

## **Bringing Our Best to Jesus**

Matthew 25-14-30

Song: The Little Drummer Boy

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4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent, December 23, 2018

What if you took your child or grandchild to the emergency room because she was complaining with abdominal pain and the emergency room doctor determined that she had appendicitis and needed surgery.

Then the doctor surprisingly said, “We have a surgeon on call, but he’s not the best. He can do the surgery, but I really wouldn’t want him operating on my child. If you want the best, I advise you to take your child to hospital X. They have the best surgeon. I think you still have time, but it’s your decision.”

What If you were managing a baseball team, and you needed a pitch hitter to win the ballgame to send your team to the state championship game. Are you going to look at your bench and choose the most likable player or are you going to send your best batter to the plate?

We usually look for the best people to hire, to give us advice, and to take care of our essential needs. Why shouldn't God ask and expect the best from us?

Jesus told a story about three servants who were entrusted with their master’s wealth while he went on a journey. Two of them did their best to put the money to work and ended up doubling the money and presented it to him when he returned.

The other servant made no effort to do anything with his money. All he was concerned with was not losing it and returning it when the master returned.

For him, the money was a burden. The servant was relieved when the master returned. He just wanted to give it back, like it was radioactive, or something. He told his master, “I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you” (Matthew 25: 27-28).

By the reaction of the master, he expected the servant to use the money and make some effort to make it grow. He never told the servant how much of the money he expected to receive back. However, he implied that he expected him to be faithful and to put it to some use.

At the very least, the master told the servant that he should have put his money on deposit with the bankers, so that when he returned he would have received his money back with interest.

Instead, the servant didn’t do anything with the money entrusted to him. He just buried it in the ground. He didn’t come close to giving his best because he didn’t give any effort at all.

Jesus isn't hard on us by expecting to harvest where he has not sown and gathered where he has not scattered seed. Jesus is putting his trust in us because Jesus believes in our potential to create. He gave us abilities, ideas, imagination, and creativity, energy, and gifts. God expects us to use what He has given us to make the world a better place and to lead people to heaven and not just use them for our selfish purposes.

God expects that we will use them with Him in mind.

We should be honored that we have been trusted by the Lord with gifts to use in this world.

We have been blessed with gifts to use in the church, with our families, in non-profits, in the workplace, in government, in our schools, among our friends, when we play, and wherever our paths cross with people and God's environment.

We expect and even demand the best from all the other professionals that cross our lives. Why shouldn't the Lord expect and require that our best from us?

Are you giving the Lord your best?

Some of you are making the best use of the time and resources that you have. Some of you may be wasting what you have.

Remember, this isn't a comparison game. The Lord isn't comparing what you do to anyone else.

The Lord isn't saying to us, "Why aren't you doing as much as another church does? Why aren't you doing as much as this person does?"

Nor does God want you to become proud and say, "Well, I'm doing a lot more than most people?" But that's not so good if you are still not giving God your best.

The Lord wants us to think about what we have been given and what we are capable of giving in return.

The Master judged each of those servants based what he did with what they were given.

Based on your abilities, are you giving the Lord your best?

One of my favorite songs this time of the year is "The Little Drummer Boy."

Last year the Mullis family presented this song at our Christmas Eve service.

I'll always remember Sawyer twirling his drummer's sticks while his mother gave us a little history of the song.

But what I like about the song is that it is told from the perspective of a boy, a boy who invites us to come with him see the newborn King.

The boy is a bit intimidated because everyone else has nice gifts to bring this newborn King. One by one, they lay them before the King as they come to honor him.

But the boy has no physical gifts to bring, but he does realize he has something in common with the baby boy. He too is a poor boy. While he has no gift fit for a King, he does have one thing.

“Shall I play for you?” he asks.

Pa rum pump um pum  
On my drum  
Mary nodded  
The ox and lamb kept time  
I played my drum for Him  
I played my best for Him  
Then He smiled at me  
Pa rum pum pum pum  
Me and my drum.

It's a beautiful message.

There isn't one of us who has a gift fit for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

We are flawed and marred by sin, but we are still invited by the Lord to participate in his kingdom plan. In fact, we are expected to participate in God's kingdom plan.

As seen in the parable, burying our talents is not an option with God. God expects us to become involved and use what we have for the benefit of the kingdom of God.

Excuses are not accepted.

They are not accepted because “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.<sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,<sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.<sup>30</sup> It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:27-31)

So even when we succeed, even if we double our talents, we must stop and remember that it is God working in us that makes the difference.

Then there are those times when we have done our best, and nothing seems to happen. We can become discouraged easily.

When we have played (given) our best and it seems to have made no difference, we need to remember that we cannot always see the results of our faithfulness.

A Jewish woman had two water cans which were attached to a yoke. Each day she put the yoke over her shoulders and went down to the river. She filled the cans and walked back to her modest hut.

The water can on the right side of the yoke was fine and sturdy. When the woman arrived home, it was always full. But the can on the left had a crack in it. By the time the woman arrived home, half the water in the can was gone.

Now if can had feelings, the cracked can would have always felt inferior to its partner. It would have felt shame that it was cracked and wasn't pulling its weight.

One day someone said to the woman, "Why do you keep carrying that can around with you? It is old and defective. It doesn't even deliver half the water back to your house?"

The woman smiled gently and said: "Did you think I don't know that it has a crack, and water drops from it? Look at the path from the river to my hut. Do you see all the beautiful flowers that are growing on the one side of the path? Those are the flowers that I planted there. Those are the flowers that have been watered every day by that cracked pot as I walked home from the river." <https://www.findyourish.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2009-04-13-101803.jpeg>

We all have weaknesses. We are all flawed. But praise God, it's not our flaws or our shortcomings that keep us from being used by God.

It's our unwillingness. It's our lack of desire. It's our lack of effort. It's our lack of passion. It's our attitude that giving less than our best to God is O.K.

Why is it that we will give our best to our coach, our best to our teacher, our best to our employer, our best to a special friend, but we expect God to be satisfied with whatever we decide to give him?

God is not concerned as much with what you have to offer as your willingness to give it.

So, if you only have a snare drum, then play it the best you can.

If you are only a child, it doesn't matter. God can use a child and often has to teach people about the Kingdom of God.

If you are a youth, that's fine. Paul told Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

If you don't have much money, give what you have. Jesus once praised a woman in the temple because she gave two small copper coins and said she gave more than all the rest because that was the best she could do. It was all she had.

That's all God asks from any of us. He asks that we give it all we've got.

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind."

In other words, when we love God, we should love God with all we've got.

We need to give God our best in all aspects of life. Anything less isn't love.

Christmas is the time of the year for gift-giving. It's Jesus' birthday, and often Jesus is the one that gets left out of receiving any gifts.

It seems appropriate this morning to join the Little Drummer Boy by bringing the Lord a gift.

What might the Lord want from us?

It's straightforward. God wants us to give what we have. You might say, "Well isn't that what the servant with the least amount of talents did. He gave what he had back to the master."

No, no. What we have is a promise, the ability, and the responsibility to take what we have and use for the glory of God.

Otherwise, we live our lives selfishly and without God in the center.

God wants the best of what we have, not the leftovers, not the afterthoughts. God wants to have the primary place in our lives, with no other gods before Him.

Like the Little Drummer Boy, we give out of the poverty of our Spirit, but as we do so, we know that angels will nod in approval and that there will be blessings that will abound because we played our drum for Him. Pa rum pum pum-pum.

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