

The United States gold reserve amount to over 8,000 tonnes of gold, assessed at nearly 400 billion dollars in value. The US gold reserve is more than one-quarter of all the national gold reserves in the world.

The total amount of gold planet-wide is 171,300 tonnes, and nearly half of this is found in jewelry.

Overall, the United States is ranked #3 in gold production, mining a little over 8% of the world's gold each year.

An idiom that is sometimes used in reference to people or things is to say that someone or something is “worth its weight in gold.”

At 150 pounds, give or take, my weight in gold would amount to about 3.6 million dollars.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus relate the “Parable of the Talents.”

It is often too easy for a modern reader to confuse this parable with the English word talent, or to assume the story is about money. I would presume that many a pastor has used this parable to exhort a congregation to give more of their time, talent, or treasure in support of the local parish.

But that interpretation would not only be shallow – an anachronistic reading of the ancient text – but it also incorrect in conveying Our Lord's meaning in the parable.

In the ancient world, a talent was a measure of weight. Throughout time, it has varied from just over 50 pounds all the way up to 100 pounds. At the time of Jesus, the Roman talent weighed 100 pounds.

So, in the parable, one man is given 500 pounds, the next 200 pounds, and the last 100 pounds.

Which begs the question: 100 pounds of what?

This requires us to dig a little into the language that Jesus was speaking at the time – most likely Aramaic, which is based on Hebrew.

The Hebrew word for weight is KBD ... which when applied to a person usually means honor ... and when applied to God means glory.

And so, in its most shallow reading, the master in the parable is either giving 100, 200, and 500 pounds of something. In a more elevated sense, he is bestowing three degrees of honor on the three persons.

But in the case of God – and Jesus usually used parables to explain God and His kingdom to those listening – the Master is bestowing His glory ... that is, the attributes of God: love, grace, and mercy ... in different proportions, to three different people.

In this light, we can see that when God gives us His love, His grace, His mercy ... we are to invest ... that is, to use ... to express or show in our lives this love, this grace, this mercy ... not only in how we live our lives, but also in our interactions with those around us.

Also, when we share God's love, God's grace, and God's mercy ... we find that it doesn't get used up – rather it increases in us.

Only then does the end of the parable make sense:

*For to everyone who has,  
more will be given and he will grow rich;  
but from the one who has not,  
even what he has will be taken away.*

We become rich, not in honor or gold ... but rather, rich in love, in grace, and in mercy.

The warning, then, is for those who despite receiving God's mercy, God's love, and God's grace – fail to make an investment in their lives, and rather, bury it ... keeping these gifts hidden away.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ – let us pray to engage the graces we have received ... may we become messengers of God's love and mercy in our daily lives by what we say and do ... and by acting and speaking with love and mercy ... from the graces bestowed on us today, in this Eucharist.