



November 19, 2017 - Trusting (God's) Trust (in us)

Given by Pastor Mattei

Once a year Time and Newsweek magazines run special issues that feature people who have had a leadership role or some form of influence on society for better or worst. What they have in common is a vision and a strong will to achieve their dream. They don't seem to fear failure and take the necessary risks to progress on their quest.

I remember as a child to be greatly anxious about my future. What would I do after my high school education? How would I enter adulthood? How would I make a living? How would I know which was the right person to marry? And so on. At times, fear was intense. The worst time was when I held my first child in my arms: I remember asking myself, "Now, what? How do I care for a life so fragile? How do I guide and nurture and protect a baby and a family in a harsh world? Fortunately, I was not in a war-torn country. I realized I could care, love and nurture my family one day at the time, one moment at the time with trust in God's help. Same anxiety when I became pastor of churches. By God's grace and through loving and patient people I learned how to pastor congregations. I had many learning opportunities, many occasions when I was called to trust the movement of the Spirit, to trust that I was called to love. By stepping out in love I was allowing God to use me and I was making use of God's gifts for me.

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is quite disturbing and anxiety provoking as if I needed more anxiety. The question may easily be asked: Am I the person who is not producing enough for the Lord? Am I doing enough with what God has entrusted to me? I consider myself an educated person and have developed some skills; but I can tell the work is never done and there should be more hours in a day. But even if I do not want to consider my work in terms of quantity, is it at least of good quality? Will the Lord ever going to be pleased with me or will I be at some point going to be rejected into a place of darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth?

The parable gives us some clues on what the Lord seeks of us.

The master *trusts* his servants enough to give them different amounts of his wealth to administer according to his servants' abilities. What transpires is that he *knows* them. He knows them enough to trust their abilities. He knows them well enough to trust they can match *his* trust and take care of his goods. The focus of the parable is not on the number of talents and the master's happiness was not in response to the return the first two servants had on their investments. We need to understand that God, the master, gives gifts; we steward them. The focus is on where the servants' energy was invested: the third servant was paralyzed by fear and invested his energy in hiding the money. His motivation was the mental picture he had of the master. Even that (distorted) picture, the master says, should have motivated the servant to do better. What the servant will miss out on is the joy of the master: we may go through life in fear, hating anything that challenges the equilibrium we work so hard to maintain, or engaged with whatever transpires and respond according to the gospel values and principles and participate in the master's joy.

The image we have of God is the same we have of ourselves (if we believe we have been created in the image and likeness of God.) If we feel inadequate and judge ourselves and don't feel "enough" or don't trust our abilities and are afraid of trying new things, challenging and stretching ourselves we most probably have the image of a judging and demanding God impressed in our spiritual memory. The experience of a compassionate, loving and understanding God who loves us to the point of trusting that we can do great things with the life and the gifts we are given propels us to be out there, investing in ourselves and others, loving and caring, nurturing and just being with one another. Trusting the God who trusts us we take risks in love knowing that experiencing the act of investing ourselves with generosity is by itself a participation in the joy of the Lord. We don't love because we are afraid of God's punishment. We love because it is joyous for us to do so. Trust God who trusts you.