SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

33rd Sunday of the Year (A) - Matthew 25: 14-30

Jeremy Irons, the actor, shared a favourite story for some young people compiling a fundraising book in Northern Ireland some years ago. The story, to the best of my memory goes like this: 'He said to me, 'Come', and I hesitated. He said to me, 'Come', and I followed him warily up the steep slope. He said, 'Come', and I stood with him on the edge of the precipice. He pushed me. And I flew!

Today's Gospel story is a parable about many things. We can play the part of each of the characters. The generous and trusting Master shares gifts or responsibilities with three servants then leaves, to return much later and take account of what they did with what they had received. Two servants engaged positively with the trust and, to the joy of their Master, doubled what they'd been given. The third was fearful, buried the gift and simply returned it, minus interest, to incur the Master's rejection, the loss of the gift and his own dismissal.

We all receive love from our Master. We don't earn it. If we give love away, as the story goes, it doubles. If we limit our love, if we live with a picture of a harsh and demanding God, we live within confines of our own making. Talking about the love of God, St Bernard indicates that the only pressure is the pressure of love itself. We come from a bountiful God. We're made in his image and likeness, part of the Body of Christ on earth, and in risking sharing our love, he is working in us, The Master's joy is real.

As the years pass and we approach a new Advent, how may we have changed since this time last year? Can we reflect on how well we embrace a generous God who entrusts himself to us? Do we see ourselves as risk takers? Can we be enterprising, learning on the hoof as we cooperate with the Spirit given to us? Maybe we catch ourselves opting safe, being cautious, playing for predictability, wary of change, of new expectations and discoveries. This Gospel parable might start some thoughts about how expansive, trusting or limiting we are. We might choose to consider how we may renew our good service record by not settling for familiar patterns of thought, behaviour and chores, but seek inspiration and new stimulus in our relationships, our reading and in our prayer.

Like all Jesus' parables, this one raises a challenge for us. We are limited. We can't do everything. So, what excites us? What tantalising bits of any Gospel story seem to invite us further? How, as we approach the end of a year in the Church's life and our own, do we let go of something(s) and reach towards others? To cease doing something we need to have something alternative to do instead, otherwise we fall back into the same old. Our story is about love and always was. Put the kettle on. It's time to pause and think.

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Pope Leo continues on the Church's preferential option for the poor

The life of the universal Church was enriched by the discernment of the Aparecida Conference, in which the Latin American bishops made clear that the Church's preferential option for the poor "is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty". The Aparecida Document situates the Church's mission in the present context of a globalised world marked by new and dramatic imbalances. In their Final Message the bishops wrote: "The stark differences between rich and poor invite us to work with greater commitment to being disciples capable of sharing the table of life, the table of all the sons and daughters of the Father, a table that is open and inclusive, from which no one is excluded. We therefore reaffirm our preferential and evangelical option for the poor".

- **Dilexi Te para 99**