



## A SEASONAL MYSTERY

Parables can be as exciting and challenging as detective stories. One, found in St Matthew chapter 25, could share its title with that of a classic film noir, written by Graham Greene and starring Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton, and set in post-War Vienna, which a haunting theme tune played by Anton Karas. Enough clues? Yes, *The Third Man*.

Like detective stories, parables are filled with half-hidden truths and deeper meanings and with clues to these scattered throughout. They are God's exciting way of challenging us to enjoy a mystery, one where the treasure we are after is a new insight into life which will enrich us in many ways if, once we discover it, we act upon it.

'*The Parable of the Talents*' is the last in a series of three parables which Jesus gave his disciples to illustrate what he meant by the command, "Watch!" – which is a theme of the present Church season of Advent. This parable reflects the same basic pattern of the other two; of a master who goes away and leaves others to fulfil a task until he returns.

In some ways this is a deeply puzzling parable. The central question of course, is: what do the 'talents' represent? There is a common, but quite shallow, understanding of this parable that it teaches the need for us to put our 'natural gifts' to work for God. But when we think of the parable in this way we are being misled by the modern English meaning of 'talent'.

To us the word means an ability, a natural gift which we possess. But it definitely did not mean that in biblical times. It was a sum of money, but here it represents something much more important: a question of life or death. What do Christians have which is God's property, which comes to us on the basis of natural ability, which requires a risk on our part, and that risk appears to benefit only God and not ourselves?

These 'talents' of this parable are the golden moments of *opportunity to show love in Christ's name*. To each, according to his ability. There will be a day of accounting. There is not one syllable of difference between what was said to the man with two talents and what he said to the man with five. The crunch comes with the man with just one such opportunity.

We may be a bit bewildered by what seems an unduly harsh treatment of the man with the least. Jesus was teaching that the basic purpose of life is growth, increase, return – of love. To fail in this purpose is to be fundamentally 'unprofitable'. There was no increase because there was no giving, no love shown to others. His life counted for nothing because of his selfishness. It had all been lived for himself.

As C.S. Lewis vividly put it:

*"It may be a hard thing for an egg to become a bird; it is a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while it is still an egg. We are like eggs, today, and we either must be hatched, or go bad!"*

To 'live for Christ' is also to love others for Christ's sake — and that has always been a risk.

*Priest-in-Charge: The Rev Dr Gerard G Moate*

The Vicarage, Windrush, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4TS

*gerardgmoate@gmail.com*

## FOR OUR PRAYERS

*A Prayer to be offered  
in Times of War and Tumult*

**O** Almighty God, King of all kings,  
and Governor of all things,  
whose power no creature is able to resist,  
to whom it belongs justly to punish sinners,  
and to be merciful to them that truly repent:  
Save and deliver us, we humbly beseech thee,  
from the hands of our enemies; abate their  
pride, assuage their malice, and confound their  
devices; that we, being armed with thy defence,  
may be preserved evermore from all perils,  
to glorify thee, who art the only giver of all victory;  
through the merits of thy only Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662

---

## JOHN EDWARD CROOK (1946-2023)

John was a tree surgeon who worked in this area all his adult life. In 2016, following an accident in which he was severely injured he was cared for by the Dean Neurological Centre near Gloucester. His funeral was in Aldsworth on Friday 24 November.

## FOOD BANK

*Priest-in-Charge:* The Rev Dr Gerard G Moate  
The Vicarage, Windrush, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4TS  
[gerardgmoate@gmail.com](mailto:gerardgmoate@gmail.com)



**CARTERTON  
COMMUNITY  
FOOD  
BANK**

**P**lease continue to support the initiative taken by Little Barrington church, in support of the Carterton Food Bank, and bring teabags, instant coffee, long-life milk and dairy alternatives, pasta and sauces, rice, breakfast cereal, soup, tinned fruit and vegetables, toiletries and baby food.

## LAST WORD

