

youthESource Drama

You Can't Come Empty-Handed, Can You?

by Rev. Dean Nadasdy

Based on the Gospel for Proper 25, the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Luke 18:9-17

Retelling parables is a little bit like retelling a good joke. You can't expect people to laugh as hard as they did the first time. Jesus' parables are masterpieces that stand for all time on their own. There is no competing with them. Still, one tries to grasp the depths of their meanings. These dramas represent such an endeavor. They are parable on top of parables. Some nugget of truth from Jesus' stories has been pulled and recast in contemporary terms. Hopefully, the recasting enhances rather than detracts from Jesus' first and best intentions.

These are Gospel dramas. By that I mean that they are meant to enhance the reading and preaching from the Gospel (Series C) for a particular Sunday. The dramas require little staging and rehearsal. Usually, one rehearsal is adequate for production. The Focus section might be included in the morning worship folder or read before the drama is presented. The best place for the drama in the service order is probably after the Gospel has been read.

Have fun with these dramas. Probe your characters and make the lines alive with feeling. True, you're piling parables atop parables, but you're working with stories that have stood the test of centuries of retelling. You can't top the one who first told them, but you can help ensure that people today hear His message, and maybe even laugh well—twice.

FOCUS

In a world of doers, provers, and climbers, sinners, who come to their heavenly Father just as they are without one plea must be a welcome sight and a surprising one, too.

CHARACTERS

Liz - exalted by her own accomplishments; dressed pretentiously

Tim - a loser who keeps trying to make it big

Matt - quiet and unassuming; convincingly confident

SETTING

Outside an office where patents are bought, 3 inventors wait. Liz holds a large portfolio. Tim bumbles in his chair, trying to hold a pet rock box, a pizza cutter, and three golf clubs with fancy covers on their handles instead of the club-ends. These covers can be created out of felt, yarn, etc. They should be obviously ridiculous. Matt sits empty-handed.

(All three characters sit quietly at first until Liz breaks the ice.)

Liz: (to Tim) Would you like to see my portfolio?

Tim: Your what?

Liz: My portfolio. You do have a portfolio, don't you?

Tim: I'm sure I have one some place.

Liz: (doubtfully) I'm sure. Anyway, in here are my patents. Sixteen of them, to be exact. I'm quite proud of them, you know. They are the mark of a creative genius...

Tim: If you say so yourself.

Liz: Indeed. Everything from new sewing techniques to Grandma's Darned Socks.

Tim: What was that again?

Liz: Grandma's Darned Socks. My latest idea. You see, I hire 10 ,000 grandmas across the country to darn argyle socks for little boys and girls. They get their money, and I market the socks under the label...

Tim: "Grandma's Darned Socks."

Liz: Right. Not a bad idea, huh?

Tim: Not bad. You're here, then, to sell the patent?

Liz: Right.

Tim: Well, since it's show-and-tell time, let me share with you my three biggies. First, (bumbles about to get to pet rock) I have this crazy idea of marketing a little rock in a box as a novelty gift item. You know, people could call it their pet rock. (chuckles proudly)

Liz: (She knows it's old stuff) Very original, Mr. ah-h...

Tim: Frazer's the name. Tim Frazer.

Liz: Very original, Mr. Frazer.

Tim: Think it'll sell?

Liz: Sounds like a great idea to me. What else did you bring along?

Tim: This pizza cutter here is something I've worked on for months. You see you press down hard through the pizza and it rolls along, cutting the pizza as it goes. What do you think?

Liz: (leading him on) Tim, you're a regular Edison.

Tim: Thanks. If those two don't get 'em, I've always got my golf handle covers. (shows them off proudly)

Liz: Golf handle covers?

Tim: That's right.

Liz: Aren't they a little hard to get into the golf bag that way?

Tim: Never thought of that.

Liz: (not impressed at all) Oh. (silence) And that brings us to you. (to Matt)

Matt: (was preoccupied) Excuse me?

Liz: I said, that brings us to you. What have you brought along to show The Man, to weave your way into the fabric of the fraternity and the sorority, I should say, of creative American genius?

Matt: Excuse me?

Liz: (directly) What do you got that will sell, buddy?

Matt: I'm afraid I've come empty-handed.

Tim: You can't come empty-handed, can you?

Liz: No, Tim, you can't come empty-handed. When you come to an office like this, you come to sell...your self, your idea, your product, your genius! People who come empty-handed go home empty-handed around here .

Tim: That's what I thought.

Matt: Listen, if you have to know, it's like this. I had a contract with these people to produce three new patents every year.

Liz: Wow! Pretty big-time. We've got a contract inventor here.

Tim: So, what brings you here today?

Matt: Tim, I've come to explain to these people that I've let them down. I just don't have it anymore, I can't seem to make it work. The ideas aren't there, or when they come, I can't put the pieces together. I made a promise, and I can't keep it. I'll just have to face the music, and hope they can understand.

Liz: Tough luck, buddy. (to Tim) I sure hope my well never (pointing to her head) runs dry. It pays to build up a portfolio, you know. (hugs hers) I'd say you (to Matt) were in mighty big trouble. They expect productivity around here. You can't expect a soft heart where bucks and business are concerned.

Matt: Maybe not.

Tim: Maybe we can help him out, lady.

Liz: Forget it, Tim. He's on his way to the poor house. I can tell. Just be happy your juices are still flowing.

Tim: I suppose.

Liz: Some day, Tim. Some day your ship will come in. Just keep working for it.

Tim: (to Matt) Say, Mister, maybe we can help you think of something quick.

Matt: No, Tim. I'm going in empty-handed. I'll just have to take a chance that the man-at-the-top has a heart.

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