

Each to their own ability

Richard Gunning *reflects on* Matthew 25:14-30

One reading of the parable of the talents interprets the man going away on a long journey as Jesus ascending to heaven. The slaves represent Christians, the talents the gifts of the Spirit, and the return of the master the return of Jesus. However the parable is understood, the teaching is clear. The talents given to us make us what we are and differentiate us from others. In God's eyes there are no winners and losers, no pecking order, no hierarchy. The reality – that some people are able to run or swim faster than others, while others are better writers, musicians or businessmen – matters not to God. What matters is that we put our talents to good use. It is significant that the slave

who made two talents was given equal praise to the slave who made five.

This parable is part of a series at the end of Matthew's Gospel with the theme of judgement. Talents are given on trust and we are held responsible for full and faithful use of these gifts. Whatever our talents, we must never let them wither from lack of use. We are to improve the quality of our work for God, and widen its scope according to our circumstances and abilities. Like the slaves in the story, we are to be stewards and, as St Paul says to the Corinthians: "it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy". If we are faithful and trustworthy stewards for God, it will never be a chore. ☺



Lord, show us how to be trustworthy stewards, recognising and using our talents fully and faithfully, to the glory of your kingdom. Amen.

A brief history of Anglican liturgy

The Book of Common Prayer

by Heather Smith

The Reformation was a turbulent time for the Church, made even stormier in England by the matter of Henry VIII's marriage. Henry intended to remain Catholic, but wanted to be free from the Pope's authority. The short reign of Henry's son, Edward VI (1547-

1553), resolutely Protestant, saw the end of the Latin Mass and the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer. It was produced by Thomas Cranmer and introduced in 1549. The later 1662 version is the only permanently authorised Church of England service book. The theology is Protestant and deliberately includes elements such as the general confession, removing the need for individual confession to a priest before receiving communion. For those using it for the first time, it represented a radical change in the perception of relationship with God.

BCP is loved by many and, although it is unusual to find it used for a parish Eucharist, it is often used at 8 o'clock Sunday morning services and for evensong. ☺

The end of the year

- part III

by Ricarda Witcombe

This Sunday takes its name from what is ahead, the Second Sunday before Advent. So today is not so much about looking back over the last fifty weeks, it's about orientating ourselves to the two weeks ahead of us and the new season beyond.

If you are familiar with mountains you will know that often the last stretch to the summit takes particular energy and focus. Climbers need to pause before continuing, to pay attention to how they feel and check they have what they need for the climb. The same is true of our life journey. We need, every so often, to take stock and check that we have what we need to continue. One of the most profound and shortest prayers is, "How am I, Lord?"

Take some time this week to pause with this prayer as you continue through the last days of this year. ☺

“As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore, make me an island, set apart, alone with you, God, holy to you.”

Attributed to St Aiden of Lindisfarne