

STEALING FROM OURSELVES

Matthew 25:1-13

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar tells about a most successful jewel thief back in the Roaring Twenties by the name of Arthur Berry. Berry liked to hobnob with the rich and famous of Boston's elite, except he did his hobnobbing at night when they weren't around. He wouldn't steal from just anybody. As a matter of fact, a visit from Arthur was a status symbol among the ladies of Boston's upper class. The police weren't nearly as intrigued by his status-oriented thievery. And one night they caught him and shot him three times. He fell through a glass window, shattered glass stuck in his body, and lay on the ground in excruciating pain. Not surprisingly, he came to a conclusion amidst the blood, glass, and handcuffs, and muttered, "I ain't going to do this anymore!"

To make a long story short, Arthur eventually got out of prison two decades later, and settled down in a quiet New England town. There he became a respected citizen, even leading a local veteran's organization. But it finally leaked out to the press that this notorious jewel thief was holed up in this tiny New England hamlet and the nation's media arrived in droves. One young reporter asked him, "Mr. Berry, you stole from a lot of wealthy people in your life as a jewel thief. Let me ask you a question. From whom did you steal the most?"

Without a moment's hesitation Arthur Berry replied, "That's the easiest question I've ever been asked. The man from whom I stole the most was Arthur Berry. You see, I could have been a baron on Wall Street. I could have been a successful businessman, had I utilized my God-given talents and developed them legitimately. I could have made it big in business, but I spent two-thirds of my adult life behind bars."

Arthur Berry was a thief who stole from himself. He did not use the God-given talents and opportunities at his disposal, and it haunted him forever. How about you? If the bridegroom were to come tonight and ask you to give an account of your life, could you say that you had taken complete advantage of the opportunities you have been given?

God bless,
Pastor Barbara