SERMON AT BRUNSWICK: 17/11/2002: GEOFF CHADWICK: PENTECOST 26 (OS 33): MTT 25:14-30: "GOD THE ENTREPRENEUR"

The Parable of the Talents is so familiar to us that that some of its original absurdities may be lost to us. Let's see if we can re-visit them.

Firstly, we must note the size of the Sums of money. One Talent was more than 15 years salary for a labourer. (See note NRSV). So to be given 5 talents is to be given 75 years worth of wages: how much would that be to us: $2 to 3 million dollars? Maybe more?

Let me read it to you again:

> "For it is as if a man, Going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave $3 million dollars, to another 1.2 million and another $600 000… The one who had $3 million dollars made $3million more. The one who had 1.2million made 1.2 million more… Then the one who had received $600 000 also came forward saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your $600 000 in the ground. Here you have what is yours." (Mtt 25:14-25, paraphrased).

(Note the absurdity!)

There is something bigger and grander to this parable than simply talking about our God given gifts and talents. No, it paints God as an entrepreneur. Here, God, the multi-million dollar business tycoon does some wheeling and dealing. Business is left in the hands of faithful slaves although some are more astute than others. With God we are involved in big business.

There is another point to this parable: it is about reaping where we did not sow. Matthew is writing to a Jewish church and there was some concern over the inclusion of Gentiles into the Christian faith. The $600 000 man has got it all wrong. He hides the money in the ground for fear of Master's ability to reap where he did not sow. I think this is an allusion to those in Matthew's church who failed to invest in the

mission to the Gentiles. Those who thought that Christianity was for the Jews only are like the $600 000 man – failing to recognise the potential harvest amongst those not like themselves.

The $600 000 man gets short shift from the Master – he is condemned to the place where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth". His sin is that he failed to participate in the wider entrepreneurial adventure of the Master. The entrepreneur wants us to play with the abundant good things he has given us.

So how are we going with the investment God has given us? Are we $3 million men/women, $1.2 million men/women or $600 000 men/women? Have we been captivated by our divine tycoon's adventurous business plan or are we afraid that his adventure might fail - *or is it succeed*? (That's it God's entrepreneurial enterprise just might succeed. Then where would we be?)

Could it be that we'd rather leave God's investment in the ground? Could it be that we'd rather reap only what we sow and not bother to reap what we did not sow? Could it be that we would relegate God's absurd entrepreneurial activities to where they should be – in the scrap heap of many a failed business venture? Perhaps failure is easier for us to deal with than success?

Now I know we'd all like to think otherwise, but I think we can all be a little scared of God's activities. God really does unsettle us. What sort of a God is it that chooses to change the world through a band of fishermen, tax collectors and ex-prostitutes? What sort of a God chooses to give us new life through the actions of death? What sort of a God chooses to give over $3 million to servants?

Our God does. Our God, who trusts us enough that we might participate in his extravagant and absurd adventure of life.

"What are you gonna do when you win Lotto?"… You have!