

Coach Koehr's Tempest Swimming Awards Dinner Talk
February 29, 2024

How To Be Average

The Parable of the Talents

- My favorite passage of the Bible is the **Parable of the Talents**
- You remember the story?
 - The Master went on a journey and called in his three (3) servants:
 - To one he gave five (5) Talents, to one he gave two (2) Talents, and to one he gave one (1) Talent
 - ***“to each according to his ability”***
 - Then the servants with five (5) and two (2) doubled what they had
 - But the one with only one (1) Talent buried his
 - When the Master returned home, he settled accounts.
 - To the ones with five (5) and two (2) Talents, he was well pleased:
 - ***“Well done my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your Master’s joy.”***
 - But to the servant who buried his Talent out of fear that he might fail, he was not pleased at all.
 - ***“You wicked, lazy servant!”***
 - ***“Throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”***
 - Whoa!
- I have spent a lot of time pondering that parable:
 - Jesus only had 1,000 days, so I **don’t think he was saying anything superfluous.**
 - So **why** did Jesus choose to **tell that story.**”

- Is there **more to our path to heaven than just being a “good” person?**
 - Surely, you can be a “good” person
 - Without working really hard, or
 - Without continually improving yourself, or
 - Without taking any risks
 - Can’t you?
 - So, there **must be more to being a “good” person** that just being pious, loving, and kind.
- More to the point we are discussing here though
 - Is there a reason **why**, in Jesus’ story, the **Master gave a different number of Talents to each servant?**
 - In my 58 years in this world, I’ve noticed that it is quite normal to see that the **people around me start with different levels of ability** in various things.
 - Doesn’t the fact that Jesus told this story sort of imply that that is **part of God’s plan?**
 - If God wanted us all to be great swimmers in the objective sense, wouldn’t he have made us all 6’5” tall with big muscles, long arms, and tiny hips?
- And isn’t it interesting that the Master **seemed equally pleased** with the servant who returned five (5) Talents and the servant who returned two (2)?
- In pondering this Parable, **the inescapable conclusions** I come to are these:
 - **There IS more to being a “good” person that just being pious, loving, and kind,**
 - It doesn’t matter how many Talents we have been given, **as long as we use them to the best of our ability,** and
 - If we have a talent and are afraid to use it, that is a waste of a gift from God.

How Not To Double Your Talents

- Let’s define success in the theological sense then as doubling your Talents.

- If you live a life where you consistently do that, then you've done at least part of what is required to say that you lived a good life.
- Imagine a continuum from **Complete Failure** to **Complete Success**
 - Success is the sense we just agreed upon
- In the center of the continuum is **Average**
 - Or less charitably, “mediocre”.
 - Not where you **EVER** want to be
 - Certainly not where God wants us to be
- Formula for being Average
 - **Only do things that you like to do**
- Swimmers that experience success, don't follow that formula
 - You don't hear good swimmers say,
 - “I'm not a morning person”
 - They just get up
 - “I was saving it for the 2nd 50”
 - They give it all they have, even if it hurts
 - “I only like to swim the 50”
 - They learn to swim everything
 - “When are we going to stop doing these basic drills?”
 - They are always trying to perfect their strokes
- In this way, swimming is a training ground for your future success
 - When you **wake at 5:00**, you're training yourself to comfort that child afraid of the storm
 - When you **PR after a hard week of practice**, you're training yourself to pull society's wagon, not ride on it
 - When you **practice hard** on Monday **after some bad swims** on Saturday, you're training yourself to persevere if you ever lose your job
 - When you **try to negative split a 100-yard** race, you are training yourself to take a risk, the kind of risk you will need to take if you ever want to own your own business

- So, the next time you need to do something that you don't want to do, just remember that **you must do it** if you ever want to be anything more than "average"
- And "average" is a place where no one in this room should want to be