

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“After a long time the Master of those servants came back to settle accounts with them.”

(Matthew 25: 19)

It was twenty-seven years ago today (1993) that some parishioners thought I had lost my mind. The gospel that Sunday was the same as today’s gospel—the Parable of the Talents. I decided that I would try to put a practical twist on this story. I went to the bank and drew out \$11,000 all in ten dollar bills. I put each ten-dollar bill in an envelope with the parish’s name and address on the front of it. Instead of preaching I invited the ushers to come forward and take the envelopes. Each parishioner who had been confirmed in the faith was to receive an envelope with a ten-dollar bill in it. That Sunday I gave out almost all \$11,000.

The goal was for each person to take the ten and see what they could do with it in a six month period. They were to make their returns to the parish on Pentecost Sunday which was in May that year. They could use the money to help a person, or to help the church or to benefit the parish. They were to put a piece of paper in the envelope explaining what they did and any monetary returns by Pentecost. They could pool their money or act on their own.

The responses were amazing. One young lad took his ten, bought a snow shovel and shoveled driveways. The money he earned he returned in the envelope—but he kept the snow shovel. Another family pooled their money and bought baking materials and baked cakes for Super Bowl Sunday and then returned the proceeds to the parish. Another family pooled their money bought tickets that they chanced off for a week at their vacation home on the outer banks including air fare. They returned more than three thousand dollars to the parish from the chances.

In all at the end of six months we had received back over \$16,000 in cash. Another \$9,000 had been contributed to help other ministries. Our return on the \$11,000 was 2 ½ times the original investment. Oh, and if you remember the story, two made a return; the third did not. And fully one third of those to whom we gave ten dollars never responded in any way. They just kept the ten. Two thousand years after Christ, the dynamic is still pretty much the same, isn’t it? That is the question of the week.