

When it comes to our lives with God, we can affect the end of the story. It's like reading a book and then skipping to the end to see how the story ends and then going back to see how the story unfolded and how the characters in the book got there.

Or maybe you have watched one of the hallmark movies and you spend a lot of time wondering how it will end. You are pretty sure it will have a happy ending and it almost always does.

In the life of Jesus and the parables he told, we are let in on how the story will end and how we can make a difference in how it ends.

This week I was looking through the catalog the ELCA puts out every year called ELCA GOOD GIFTS CATALOG.

Some of us get that catalog or we can look it up on line. It's amazing to see the difference each of us can make by choosing a good gift suggested in the catalog.

More than 85% of our gifts directly go to support the work suggested. Only 15% is used for administration and fundraising.

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, we see so many opportunities here to change the end of the story.

Everything from buying a chick to provide eggs for \$10 or a piglet for \$30 or Honeybees for \$20 or a water filter for \$30 or a child's school supplies for \$10 or a solar-powered lantern for \$30 or stock a health clinic for \$75. The list goes on and on.

As we respond to these needs, we make a difference in the book of life God is writing.

That brings us to today's story Jesus told.

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He told the story of talents.

As one is setting out on a journey, 5 talents are given to one of the servants. To another, the owner gives 2 talents and to another 1.

At the time a talent was equal to 15 years of wages to a laborer.

And then the owner went away.

Here is what happens. The one who was given 5 talents, went off and made 5 more talents.

The one given two talents made two more.

The one who was given one talent, took the talent or money and buried it in the ground.

The owner returns and praises the first two who had multiplied the talents they were given, but is upset with the one who hides the one talent this laborer had received.

What this says to us is that God has invested in us and expects us to make good use of those investments.

We can make a difference in God's future with us. We can make a difference in how God's story with us goes forward.

Jesus tells this story just days before he will give his life on the cross.

He gives it as a testimony to show how far God will go to communicate God's love for us and all the world.

As Rev. David Lose has written, "Jesus has spent his life and ministry proclaiming God's kingdom, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, offering forgiveness, and welcoming ALL who recognize their need into the loving embrace of God."

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And for that message he is crucified. *That's* how much God wants us to know of God's love.

And just in case we miss or underestimate that message, God raises Jesus on the third day that we might know that life is stronger than death and love more powerful than hate”.

That's the God we proclaim.

In the meantime, God gives us work to do.

Here are some of the words of a Dakota Road song which we have sung together in worship, We Can Make A Difference.

“We can make a difference, in everything we do.

We can make a difference, it's only up to you.

He needs someone to lean on, it just takes one shoulder. She has a lonely heart, just takes one to hold her. They're afraid to take a chance, just takes one who's bolder. We can make a difference.”

Where and how have we used what God has invested in us?

Stumbling upon the ELCA Good Gifts Catalogue with week, Mary and I decided to pick some of the options available to purchase to make a difference in the lives of those in need.

We picked chicks to help a family spread their wings. When chicks grow up to become chickens, their eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals- they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.

And we picked Honeybees which supports farmers and healthy honeybee colonies. Honeybees provide honey to eat and beeswax to transform into handcrafted soaps and candles,

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allowing a farmer to start a small business selling their products. and as an added bonus, these little bees boost crop growth on the farm by pollinating plants everywhere they go.

And we picked gifts of school supplies for children.

There are many options in the ELCA catalogue which can make a big difference in the world.

If you don't get the catalogue, you can just go on the ELCA website to find it.

It's a way to multiply the talents you have been given.

God uses each of us to share what we are given and in doing so we have an effect on the future of God's story with us.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL! AMEN