

**St. Thomas Medina**  
**Rev. Alexander Breckinridge**  
**Church Year: A**  
**Date: 11-20-11**  
**Season: Pentecost (Christ the King)**  
**Passage: 25:31-46**

Several years ago, I met a man named Malcolm Diesenroth. At the time I met him, Mr. Diesenroth had retired following a very successful career in the oil and gas business and he was devoting his full attention to philanthropy. As a deeply committed Christian of the Episcopal persuasion, Mr. Diesenroth has been a very generous contributor to mission and university in his parish home in Tulsa, to the Diocese of Oklahoma, and to Episcopal institutions like the seminary of the Southwest in Austin which is where I happened to meet him. Mr. Diesenroth considered his philanthropy to be stewardship—stewardship of his whole life—his time, his talents, his resources—and his understanding of stewardship came from a heart that was deeply grateful for all of God’s blessings. Now the circumstances into which Mr. Diesenroth was born might not have appeared from a distance to be particularly blessed. He grew up in Oklahoma in the 20s and 30s. This was the Dust Bowl. Family farms were wiped out. People were starving. Mr. Diesenroth’s family was among the poorest of the poor. In fact, he said, they were too poor to leave! But it turns out that Mr. Diesenroth’s family was very rich in something else and that was in God’s love. Mr. Diesenroth’s

mother let him and his brothers and sisters know that in every moment of every day and in every possible way that she loved them and that through her God was loving them too.

Now as you would have to be in such circumstances Malcolm's mother was also very practical. She wanted to teach her children how to get along in the world—to teach them not only how to survive but how to thrive. Survival meant hard work. There was no other choice. Everyone in the family had to work hard to keep food on the table. But it was how she taught Malcolm to thrive that shaped his life in the most profound way. There were three empty coffee cans in the Diesenroth's tiny kitchen. The first one was labeled "share." The second "save." The third "spend." When little Malcolm earned 10 cents, it went into the "share" can. The next 10 cents he earned went into the "save" can. Finally, the last 10 cents would go into the "spend" can. That was the rhythm of life his mother taught him and it is the rhythm that has marked his life ever since. Share. Save. Spend. And exactly in that order. Throughout Mr. Diesenroth's long career as an oil and gas developer, bank president, faithful leader in the church, the habits of the heart taught to him by his mother have guided his life. Share. Save. Spend. And exactly in that order. Mr. Diesenroth says that all of his life guided by "share and spend" has been grounded in his gratitude for God's love, the love he knew

through his mother, and the love he has experienced from and shared with others along the way. So how might Mr. Diesenroth's practical and spiritual learning from his mother affect us?

Last week I asked our children in their Sunday school classrooms if they would take a moment to reflect on what they wanted to thank God for and what they wanted to share with others. And remember that our gospel reading last Sunday was Jesus telling the parable of the talents. So many of our kids wanted to thank God for their talents and then share those talents with others. Eleanor and Laura and Lavinia each said they had a talent in being a friend and they wanted to share that talent with everybody. Another way the children in that class wanted to share was by giving food to food drives and by making pies for the Thanksgiving Feast. And they were all thankful for "love in general" and wanted to share that love, God's love, with others. Now a couple of people said how important it is to save because you never know when an emergency might arise and you might need to buy a new toothbrush! A younger class listed all the things they are thankful for. The list included stuffed animals their toys, good food. Things you might expect. But right at the top of the list of things to be thankful for was "Jesus' love." And then after discussing how sharing their talents was also a way to share God's love, David was asked what he was

going to take away from the parable of the talents. Now we'll remember that the third servant is afraid to use his talents and so he buries it in the ground. He was afraid to take any risks. David said, "I learned not to be afraid of what's going to happen in the future because what you are afraid of usually doesn't happen. Things will usually work out." It reminds me of St. Paul's observation that "the things work f or good for those who love God." So don't be afraid to take some risks.

The children are telling us that their gratitude for God's love and for the talents with which God has blessed each one of us invites us to share those talents and those blessings with others with love and gratitude.

After all, as we share what we have with others, who knows, we might even see the face of Jesus in the ones with whom we're sharing. That's another thing that Malcolm's mother told him. That in every decision he made to share, save, spend that he should imagine that he was seeing the face of Jesus. It's informed not only his stewardship and his philanthropy, it's informed his business decisions. Seeing the face of Jesus in everyone he meets has informed his whole life.

And that's what our gospel story this morning is all about. It's not about who's good and who's bad. It's not about who's a sheep and who's a goat. It's not about who gets to go to heaven and who doesn't. It's really not.

Our gospel story this morning is about where we see the face of Jesus and how we see the face of Jesus. And where we see the face of Jesus is very clear. We see Jesus' face in the faces of "the least of these," in the faces of the little ones. Reacting out in love is the way we'll see the face of Jesus. And the way to miss Jesus is to miss on reaching out in compassion and love. Like that third servant from the parable of the talents. When we're afraid to use our gifts, when we fear the future, when we're so busy or too distracted or too afraid for our well being that we ignore the well being of others, we'll probably miss out on seeing the face of Jesus.

Did you know that the story we read this morning is the only time in all of the four gospels that we hear Jesus describe the last judgment? And isn't it interesting that when the king returns he doesn't seem to be too interested in what anyone believes? And he doesn't seem too interested in what anyone says about him. But he's **very** interested in whether we have seen him—whether we have been compassionate enough to reach out beyond ourselves to someone who needs our love. The poor, the hungry, the rich, the prisoners. These are all good examples of the "least of these" of "the little ones" in whose faces we'll meet Jesus. But there are certainly others. Is there someone in your life who's lonely? Reaching out to that lonely person in love and compassion—even when it's not convenient—is

another place you might see the face of Jesus. You remember a couple of our children mentioning that one of their talents was to be a friend? There you go. Is there anybody in your life who you think is maybe just downright unlovable? We all do. Maybe your work this week is to reach out to that person you find to be so unlovable. You might be surprised to see the face of Jesus even there. And this week as we're baking pies and roasting turkeys, and mashing potatoes and running spreadsheets to figure out who gets what at our great Thanksgiving Feast, see if you can imagine that it's Jesus you are serving. Be alert. Pay attention. You might meet Jesus in some pretty surprising places.

In a few minutes, we'll be bringing our pledge cards to place in these baskets as we come to the table to share with each other the feast that Jesus has prepared for us. Think of these baskets as one of Malcolm Diesenroth's mom's empty coffee cans. The one marked "share." And know that we're not just sharing our treasure with our friends at St. Thomas and with the church. In the most profound sense, when we drop those cards in the "share" basket, we are sharing our treasure with "the little ones" and we are sharing our treasure with Jesus himself.

Are there times when we'll be too distracted or too self-absorbed to forget to reach out? Sure there are. It's part of being human. And are there

times when we'll give love and compassion to someone else even when it's inconvenient or maybe even hurts a little bit? I know there will be for each one of us. The truth of our lives is that we are not just good sheep or bad goats. The truth of our lives really is that we are **all good goats!** So this week let's share our talents which God has given us with everyone we meet. And be on the lookout for the face of Jesus. Amen.