship music?

Why hasn't God given me that talent? And God says, I'm God and you are not. Get over it, Clive. I don't know what the translation is in the Greek, but just get over it.

Because this is what I'm calling you to do in this moment of time. Because at the heart of this parable is adventure and opportunity.

Adventure and opportunity. Because whatever is given to you by the master, whatever it looks like is precious. Hugely precious.

And don't bury it. You see, this scripture has always been trotted out when leaders talk about money. Because a talent was an amount of money.

[6:10] But I sense that Jesus was using this to talk to the Pharisees, who were pretty inflexible on opportunity and change. They didn't do it very well. And so Jesus is saying, you know, whatever it is that you've been given, grow it.

Encourage it, whatever season that may be. And hence, Jesus focuses on the waste of not embracing it. Of not taking it. Of not using it. Of not building it up and growing it.

And the servant who sadly takes this precious talent and does nothing with it. And hides it away. No wonder you can understand why Jesus may be in this story gets a bit prickly.

Because if I've given you this amazing talent, the talent that's been given, whatever it is to grow and build. And all we do is just go away and hide it or moan about it or do nothing with it.

Then what is the point of that? No wonder Jesus says, you're a bit lazy. I've just been watching a teaching series on ministry.

[7:17] And I'm really struggling with this idea of people coming saying, oh, I think you've been called to ministry. Ha! We've all been called to ministry.

Each and every one of us. That's the way in which the talents work. Because we work together. God brings all things together for good. And that drew me to Romans 12.

And this idea about the body of Christ. You know, for just as each and every one of us has one body with many members, do not all have the same function.

We don't. So in Christ, we, though many, form one body. And all the others, we have different gifts according to the grace given to each one of us.

Hold that picture. Hold that picture. Hold that picture about the body. This congregation, we have different gifts given to us at different times of our life.

[8:21] My gift now isn't the same as it was 20 years ago. I've been given more gifts. I'd love to go out and run a marathon.

People are like, yeah, I know, I know the body's not up to it. You can be honest with me. You know? Maybe 20 years I might have been able to do that.

But it's not my gift. But there are many people here who will. Isn't that wonderful in the way in which we use our different gifts to build up the body? And that is here. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.

If it's serving, then serve. Thank you to those that were here on Monday. We had a celebration of a life here on Monday, filled where people came and served.

It was beautiful. If it's teaching, then teach. If it's to encourage, then give encouragement. I think that's a gift everybody should have.

[9:23] And if it's to lead, do it diligently. If it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. You see, this collective gifting, these gifts are given to us in grace.

And I am humbled by that. When I look across you, the saints, of the way in which people are gifted, in the way in which you use it. Also, again, like you, I feel that frustration that Jesus feels when you see people have got such rich gifting and they just don't use it.

And the Holy Spirit comes and stirs up the gifts in us. And if we are open, we ask you, say, stir up the gifts in us. Stir them up. Don't just leave them there.

Stir them up. Stir them up. And in Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through him who gives me strength. I can do all things.

And we talked earlier a little bit about courage. Somebody said something about courage earlier. And that courageous moment of actually stepping out and using our gift. It doesn't stop me earnestly seeking more.

[10:27] In fact, we should. The guy that got ten talents in the end. That is great. I'm not sat here with my three thinking, that's not fair.

I'm going to throw my teddy out. That's for the good of the body of Christ. Let's use them and encourage one another. If you are a financial wizard, then bless you.

Bless you. Bless you. Grow money and give for those of us who need to use that in an area in which we can use. Because we have the gifting to use that in another area, but we don't have the money to do it.

If your gifting is to share, if your gifting is to do whatever in your workplace, then use it richly. Having said that, having said that, I really sense this idea of kingdom.

Because we need to live like the kingdom of God is near. I remember talking of gifting and Susan Boyle.

[11 : 30] On my council estate where I grew up, there was a small metal Baptist chapel. All the other churches had retreated. I think we were just too bad for them.

But I can remember it. There was, you went in and you smelled, you remember those old gas heaters where you could smell them when you went in? Because they were leaking so badly, I can feel it now. And there was a lady.

And we loved her. Because she was like us. She had one coat. She always wore the same coat. Everybody on our council estate had one coat.

And I remember she would make cookies for us. And she called us her saints, this group of six-year-olds that used to gather.

And she would come Sunday by Sunday. I knew how much that cost her. Because there wasn't much in our larder. And I think probably what came out of her larder filled those cookies for us on a Sunday afternoon.

[12 : 32] And she taught me the stories of Jesus. She drew me into a relationship with Jesus that never left me.

Her talents, and I'm sure she had many, but she used that talent so richly. And I am the product of her increase.

I am the product of her increase. Who brought you to know Jesus? Who told you about the stories of Jesus?

Who led you into a deeper relationship with the person who you love and know? So much so that you want to go out and serve him in the everyday. Who taught you? And if we are the product of his increase, how much more do we want to increase with others who we are being called to reach?

To use our talents. And I get quite... And why was it? What was it that drew me? It was her passion.

[13 : 41] It was her passion of using her talent. And maybe already you're thinking, what is my talent in this season? Maybe we rejoice for what our talent was in past seasons.

But what is your talent in this season that God is calling you? And where is he calling you to use that? Because that's the challenge this morning. Maybe it is inviting a friend to supper.

Maybe it's inviting a not yet Christian round to your house. Maybe it's spending more time. Maybe it's serving as you're serving in the food bank or wherever, whatever we do. And you may say, that's great.

But how do we increase that? Because that's the story that we've heard this morning. How do we increase that? Because that's what the Lord wants. And as the story ends, there is more.

You are the product of the blessing. Because I stand here on a Sunday morning and we are so blessed to be in this place together.

[14 : 43] To be encouraged and to be built up. At Trinity College with our Trinity Church family, it says, live like the kingdom is near.

And I get really excited about that. Because that's worth getting out of bed for in the morning. So how are you going to use my talent today, Lord? What are you going to show me? What is new? Where is that courageous edge that you are going to gift me in the power of your Holy Spirit to use that? And I get it. Why wouldn't I want to? You know, I want to see my family, my neighbour. I want to see the bloke who yesterday, who stole my parking space, just as I got it at the surgery.

I want to see him come to Christ. I want to see him blessed by that only parking space that was left, that I've been queuing for, for five minutes.

Bless him, Lord. The talent is not for hiding. And it's by God's grace that we are here. It's by God's grace that many here are using their talents and gifts.

[15 : 47] It's about God's grace. I think for us in this scripture, it's what I would call a power up moment.

That maybe for some of us, we have been a bit, well, how do I use my talent? Is this my talent? What do I do? How can I use that? And the Lord says, use it richly, because I will increase it. I will increase it in what you have. I thought one of the, if you were here at the 1115, you were probably impacted by Liz, who led our prayers.

She really got down with the kids at the 1115 by using the words of one of my favorite songs that I've been using as a song from Stormzy.

And it's called, I'm blinded by your grace. And if you haven't seen the clip, for me, it says something about how you use your talent to bring a whole community.

[16:51] Stormzy went back to a community, large, close community in, I think it was in London, in amongst all these high rise.

And people came down, it was like a flash mob. And he uses this, these words of, I'm blinded by your grace, the grace of God that passes all understanding, that increases what we have in him. And then, as he sang this song, the community gathered, and they gathered, and they gathered. And then, they prayed.

Here's the clip. Weep along with me, because it's passionate. And this is what Jesus, I believe, is trying to get over about us changing our community.

Thanks, John. And it spoke to him on the deserving ness of the power of God that stayed in us coming and assured that there's that she came going well and said it feels important. And that he hid his treasure in his life.

[17:56] Feg it out,■■ him on the punya scale, only in our living's life. We've seen your presence hit the drum, even in our houses we find him to see. There's not no one decision, Lord, his name, but he needed him to know it. And this is what Jesus went down, but this is what Jesus went down. So, march he had to send the troubleance, who saw something on his way.

And this is what Jesus' name so solidieth of the mightier. I saw God we've seen as the covenant, he's been facing 1508 in the physical movie value, together and he moved on his hand on the House of Man To another day, I was so afraid Till you came and saved You came and sent me And the rain was boring Cause the sun faded away Now I'm in a better place No longer afraid Blinded by your grace You came and sent me I said a prayer this morning I prayed I would find a way To another day, I was so afraid Till you came and saved You came and sent me No longer afraid Although I'm alone Nobody will fix me I'm blinded by your grace