Reflection Devotional, Tuesday, July 14, 2026
Proper 10, the week of the seventh after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Flunking Ordinary Living

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
14 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; . . . .to each according to his ability. Then he went away. . . . 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. . . . 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 975)
AM Psalm 26, 28; PM Psalm 36, 39
Joshua 2:15-24; Rom. 11:13-24; Matt. 25:14-30

Today we celebrate the Feast of Samson Occum. (See below.)

David's Reflections

Walker Percy's novel, *The Second Coming*, tells the story of a young woman who escapes from a mental hospital and struggles to recover a grasp of reality. In one scene she remembers her parents' disapproval and says, "I made straight A's and flunked ordinary living."# The third character in this parable of Jesus could have said the same. He may have been a bright person, because his master did entrust him with a large sum of money A talent was a denomination of money, perhaps as much as $1500 in our currency.

However, unlike his two peers, this person buried that money, a behavior common in antiquity to conceal wealth from an invading army. This

man feared losing in a way his colleagues did not. Perhaps he feared failing at life. Fear of failure can serve as a motivation to strive harder to succeed. The first and second characters in this story probably feared failure, too. Yet, their fear of failure prompted them to attempt success. Jesus may well have been chiding the religious leadership of his people for having "buried" the Scriptures, for having failed to exercise proper stewardship of the legacy of hope from the Law and the Prophets.

Can we accept the challenge of God's gifts of spiritual resources and calling? Obviously, our abilities and spiritual gifts are intended to be of service to God and others. The rich heritage of the worship of our church, her sacramental ministries, the Scriptures, the presence of the Spirit, the support and love of the community, the opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation, the chances to witness and serve that call out for our response--quite an array of "talent stuff."

Temptations abound to hide everything for fear of the risks of failure, out of resistance to the demands on our time and energy, or out of preoccupations that drain our energy and divert our focus. Those temptations come daily. We can find some measure of freedom by understanding that failure makes a great teacher and that God forgives.

Burying everything by neglect or procrastination puts us at risk of that moment of accountability, that moment when realization cannot salvage opportunity, that moment salted with the tears of regret and self-condemnation. Perhaps the memories of such moments will stir our risk-taking genes and keep our talents dust-free today. We might just avoid flunking ordinary living.

Walker Percy, *The Second Coming* (New York: Pocket, 1980), p. 108.

Collect of the Day, Proper 10, the week of the seventh Sunday after Pentecost
O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus

Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. ***Amen.*** (BCP, 231)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Samson Occum, witness to the faith in New England (died 14 July 1792 CE).
http://satucket.com/lectionary/samson_occum.htm
https://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/n-o-p-q/occom-samson-1723-1792/

Collect of the Feast of Samson Occum
God, the Great Spirit, whose breath gives life to the world and whose voice thunders in the wind: We give you thanks for your servant Samson Occom, strong preacher and teacher among the Mohegan people; and pray that we, cherishing his example, may love learning and by love build up the communities into which you send us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Peace
O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

For the Church
Give to your Church, O God,
a bold vision and a daring charity,
a refreshed wisdom and a courteous understanding,
that the eternal message of your Son
may be acclaimed as the good news of the age;
through him who makes all things new,
even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(This Franciscan-inspired prayer was offered by our chaplains during this meeting of the House of Bishops.. House of Bishops, ECUSA, March 2008
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_95614_ENG_HTM.htm)

A Prayer for Light
O Lord God Almighty, as you have taught us to call the evening, the morning, and the noonday one day; and have made the sun to know its going down: Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God and eternal light, living and reigning for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission
Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

Daily Office Gospel, Matthew 25:14-30
14 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted
his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another
one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had
received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five
more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two
more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug
a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19After a long time the
master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one
who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents,
saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more
talents." 21His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave;
you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many
things; enter into the joy of your master." 22And the one with the two talents
also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I
have made two more talents." 23His master said to him, "Well done, good and
trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in
charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." 24Then the one who
had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that
you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you
did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the
ground. Here you have what is yours." 26But his master replied, "You wicked

and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*