Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering: **Matthew 25:14-30**

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book): Year A - Proper 28, Text: Matthew 25:14-30
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary): Year A - Proper 28, Text: Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents reinforces the message of the previous one, undergirding its assertions on the suddenness of the master's arrival, the need for watchfulness, and the dread consequences of being foolishly unprepared — the last concept being spelled out in terms of fear, sloth, infidelity, and downright wickedness.

Verses 25:14–15: A man going on a journey summons three servants and entrusts his property to them; see 24:25. To one he gives five talents, to another two, and to another one.

A talent was the largest monetary unit in the ancient world, indicating that the three servants were no ordinary slaves. They are trusted administrators, and the parable is directed especially at leaders in the Christian community. Furthermore, talents were the heaviest weights or largest units of monetary value, with one talent being the equivalent of 6,000 denarii; a denarius was the equivalent of one day's pay to a worker.

Verses 25:16–18: Two servants trade with the talents, each doubling the original five and two. However, the servant who had received the one talent does not drink it up with carousing or make a run with it to the big city or the nearest border. Nor did he invest it. He digs a hole in the ground and buries his master's money. It lies idle — saved for the day of his master's return.

Verses 25:19–21: After a long time, the master returns and settles accounts. He calls the three servants to appear before him one by one. The master praises the first as good and faithful, and promotes him. He who has been faithful over a little is set over much. He is taken even more fully into his master's confidence and drawn closer to his master's side; "Enter into the joy of your master."

Verses 25:22–25: The scene is repeated in the case of the second servant. Finally, the servant who had been entrusted with one talent comes forward. In addressing his master, he sketches him as a hard and unscrupulous man, "reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not winnow."

Afraid of losing the one talent and suffering the consequences, he had anxiously hidden it in the ground and now rather proudly produces it with a little flourish, "Here you have what is yours."

Verses 25:26–27: But the master denounces him as wicked and slothful. Surprisingly, the master accepts the unflattering character sketch drawn by his slave, and he states that the servant should have at least invested the money with bankers so that he might have received not only the original talent but also a little interest. Unlike the other servants, this man had done nothing while the master was away.

Verses 25:28–29: The master strips the third servant of his lone talent and gives it to the servant who had doubled the five. To the faithful more will be entrusted, while the faithless will lose everything they ever had. Power and privilege are to be used God's way — or lost! The lesson is straightforward: Readiness is described not as a passive posture but as faithfulness in assigned duties by assertive action.

Verse 25:30: The worthless servant is cast into the outer darkness where existence is all regret, all weeping and gnashing of teeth. Outer darkness signifies a place farthest from the kingdom, farthest from God who is the source of all light.

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