



Mattering to God
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30
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According to Dr. Gordon Flett, “mattering is a ‘core, universal human need,’ a necessary component for well-being.” Mattering is more than feeling like you belong or having good self-esteem, it is about feeling valued by others and believing that you add value to the lives of those around you.

Research shows all kinds of benefits for people who feel like they matter, which lead to better relationships with themselves and with others. A “lack of mattering is associated with burnout, self-criticism, anxiety, depression, aggression, and increased risk of suicide.”¹

You can get a sense of how much you feel you matter by asking yourself just a few questions:

- Do you feel valued...
 - in your relationships?
 - at work (both paid and unpaid)?
 - in your community?
 - by yourself? (Do you matter to yourself, possessing a sense that you’re worthy regardless of what you accomplish or how you look?)
- Do you add value...
 - in your relationships?
 - at work (both paid and unpaid)?

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/27/well/mind/mental-health-mattering-self-esteem.html>

- in your community?
- to yourself? (i.e. practice self-care)

Mattering to self and others creates a sense of safety, of being valued, of being cherished, of belonging. Today's gospel highlights the fact that God values us: we matter to God.

Jesus' parable of the talents invites a full-hearted response to God's lavish gifts of faith and purpose: Be aware of those gifts; appreciate them; and use them! We are meant to be engaged, alert, and ready to share what we have received from our extravagantly generous God. While the parable has sometimes been interpreted in the context of judgment, a careful reading also spotlights the beauty of the faith-generated response to God's lavish grace.

On the surface Jesus' parable might lead us to think we are judged by how we use our talents: some workers please and others disappoint their master. First Thessalonians is a letter reminding people they have exactly what they need to survive and thrive. The gospel text today reminds us that there is a depth to faith that is sustainable. In fact, beneath the parables of Jesus is a depth it will take a lifetime to unpack.

Jesus' parable tells of a man who entrusted his possessions to his servants so that they would carry on his business.

Each talent Matthew mentions equaled about 20 years' wages — quite a sum! We shouldn't feel too sorry for the servant who only got one. The owner was not only wealthy, but extravagant in his trust!

While the numbers are astounding, Jesus' emphasis is on the way each servant understood his relationship to the owner.

For two of them, the master's trust impelled them to imitate his risky behavior, giving them the courage to "trade" or work with the owner's fortune, assuming risk of loss for the hope of gain. They gave the owner the highest compliment possible by imitating him.

The third placed his faith in the value of what he had at hand; fearing the consequences of a loss, he played it safe, effectively repudiating the owner's lavish approach to life.

The grim will respond with prudent timidity — striving to avoid any mistake. Others will be moved to imitate the unrestrained generosity of the God who has put so much in their hands. They trust that the owner understands the risks and will stay with them through it all.

Obviously, by now, we are speaking not of the parable, but its subject: God.

People who risk imitating divine openhandedness collaborate with their creator.

Not everybody feels comfortable with risk taking. And yet, God calls us in a trust relationship. It is true that God entrusts gifts to us, each slightly differently, and calls us to use them to do God's work in the world. But I hesitate to directly equate the man in the parable with God, because the loving God I know is not a "harsh man" (Matthew 25:24) who calls us "worthless" (Matthew 25:30) and dispossesses us if we do not earn enough return on the investment.

In God's eyes, our worth is not tied to our ability to achieve. We are each made in the image of God and that is what gives us our worth. That should free us of any fear or anxiety. We matter to God, and the gifts we receive allow us to grow in the measure in which we use them for God's kingdom.

We matter to God who has birthed us out of love and for love. We are God's precious children, endowed with generous gifts intended for God's ongoing creation. What a privilege it is to be trusted and called to administer God's gifts.

Let us give thanks to God for the trust received. Let us rejoice in the knowledge of mattering to God. let us use the gifts received in the power of the Spirit. Amen.