



*NEW YEAR'S REVOLUTION: "Capacity"

Biblical Text: Matthew 25:14-21

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* (play "Beatles Clip") *Back in the day, the Beatles sang, **"We all want to change the world..."* And I resonated with the message. When I became a Kansas City High School transplant to the little town of *Troy Kansas, I first felt, for the first time, in my heart, that God might be calling me to be a minister of the Gospel.

And then I went to my high school guidance counselor. He said, **"You don't want to be a minister - you'll never make any money."* Years later, when I decided to become one anyway, he was right for the first ten years anyway.

I never forgot his negativity. It lived *"in here"* for years. A harder conversation happened when I told my best friend. He said, **"Trust me, you are nowhere near good enough or spiritual enough to be a minister."* I believed him then, and on my worst days it is still a conversation that runs inside my head.

Those conversations were with me for years, tearing down my self-confidence. I didn't know, as Richard Rohr puts it: **"We are not human beings trying our best to be spiritual. We are inherently spiritual beings learning how to be human."*¹

Turns out I'm not the only one who has struggled with feelings of inadequacy. **It's a thing.** Back in 1978, two psychologists first observed something they called **"the impostor syndrome"* - where very capable people believe - inside - that they're not capable or intelligent enough to do what they are doing.² *

If it sounds familiar, you aren't alone. The amazing Pulitzer Prize winning poet Maya Angelou once said, **"I have written 11 books, but each time I think, 'uh oh, they're going to find me out.'"* Seth Godin, after publishing a dozen best sellers, in his book **The Icarus Deception* says that he still feels like a fraud.³

As I said last week - *our identity is created by what we believe about ourselves.

And too often people, especially people of color and women, not only fight bias and putdowns from colleagues and superiors, but often the feelings of inadequacy we believe about ourselves. And most of us never talk about it.

¹ Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self*. Copyright © 2013, Jossey-Bass, Pg. 121-122.

² Imposter Syndrome is a term coined by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1978.

³ Carl Richards, *"Learning to Deal with the Impostor Syndrome,"* The New York Times (10-26-2015)

Imposter syndrome also shows up in church. We often feel: “I’m not spiritual enough. I’m not holy enough. I don’t know the Bible. I’m not talented enough. I’m too (young, old, thin, fat, etc.) **DON’T ALLOW ANYONE TO TELL YOU THAT!**

*In this series, I’m looking at 5 components that are necessary to claim the life God has given us: **Identity - Capacity – Motivation – Endurance – and Security.**

Last week, we claimed our **identity** as a beloved child of God. This week I want to invite you believe in your ***capacity** – who you were created to be by God.

Instead of letting anyone, including you, shame you or put you down because you aren’t ____ . Learn to ask, ***“How am I doing with what I’ve been given?”**

We all have a purpose God designed for us to live out. Ephesians 2:10 says ***“We are God’s masterpiece. God created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”**⁴ And that true for all of us.

*But what does this have to do with the parables of Jesus Christ like we have in our Bible text for today? A lot - actually. The Parable of the Talents is a key to understanding what we do with the capacity that we have been given by God.

*So, open your Bibles with me to Matthew 25:14-21. In our text, Jesus told a parable about using our God-given capacities. He told a story about how the master of a house entrusted his property to his servants, each according to their ability. Verse 15 says: ***“...to one he gave five talents (a measure of silver), to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.”**⁵

Verses 16-17: ***“The one who had five talents... traded with them; and made five talents more.”** ***“So also, the one with two talents made two talents more.”**⁶

Verses 18 tells a different story entirely. ***“But the one who received one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.”**⁷ Though the amounts differed – all the servants were given the same opportunity.

And when the master of the house returned there was blessing reserved for all those, whatever their ability, who used the capacities they had been give.

Verse 21: ***“Well done, good and faithful servant; *you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; *enter into the joy of your master.”**⁸

⁴ Ephesians 2:10 – paraphrased by the author.

⁵ Matthew 25:14-21. Adapted from the *New Revised Standard Version*®. Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁶ Ibid. Adapted from the *New Revised Standard Version*®.

⁷ Ibid. Adapted from the *New Revised Standard Version*®.

⁸ Ibid. Adapted from the *New Revised Standard Version*®.

*This is not a parable glorifying riches or identifying God's favor on those who have been given more. In fact, the Gospel runs the other way. God make room for those who have little. This parable is not about how much we have received or what we have. **It's what we do with what we have received!**

*When we allow fear, shame or feelings of inadequacy to tear us down miss out on the blessings God wants to give. And we don't do it on our own. People often reinforce our feelings of self-doubt with subtle and not-so-subtle put-downs, comparisons, bragging and bravado. But that's not what God planned.

*I learned this long ago: *"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."*⁹

I've been practicing the craft of ministry for quite a few years, and have served in places of influence. Even so I am not immune from feeling inadequate.

I was the television face of United Methodist worship to about 35,000 people in Kansas for the years I served as Senior Minister at First Church, Wichita. *

One Saturday in the Spring of the year I was at Home Depot, picking up a part for a lawn mower that I was fixing, and, well, I wasn't dressed in my Sunday preacher clothes. I was in a greasy shirt and cutoffs and old tennis shoes.

*A woman stopped me on the way in and said, *"I know you from somewhere."* I said, * *"You might have seen me on Sunday morning on TV from First United Methodist Church."* She looked me up and down said, * *"No, that can't be it."*

So much for my fragile ego! I internalized that conversation for weeks. It wasn't her comment. It was my own inner conversation that hurt me.

*God has given you capacity when he gave you the gift of life. You have talents, abilities, skills and means to use them to create and fashion a productive life in service to the One who gave you everything. You are amazing!

***Don't tear yourself down when God is trying to build you up!
And don't let anyone else do so either!**

Let's pray. *O God, you created each of us with the capacity to use our lives for good, and to live for your glory. Remind us to not let anyone, including ourselves, tell us differently. Help us use our mental, physical, economic, and spiritual capacities that you have given to bring you glory. In Christ's name, Amen.*

⁹ Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale. American clergyman, 1822-1909. Published in [A Year of Beautiful Thoughts](#) by Jeanie Ashley Bates Greenough, p. 172. (Often misattributed to Helen Keller.)