

Jesus The Storyteller, Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30, 7/25/21

Context: Matthew 24- Olivet Discourse. Why? Toward the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus is up on the Mount of Olives with his disciples looking out over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This is the **modern day view** of Mount of Olives, and this is the **view of the Temple Mount** from the Mount of Olives. From here one of his disciples asks Jesus about the signs of the end- when Jesus would return to set up his kingdom...a fascinating chapter for another time. **Blank Slide** Then in chapter 25 Jesus shares a series of parables to prepare all his future disciples (like us here in 2021) for his return. The key is understanding the audience. Jesus is speaking to his disciples, not Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists. They are aimed at professing Christians, who at least think they are his followers. And his purpose in these parables is both to encourage and to warn professing Christians so that they will be prepared when he returns, because not everyone who says they are Christians have the real thing. The first parable Jesus tells us that true disciples, converts have a zeal for his return. The second parable is the one we will study today from Matthew 25:14-30, Parable of the Talents. In this parable Jesus teaches that true disciples have a zeal for serving their master, Jesus Christ. **The Request, The Response, The Reward, The Reaction**

THE REQUEST

¹⁴ For it will be like a master going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

Let's stop there for an obvious but important observation. We are servants not the master in this parable. Jesus is the Master. The cultural air which we often unknowingly breath puts mankind in the position of Master of their own universe. Our world will tell us we are self-creators, we are master of our own bodies, our resources, our own version of morality and purpose. Summarized in the pop phrases- "You do You", "Do what feels right to you", "My body I can do what I want." "You can be whoever you want to be." Many of us naturally think of our lives like that. 1 Cor. 6:20- *You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body.* You may say you are a Christian, but who rules your heart? Who is master of your morality? Who has the rights to speak into your biology and sexual decisions? Who is Lord of your wallet, time, your purpose? Do you think twice before you make decisions? Do you ask, Lord what do you want me to do? Make no mistake the infinite creator is master of the finite creature, for his good intentions. Those who truly belong to Christ will embrace his Lordship.

Let's continue reading. ***¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.***

Notice the master entrusts his property, possessions to these servants...not to use on themselves, or even for safe keeping, but for productivity. They are given this in the form of Talents...scholars tell us a Talent is a very valuable unit of money. Somewhere between 500k-1Mill. A lot of money. Now talents symbolize more than just money but not less than money. In other words, Jesus has entrusted his kingdom to us as Christ followers, as what Paul will call us-

Ambassadors of Christ. Jesus is talking about everything that he has given us- our lives, relationship circles, jobs, health, time, our education, our abilities, spiritual gifts. He's also given us the message of the gospel. Paul was blown away by this- we have been entrusted with this treasure (the gospel) in jars of clay (us). We are meant to be in awe by what he has entrusted us with so that it would draw us to worship, zeal and responsibility.

Notice he gives different amounts to different servants 5,2,1. With the identifier- "each according to his ability." People aren't all the same, all equal in dignity and worth before God. Equal in the sense we are all sinners deserving of death and the free gift of salvation. But we clearly don't all have equal abilities and responsibilities. Not many of you enjoy public speaking- #1 fear. Good job security. I see big picture...But I'm not terribly detail-oriented...details are annoying to me but I recognize their value- lots of trade errors. A great tragedy for a Christian would be to go through their whole life and never really discover their gifts, abilities and purpose. Your first responsibility is to discover that! Small groups, serving, ask people who know you...where do you come alive, where are you affirmed? Not only are we all designed with different gifts, God has given us different capacities. Mark Dever's relational wallet...Never compare yourself to other people- comparison is a thief of joy. Don't take on more than your capacity or you will burn out or resent others- Mom's just because one of your girlfriends can juggle being a mom of three, working full-time, serving at the church, get to the gym and still make dinner doesn't mean you can or should. God made you like you are- use whatever talents whether it's 5,2,1 for him...because they aren't meant for you to spend on yourself, but for His kingdom.

THE RESPONSE

¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.

¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

Notice the first two servants were excited "at once", zealous and busy at work. There was a sense of joy and purpose that they had been called to. They knew their purpose, they sensed the freedom of the master to go after it...maybe even take some risks for their Master. They were the Warren Buffet's of spirituality. But notice the contrasting approach of the last servant, buries it... no risk, no excitement, no adventure, no ambition, no zeal. This may be a servant in name, but not in heart. Just as there are Christians by name, but not in their heart.

THE REWARD

¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more,

saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.'

²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

A few things I want us to see. First that the master rewards them for faithfulness, which is equated with fruitfulness. Being faithful as a Christian isn't just knowing lots of facts about God and avoiding sin...it is being about the master's business! Notice Jesus uses rewards as motivation. We are so reluctant to do that in Christian circles, it's just your duty you should think about rewards... well Jesus did.

What was their reward for faithfulness? Two things: Entering the joy of your master. This is so important because so many people think only in terms of duty. His goal for your life is your ultimate joy. Not begrudging submission. Some of you think of your marriage like that. Just made a commitment, that's it. No joy, no delight. John Gottman- Marriage institute of Seattle- Most important thing in marriage, not sex life, communication, etc. A couple's friendship. What about your relationship with Jesus? John 15- Friends. I want you to enter into a joy you can't imagine. Some of you think God is against your joy.¹ Couldn't be further from the truth- it's just that we as C.S. Lewis points out- we are far too easily pleased with cheap substitutes for joy. Or we think the things that bring us happiness like sex, laughter, vacation, good food, possessions are the end in of themselves- they just point to the ultimate joy in our relationship with God. Teach your kids this: Ice cream points to the joy of our Master.

The 2nd reward: *You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.* Your reward for diligent work is more work. Ughh..that's not the kind of promotion I was looking for. The best employee, take on more for the same pay...That's not the picture- Eternity in the new heavens and new earth return to Eden-like joy and fulfillment in the work God has given us, pre-curse. We get little glimpses of this when we accomplish something we feel we were made for. Eric Liddle- runner- when I run I feel his pleasure. This is a major departure from how most people think of heaven- idle unemployment sitting on clouds in tunics, eating grapes? What???? You don't retire from being a disciple ever. We are about his business forever.

THE REACTION

But there's another servant... *²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,*

²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'

¹ Sourced from Mark Clark from Sermon on Matthew 25:14-30

Now what are we to make of the way this servant responds and describes his master? His view of the Master is harsh or even mean, merciless, or cruel character who acts unjustly, demanding a harvest from a field where no seeds have been planted. I take this to mean that this servant had a warped, resentful view of his master vs. a true understanding like the first two, who had a zeal and love for their master and his business. This is a servant who may represent some people who may be religious, even think they are a Christian but has a warped and false understanding of who God is. Aren't filled with love for God, they aren't about his work. They may, like this servant, even blame God for their apathy and irresponsibility. This may be someone with a religion summed up by "As long as I'm not doing anything wrong, maybe God will leave me alone." It's not an awe of God that draws him to work for God like a true Christian, but a dread of God that draws him away from him and away from productivity.

²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'

²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But it's not just loss of reward...

³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This may shock some of our modern sensibilities. We tend to prefer to think of Jesus as the only meek and mild, loving and forgiving...But he is also the judge and avenger of evil. There are consequences for rejecting God. Jesus uses his own words against this servant- if he really thought these bad things about his master then he should have at least taken it to the bank. It's not an excuse. On that final day we meet Jesus at the judgment seat, there will be no excuses. There will be those who hear well done good and faithful servant enter my joy. And those who lived for themselves, they were their own masters, they lived without Christ, who for eternity will live alienated from God. A place described as dark- with no light of Christ, a place not of joy but despair, a place not of peace and fulfillment but of no purpose.

Blank Slide Warning- if you think you are a Christian, but you have no zeal for the Lord, no zeal for serving the Lord, if you have a warped understanding of God- test yourself because you may not be a true disciple. I'm not preaching a works-based salvation. I'm not saying go out and work in order to be saved. I'm saying that those who have caught the real thing, are truly born again of God by the Spirit, have trusted Jesus as their savior will increasingly give him Lordship of their lives. They will be drawn to a zeal to produce.

What are you doing with your life? What are you doing with your time, talents, treasures? You could have lots of stuff, great family, great house, good kids. You could be very successful at life at a whole bunch of stuff that doesn't matter. Story of guy in Avis line.

Now for some encouragement: If you have felt that you have been wasteful and lazy- don't let this parable destroy you. That conviction in your heart is good- it is God's grace to motivate you! Look to Jesus in your conviction and weakness. The Master Jesus became a servant of all, using all his talents, divesting himself of all heavenly riches to become poor so that we may become exceedingly spiritually and eternally rich, so that we would inherit the kingdom.

God plans to do more with your talents than you would ever believe. Some of us think about Christianity merely as a list of things to believe. Just input this data into your brain and then you are good. NO! It's an adventure- The Christian life is more like Lord of the Rings than taking a history test. For young people-Discover God's adventure for you! Seasoned vets- mentor the younger in this! Many think they don't have much to give and get discouraged. But God can do exceedingly above and beyond what you ask or think. God wants to make you a spiritual Warren Buffet. 5 Loaves and 2 Fish. God is the great multiplier. Take what you have and lay it on the altar.

Meet George- He was a thief, a liar and a gambler. From the time he was ten years old he was stealing money from his father. At age 14, while his mother was dying, he was playing cards with friends and drinking. He was arrested as a young man for his thieving ways...But through a friend, George began reading the Bible and his heart changed and gave his life to Jesus. God took this thieving, gambling, drinking, wasted life and used it beyond anyone's wildest imagination. God put into his heart to care for orphans in England at the time he only had 2 shillings in his pocket. This George, is none other than George Muller, the great Christian hero: By the end of his life he shared Christ with thousands and cared for over 10,000 orphans in 5 locations in England. Let me show you a picture of **George**...Now if God can use that guy, with that haircut don't you think he can use you? God's work moves forward on the backs of ordinary people with extraordinary devotion.²

Blank Slide Serve Card

² Lon Solomon quote