

Exercise. That's almost a dirty word to me. Exercise. I know what the experts and the doctors say. They tell me to use my body more-to exercise it so that I use what it was meant to be--active, doing work, using muscles, pumping my heart. There are life long benefits of exercise. I'm at that age right now where if I don't start a more vigorous exercise program, I'll loose what I have been given in body or muscle skills. You know what I'm talking about, if I don't use what I've been given by exercising it, I'll lose it. If I start more exercise, then my body will get in better shape and I'll pump more oxygen to my heart and my brain, keep healthy, and overall gain better sleep and on and on.

Listen to the words of Jesus in this parable today. He's telling us to exercise.

Did you hear him condemn the third servant for what he didn't do? That servant didn't exercise himself so Jesus uses the harshest words that he utters in all of scripture. Jesus says: For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

His words make so much sense when we apply them to our physical body. For those who have exercised, more energy and health will be given, no matter what your age or condition. For those of us who use our bodies very little, even more will be taken away. We waste our muscles away, losing what we were given in our body. We have less and less of our physical well being. On the other hand, those who have used their muscles and exercised and used their bodies as intended, they have even more strength and health and longevity.

Exercise says Jesus.

How well we understand these concepts in the example of our physical bodies. How poorly we understand these concepts in terms of our spiritual beings, our spiritual journeys. For the servant is condemned, not for what he does, but for what he doesn't do. My doctor gently condemns me for the exercise I don't do So does my body. So does my health.

God, as master in this parable, demands from us that we should use to the fullest the abilities which we possess. This parable tells us that whatever we have, little or great, we must give it to the service of our Lord; in other words, God. The servant who is punished is the servant who did not try. The servant with the one amount did not loose or misplace or forget about his amount, he simply did nothing with it.

Jesus then teaches that more will be given. If a person has a skill, a gift, and exercises it, then that person is progressively able to do more with it. But, if you have a gift and fail to use it, you will inevitably lose it. If you or I have some proficiency at a game or an art, if we have some gift for doing something, the more we exercise that proficiency and that gift, the harder the work and the bigger the task we will be able to tackle and handle as life progresses.

But, if we fail to use it, we lose it. That is true of playing golf or playing the piano, or writing poems or carving wood or thinking out ideas. We have to keep using our gifts. And the more we use our gifts, the better and more able we become. More is indeed given.

It's as if Jesus is saying in this parable: Don't act selfishly hiding in your fears or your laziness. Instead, you can act, challenge yourself, venture, try, use your gifts, risk in your decisions towards others, give of yourself rather than hoard yourself. And do it for your Lord. Our God. For this

parable is about the gift of human life that we all receive and is never ours in the first place. With the gift of life we have received we also have received particular gifts.

It doesn't matter, Jesus says, how much you have. Each servant received differing amounts. What matters is how you use what you have been given. What matters is how you use what you have been given.

That's what God really cares about.

This parable is about the attitudes that you and I bring to living out our lives. Do we hoard or do we risk? How do you decide to live out your days?

It's worth looking at our spiritual attitudes also. If we make no investment in the spiritual dimension of our lives, if we make no investment in our relationship with God, then like our muscles, our souls will waste away, drying up like a plant left unwatered. As surely as the dry leaves will fall off the unattended plant, you and I will lose what God has given us. Do we pray? Do we worship? Do we thank God for the beauty and gifts around us? Do we try new ways to participate in how God redeems and resurrects the world around us? Do we participate in ministries to help the church's activities and outreach or the community's programs? Or do we bury our souls in the sand and leave them there?

We all heard that the 3rd servant is condemned. It is important today to remind ourselves that this condemnation is not for what he did, but for what he did not do. Did not do.

Did not do in life for his Lord. Too often we think that God is concerned about the misdeeds that we do. But today, maybe it comes as a shock to some of us to realize that God may be a good deal more concerned about the deeds we do not do. Even with the fact that in worship we ask for forgiveness when we confess that we have sinned by what we have done and what we have not done. Not done!

In our life with others, in our spiritual journey, in our relationship with others and with our souls and with God. If we don't use what we have been given, less will be given.

Exercise.

That's what Jesus is saying today. Exercise yourself and your attitude and approach to life. Exercise your spirit, your soul, your abilities. Don't keep things as they are, or as they have been--the condemned servant did that. Rather, take an adventure each and every day. Exercise and celebrate all that God has gifted you with and continues to present to you in opportunity, today and all days.

If you and I dare to venture to exercise this way, then Jesus promises that we'll hear this: (for it will be said to you) "well done, good and trustworthy servant, enter into the joy of your God."  
***Enter into the joy of your God.*** Amen.