

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked”

This statement of Jesus has become somewhat of an idiom in Western culture. The idea of “to whom much is given, much will be required” is that we are held responsible for what we have. If we are blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, and the like, it is expected that we use these well to glorify God and benefit others.

To put our Lord’s words into context, Jesus had just told a parable about being ready for His return. His disciple Peter asked if the parable was for just them or for everyone. Jesus replied with another parable in which He defines the “faithful and wise manager” as one who gives out food and other allowances “at the proper time.” When the master returns and finds the faithful servant managing his resources well, he “put him in charge of all his possessions”. We have been entrusted with certain things, and faithfulness requires that we manage those things wisely and unselfishly.

Jesus then continues the parable by contrasting the faithful servant with one who abuses his authority during the Master’s absence and ill treats the servants under him, while living a life of drunken self-indulgence. This unfaithful servant mismanages the master’s resources to satiate his own greed, and Jesus warns that severe judgement is certain for that servant. It is then that our Lord summarises the point of the parable with these words of warning “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

In our moneyed and comfortable society its easy to assume that only wealthy people have been “given much.” Making this assumption then allows us to point the bone, as it were, at others and to criticise them their misuse of their riches. The assumption that only the wealthy are ‘given much’ also lets us ‘off the hook’ as we convince ourselves that we have noting much at all when we compare our straitened circumstances to others who seem to have everything by comparison. Adopting an

attitude that says.. 'I'm a second class person because I have little or nothing compared to others,' often breeds what may be called a 'professional shrinking violet' attitude in many Christians who are sure there is very little they can do and just as sure that someone else much better equipped should be doing it anyway. Many of us, and I include myself in saying this, would be infected to some extent with the misconception that I'm nothing much at all and surely there are others much better equipped and gifted than me to do...well.. just about everything.

Dear People, I must say to you that all of that is a blatant and cowardly lie for, in truth, we have all been given much, very much indeed. We could think of the gifts God has bestowed upon us in various categories. Firstly there are what can be called the Gifts of Nature. The very fact that we have life and being... is the gift of God. We live in what is still, as far as is known, a unique environment (the planet Earth) a place that supports our life in every way imaginable...air to breathe, food and water are the most basic gifts that support and enable our lives to continue and flourish. God has willed it so.

Secondly there are the gifts of culture, society and family that we received. Here we are living in one of the world's most stable and peaceful democracies. We enjoy good housing, good infrastructure, adequate food and healthcare. We can all be the recipient of a complete formal education. We have access to useful and worthwhile employment that is generally well remunerated. Most, if not practically all of us, have grown up knowing we are part of a family where we are safe, secure, loved and even forgiven. Our society, imperfect though it certainly is, as are all human societies, also owes much to God in the sense that it was founded and developed by people steeped in the Christian culture of Europe and the Western World.

Despite the gifts of Nature bestowed upon us and despite the gifts of Culture, Society and Family that we have received, its blatantly obvious that humans are generally in a terrible mess both individually and communally. We all know that full well in terms of our own individual limitations, failures and sinfulness and we all can see the abject failures of human society at every single level.

However, God grants to any who come to faith in Jesus Christ more wonderful gifts beginning with the gift of faith itself. Faith in Jesus Christ, His humble life, His saving death in the cross and His glorious resurrection. St Paul puts this better than I possibly could when he says: ***‘In Jesus we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished upon us in all wisdom and understanding.’*** (Ephesians 1:7-8)

It is the gift of faith that enables us to receive the gift of hope as St Paul says.. ***“We have put our trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all, and especially to those who believe.”*** I Timothy 4:10

As well we have been granted the gift of Love. Again it is St Paul who says most powerfully that followers of Jesus Christ, that is those who believe in his salvation and who place our hope in the power of the Holy Spirit within us will be people who... ***‘Clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, forbearing each other and forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven us. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.’***

Those three ‘supernatural gifts’, if I may call them that, are given to every Christian. They will enable any one of us to live lives of useful service to God, to the church, to our families, to human society and to the world we live in. All we have to do is to learn to rely on the Power of God the Holy Spirit and ask Him to be our companion, our muse and our guide in our living the life of faith. As St Peter says: ***“Each of us should use whatever gift we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”*** – see I Peter 4:10

So, dear faithful people, we must all stop unfavourably comparing ourselves to others in order to convince ourselves that we are of little or no use. God has bestowed upon us the gift of life. We didn’t ask for it. God gives us resources such as finances and time. God bestows upon us all sorts of talents such as culinary skills or musical ability, and gifts such as encouragement or teaching. We should ask God for wisdom in how to use these resources and we must commit ourselves to expending them according to His will so that He may be glorified.

With regard to spiritual gifts, yet again it is St Paul who says, ***“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully”*** (Romans 12:6-8)

We have been given much, of that there is no doubt whatsoever. Truly, we are amongst the most blessed of all God’s people. Accordingly, not one of us should be at all surprised that God desires us to use what He has given us to further His Kingdom and proclaim His glory. It’s what we were created to do. Our Lord himself says to us: ***‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. . . . For the Son of Man . . . will reward each person according to what they have done’***”

That’s right we are to make ourselves living sacrifices ([Romans 12:1](#)), giving the things God has given us in service to others, It is in doing this, willingly, generously and wholeheartedly that we will actually find the fullness of life.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.