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Proper 28A; Matthew 25:14-30
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Louise Penny's Chief Inspector Gamache mystery series has long been a favorite of mine.
Primarily set in a teeny village in Quebec, Gamache and his team solve homicides
With great skill and compassion. In the latest book,
when considering two brothers who are business partners,
the Chief reflects, "It's no longer about what you have,
but how much the other one has."

There are certainly discrepancies in our parable for today, aren't there?
Once there was a master and three enslaved people.
As he is leaving town, the master entrusts each enslaved person w/ talents.
Talents are a huge wad of cash, 15 years of day laborer's wage.
Person #1 gets 5 talents,
Person #2 gets 2 talents,
Person #3 gets one single talent.

When the masters comes back "after a long time,"
The first two people have both managed to double the talents they have been given.
Both are praised with nearly the exact same words:
"Well done, good and trustworthy servant;
you have been trustworthy in a few things,
so I will put you in charge of many things.
Enter into your master's joy."

Then there's person #3, who buries the one talent he is entrusted with.
Now hiding money reminds me of my grandparents' generation,
Many of whom never got over the Depression
They squirreled money away places in the strangest places–
In the freezer, in various books, and, yes, burying it outside
It may not have gained interest but by God it was there.
After the bank failures, they were afraid.

The text says person #3 is afraid. He believes the master to be harsh.
On the other hand, the third enslaved person seems to be a risk-averse, cautious man.
I imagine he is afraid of losing the little he feels like he has.
He wants to make sure he has something–SOMETHING– to give back.

And remember the master gives no instructions **at all** about what to do w/ the talents.
In addition to being afraid, perhaps the third person just doesn't really know what to do,
so he hides the talent
If he buries the money, in addition to it being safe,
he doesn't have to deal with it anymore.
He can just move on with his life.

B.c remember that first rather long sentence in the parable?
It ends by saying that the talents are given out "each according to his ability."
Imagine standing there and the person to your right gets five talents
and person to your left two talents
and then you get one.
The fact that you get less money is not random.
You're getting only one talent b/c somehow
you're less than the other two

It's not clear if the 3 enslaved ppl are told this about this ability discrepancy,
but they could have been; they also could have intuited it.
Ouch. So the third person, in addition to being afraid, is embarrassed or ashamed.
He has less money. He has less ability.

It's no wonder the third enslaved person hides the talent.
And I mean come on person #3 did not spend the money or gamble it away.
And yet the master is furious with person #3. Seems he was right to be afraid
The master makes him dig up the one talent
& give it to the guy that has 10 talents
Which I will never be able to explain to you
b/c I will never understand it.

The third man does NOT get rebuked because of the end result.
He gets fussed at because he does not recognize the considerable amount he **does** have
1 talent is a day laborer wage for 15 years of work.
1 talent is 15 years' wages for a day laborer.

We may sometimes think we do not have enough when maybe that's not precisely true.
Maybe we don't have as much compared to other people in some regards.
Some people do seem to be given more to start out with:
more brains, more money, more privilege, more opportunities, more talent.
These differences are real, even when we want to pretend they aren't
Even if we pretend the differences don't exist or don't matter.
This parable asks the reader if we actually have more
than we think we do, and, if so, then to use it.

It's easy to think, well, that's not me. I really don't have enough.
And maybe that is true in some arenas.
And I've also noticed that folks who are highly accomplished will think that
Their expertise needs to extend to all areas of their lives.
For example, perhaps you can carry a tune & even enjoy singing
but you know you can't sing like the section leaders,
so you never consider joining choir,
though it is a huge gift to this community,
Not to mention the longevity benefits
Singing has been found to have

God seems interested in us in using what we do have, no matter how we feel it stacks up
Because if we use what we do have,
when we are focusing on it, looking at it, contemplating how to use it,
Rather than looking at what someone else has
we might realize that we have more to work with than we think.
we may realize what we do have.
Someone's always going to have more; they just are.

And there can be something freeing in that, I think, in being asked to use what we have
And in being told what we have might be enough
even if it's less than we would like or less than others.
In a world that is incredibly focused on the number & how it stacks up,
the GPA,
the salary
the home equity in our home
the college ranking
The profit
The number of health issues–
What if the other person's #
doesn't matter smtimes?

What might we be hiding because we're scared it's not enough?
What are we not using because we are afraid of messing it up or losing it?
What have we buried because we are ashamed or embarrassed of
how little it seems compared with other people's?
& what difference could it make if we brought
that something out anyhow
no matter how puny we think it is?

I wonder if we might somehow find ourselves in a Stone Soup moment,
When people bring forward the small bits of carrots, rosemary, and potatoes
And somehow get a rich, hearty stew even though times are hard?
What might we find if we bring out our small little nothings,
the puny amounts of time, or energy, or patience?
Oh, the beauty we are hiding.
And oh, the beauty we all need
to keep going in today's world/
"It's no longer about what you have,
but how much the other one has."
What if it's no longer about what the other one has
but how much you have.
It's no longer about what the other one has
but how much you have.
Amen.