

**የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት**  
**The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Faith and Order**  
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6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Great Fast, the hymn is for a good servant who serves well

2Timothy 2 : 1 – 16; 1Peter 5 : 1 – 12; Acts 1 : 6 – 9;

Psalm 39 (40) : 8, 9

To do Thy will, O my God,

I am determined to do it.

Indeed, Thy law permeates my system. (Geez = [it is] in the middle of my belly)

I have preached righteousness in the great gathering

Matthew 25 : 14 – 31

#### FORMULA FOR ETERNAL REWARD

In all things, our responsibility is to anticipate God's will; and, to do it as would please Him on His return. To pray as He has taught us to pray; to deal with each other, as He has commanded; to walk always in His Way: each of us must do these things according to what we have received. It is naive to imagine that we know Him as He is. This is because, in His Divine essence, He is unknowable. Some concentrate on His generosity and mercy, others on His justice, yet others on His awesome power. Christ is truly the son of man through the power of the Holy Spirit acting with the cooperation of the Virgin St. Mary. But, eternally, He is truly the only begotten Son of His Father, without a mother. Although He has revealed these things to us, these are mysteries: beyond our comprehension.

However, at this point in the Great Fast, our Forefathers chose this third of four parables recorded by St. Matthew to explain Jesus' teaching about the meaning of life. He taught that the basis of life's tests is one's use of talents. God gives us talents to develop according to His will. He observes what we do with these gifts, in the time of our lives. How one invests his or her potential in time indicates one's attitude toward God, including one's reactions unto others, to whom He has given different gifts. (Mt. 22:37-41) While people often make the mistake of counting and comparing how many things they acquire by use of these talents, God is watching, on a more basic level, how the talents are invested, as either multiplying talents\_ not stuff\_ or as burying the talents in the stuff.

Or, look at it this way. Think of the title of this article, "FORMULA FOR ETERNAL REWARD," as another way to understand how God views what people do with their lives. In His "PARABLE OF THE TALENTS," our Lord gave a practical example of how to determine what to expect when He returns in glory to judge us. Our reward will be based on the Interest which we demonstrate in God's will. Some people are unsure of how many talents they have. Rather than counting talents, it may be easier to calculate by carefully examining one's whole life against the equation:  $I = P \times R \times T$  First, consider

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the Principle of God's will with regard to whatever talents you have received. Next, the Rate of your personal application to knowing, and doing His will, in the Time which He has allotted you on this earth. The big unknown is the time element. That's the point of the reading from the book of Acts appointed for this day. It should remind us of the lesson for the Fifth Week of the Great Fast about living the present, always conscious of God's presence.

Jesus Christ became one of us to fulfill two divine objectives in our regard. His intervention has both temporal and eternal implications.

- 1 . In all things, He did the will of the Father. He, as the unique incarnation of God the Word, was born as a baby, grew in grace (Lk. 2:52) according to His unified nature. Christ came to be our example, to demonstrate what it means to be permeated (full measure) by God's will. God planned it that way, so that everyone might see how this process should unfold in the context of one's lifetime. We must grow into it.
2. God became one of us in all things except sin, in order that we might not just see and hear about how it can be done, but be empowered to actually do it: find fulfillment, and thereby escape from the nothingness of sin. We are supposed to receive and grow toward His fullness, in that grace for grace (Jn. 1:15) which he brought with Him.

What He did, not only affected the people who met Him. It affects us, according to how faithfully we, as His people, do in His remembrance (Luke 22:19; 1Cor. 11:25) what He did for us. This we may actively choose to do. God always gives us the choice to reject Him, or\_ each, in our own age, each in unique ways\_ to participate in His new and everlasting covenant. This starts with the washing unto regeneration from that water which flowed from His side. It is then sealed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These initial gifts of Baptism and Chrismation, like most precious talents, must not be buried in childhood. Nor should they be buried like some mementos in one's wallet or safe-deposit box. Rather, as the initiation into the covenant of the Body of Christ, these talents should be continuously renewed by regular Repentance, and nourished by His divine Body and Blood in Holy Communion (*qurban*).

Just having had the intention of doing God's will, will not be an acceptable response. The road to Hell is paved with good intentions, which were never actualized in time, but buried by careless waiting for some imaginary better moment. Instead, we must start immediately, and endure to the end: accepting His power (grace), and using talents to discover our original destiny, growing in the Body of Christ, toward that very image and likeness of God. Just learning how to rehearse chapter and verse may, in time, lead to the curse of the weeping and gnashing of teeth. To enter into the joy of our Lord, one must invest whatever gifts he or she has already received to do what, of God's will, needs doing in the present. In the end, each of us will surely have to answer for how well we used well all that we received, as freely as we received it.

Abba Thomas April, 2005