

**“Back to the Basics Part II: Get in the Game;
“Skills and Drills”**

In part two of our sermon series, Back to the Basics, Get in the Game, we are invited to ponder our commitment to Christ and to the local church to which we belong or attend. As members of the United Methodist Church, we commit to uphold our local church with our “prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.” Our stewardship emphasis is how we can live a life of faith and be part of the community that loves, witnesses, shares and gives. Last week we looked at “training” for godliness. This week we take that training a bit farther and talk about “skills and drills.” How do we develop the skills and talents we have been given in such a way that it gives glory to God? Do we use our gifts and talents or do we hide them for fear of failure? May God help us get in the game and share our talents with others for the building up of the reign of God. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Skills and Drills”**

Prayer for the Week

Loving God, giver of every useful and beautiful gift, you have made us shareholders in the Spirit and investors in the Gospel of Christ. Encourage us to so speak and act and pray, that all we hold in trust may be used more wisely than our own wisdom could direct, and more lovingly than the small resources of our compassion would allow. Through Christ Jesus, your true Child and our Lord. Amen! (Bruce Prewer)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 10/16/17 James 1: 16-18

The book of James is in some ways a balance to Paul's insistence that grace is free and there is nothing one has to do to earn grace. Although Paul often pointed out that grace was not an excuse for sin, sometimes there were believers who took grace for granted and did nothing to help or build up the community of faith or share with the outside world. The author of James is insistent that all gifts come from God and that believers are called to live out those gifts like a "first crop of the harvest." In the next few weeks we will spend some times with the letter of James who challenges believers to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only." *What good gifts have you received from God?*

Tuesday, 10/17/17 Matthew 25:14-18

This fairly well known parable is part of a series of parables focusing on the "end times". Although Jesus states that "no one knows the day or hour," he nonetheless encourages his followers to live intentionally as if each day is his or her last. This parable focuses on slaves or servants being given financial responsibility for the property of their master. Each one is given a different amount, "each according to their ability." It isn't fair, particularly, but may be just. It seems that each is asked to take care of things in their realm of talents, gifts or abilities. Two went out and were productive, the third did nothing at all. *Can you think of times you have seen this happen in your life, at your work place or at school where different people are given different responsibilities? Which servant were you? Were you able to be productive with the tasks you had been given? Had you ever been afraid of being unable to do what you had been asked?*

Wednesday, 10/18/17 Matthew 25:19-23

The first two servants are successful. The master returns and the one who has five talents and the one who had two talents have taken what they were given and multiplied them. Their master praises them, promises them more opportunities and throws a celebration for them. The trust their master has put in their abilities has been justified. He took his property and entrusted it in the talents and gifts of his servants. Business owners, bosses, parents and others see the talents and abilities in their workers and subordinates, their children and those they mentor. Like God who gives good gifts, the master in this story wants his servants to succeed. *What kind of gifts have you been given? Where have you seen your gifts and talents used in ways that make the world better?*

Thursday, 10/19/17 Matthew 25: 24-30

This is the hard part of the parable. The third servant is not successful, in fact he doesn't even try. Perhaps the successes of his co-workers were too intimidating. Perhaps he was just so afraid of his master and failing. Whatever happened, he was honest about his inability to function because of his fear and he was right. The master is furious. He takes away the one thing the servant was given and gives it to the first servant and then he literally throws him out of the kingdom. This is so harsh. It sets up Jesus' judgment of the nations...."what you do to the least of these you do to me." In the end, it may not be about success as much as it is about at least trying to do something with what one has been given. *Do you tend to not do things for fear of failure? Do you hold back your time, talents, and your gifts or service because you do not think you will be successful?*

Friday, 10/20/17 Matthew 14-30

The hardest part of this parable is the last two verses. It seems unbelievably unfair that those who received the most were given more and the one given the least is thrown into outer darkness. Yet, in re-reading the whole parable it becomes apparent that in the end, it is not about how much, but about what each one was willing to do to share, produce and take care of their master's property. Being a steward means recognizing that possessions ultimately belong to someone else. In the case of Christians, all we have belongs to God. God shares with each one and asks that each follower of Jesus share what they have. In a culture where abundance is focused on what one has...and not on what one shares, it is difficult to believe that giving and sharing is what God wants. Each follower of Jesus is given gifts...talents if you will, of time, talent, money and opportunities to witness through word and deed. *How does your time, gifts and talent give witness to your faith in Christ?*