

## **Uncork the Good News**

*November 16, 2008*

(Pentecost 27 - Year A)

Matthew 25: 14-30

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Susan and I have an old friend of ours named Mike.

Now, Mike is somewhat of a wine connoisseur in that he loves to collect fine wines from around the world, especially good wines from France.

When I was ordained to the priesthood, we had family and close friends over to our house for a party.

When Mike walked into our house for this party, he came in carrying a huge wooden case in his arms.

In this wooden case was six bottles of wine that Mike had carefully selected from his wine collection to give to us as a gift.

We then opened the case and Mike meticulously described the special qualities of each one of these bottles of wine.

However, there was one bottle of wine, a rare Cabernet Sauvignon, that Mike described as being of an exceptional vintage.

This one bottle of Cabernet had special qualities that Mike wanted us to savor and enjoy.

Over the next few years, Susan and I would pick out one of Mike's extraordinary wines to drink on special occasions with a special meal.

However, I protected that one very special bottle of rare Cabernet.

I hid that special bottle of Cabernet behind our wine rack, so that an uneducated guest in our home would not open it by accident.

As special occasions would roll around - like a birthday or an anniversary - Susan and I would debate about whether or not we should go ahead and open Mike's most special bottle of wine.

But, each time, we agreed that we should wait for an even more special occasion in the future.

One night, Susan and I had ordered a pizza from Rosatti's to be

delivered.

While we were waiting for the pizza to arrive, Susan asked me to go and open a bottle of red wine.

I looked in our wine rack - and none of the cheap stuff from HEB was there.

The only red wine that we had in our house was that rare bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon that Mike has given us years before.

Susan and I looked at each other, we got a mischievous grin on our faces and decided - what the heck, let's go ahead and open it.

As I began to use the corkscrew to open the bottle, it was obvious that the cork had become dry and brittle.

And then, the entire cork crumbled into the bottle.

After trying to fish out the little bits of cork that floated in this invaluable wine, we took a sip.

However, with just one sip, we realized that we had waited too long - and had stored the bottle improperly-

For this wine was no longer the fine, impeccable Cabernet that Mike had intended in his gift.

You see, I had gone and buried that wine in fear.

I had not shared it in the company of friends.

I had not shared the incredible gift that I had been given.

And now, it was too late, as I stared into a glass of red wine vinegar, with clumps of dry cork floating in it.

Near the end of his earthly life, Jesus tells us a story:

A man gave out several million dollars to his workers.

One of the workers took the 5 million dollars he was given and shared and lived in joy, and he made 5 million more dollars.

One of the workers took the 2 million dollars he was given and shared and lived in joy, and he made 2 million more dollars.

Yet, one of the workers took the incredible gift of 1 million dollars, and went and buried the gift, hiding the gift behind the wine rack.

And when the man who gave the incredible gifts to each of his workers asked each one what they had done with the gift,

Each of the workers who lived in the midst of risk and openness were

invited to enter into joy of their master.  
However, the one worker who lived in fear and who hid the money, does not experience joy.

You see, I don't think that this story of Jesus has as much to do with the money we receive.

I don't think that this story has as much to do with the talents we possess.

I think that this story of Jesus has more to do with the greatest gift we have ever received in our whole life.

And the greatest gift that we have received in our whole life is the good news of Jesus Christ.

Every Sunday, I come down the aisle here to read the Gospel to you, out loud.

That word, "gospel," actually means "good news."

Therefore, each Sunday, I come down this aisle to read the Good News out loud.

Yet sometimes, when I look out at you as I read the good news, some of you look as sour as if you had just tasted a lemon.

Some people yawn or look at their watch or fidget on their feet.

One Sunday, I even saw a woman filing her nails as the good news of Jesus Christ was proclaimed.

Yet, when we hear the good news of Jesus,

It is as if a man comes up to us and says:

"Here is a gift of a million dollars to share and to risk."

When we hear the good news of Jesus,

It is as if our good friend walks into our party carrying a wooden case filled with priceless wines for us to enjoy and share over dinner with friends.

When we hear the good news of Jesus Christ, we are not supposed to yawn or hide it behind the wine rack.

When we hear the good news of Jesus Christ, we are supposed to get out a cork screw and open it up and share it and fill our glasses to the

brim.

Because the good news, the great news, is that you and I are loved by God, no matter how much we have messed up in this life.

So, we take the million dollar good news, the best news in the world - and we do not bury it in the ground,

But we run out of this church and show our friends our 401(k) statement.

And we say:

“Look at how stupid I was!

I invested all my life savings in the stock market.

And now, my retirement plans have gone down the drain.

But, you know what, I have heard the best news:

God loves me - no matter how badly my investments have gone south.”

We take the million dollar good news, the best news in the world - and we pour out the prized Cabernet for our friends and we say:

“I gotta tell y’all, that I messed up in my first marriage.

But, you know what, I have heard the best news of all:

God loves me - no matter how badly I botched up my marriage.”

Each Sunday that we hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

We are given a million dollar gift.

Each day that we hear the good news,

We are given God’s prized vintage Cabernet,

Because we hear that we are loved by God, no matter what.

So, dig up that good news that you have buried.

Pull out God’s million dollar gift from behind the wine rack.

Get out that corkscrew and shout out the good news:

“GOD LOVES YOU, NO MATTER WHAT!”

Then go...and enter into the *joy* of your master.

AMEN.

© The Rev. Jeff W. Fisher, 2008