

The Parables of Jesus: The Talents

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, September 5th. And for anyone who may be wondering, why does he say the date every day? I have a calendar, it's on my watch, it's on my phone.

It's because I like to tag the date on the sermons because we post them other places. So I like for people to know, okay, this is this week's sermon, for example, if they're not here in person. So that's why. And our sermons are available by podcast through iTunes and Spotify and other things. They're also available on our sermon phone line, which is kind of cool, 587-400-0533. So generally what we aim to do is have the current sermon up Sunday, Monday, so that people can listen to it anytime, all week. Well, you made it.

Today is the final sermon in our series on the parables of Jesus. We started this series back on April 18th, believe it or not.

[1 : 03] And we started that series with me talking to my computer. So that's what's changed in that period of time. We started that day with an introduction. And since then, do you recognize, we've explored 15 parables together.

So indulge me with a quick informal survey here. And I need to see hands either raised enthusiastically or clear abstinence on your face.

No wishy-washy. So now, here come the questions. Did you find this sermon series, you can't hurt my feelings. Well, you can, but hopefully you won't. Did you find this sermon series, the explanation of these parables of Jesus, helpful?

Even if you didn't catch all the messages, which are available on the website. So did you find it helpful? Excellent. Excellent.

Perfect. Did you find that you learned something new? Did you feel challenged? Did you feel encouraged? And this is not me looking for self, English major and forgetting words.

[2 : 15] I'm not looking for praise. I'm not looking for a pat on the head. I'm looking for, is this helpful? Was it helpful? So knowing that we only explored 15, only, everybody says, would you be interested in looking at more sometime in the future?

Okay. That's about 50%. Sounds good. I'm taking the names of everyone who didn't raise their hands. No, I'm not. I'm just kidding. So that info is really helpful for me.

Thank you. And we won't do this series two months from now to continue again, but we will look at more parables together. I think that's a good idea. So parables.

As you probably realize, you've realized over time and certainly during this series, Jesus is famous for telling parables. In fact, as we've learned, approximately one third of Jesus' teaching in the Bible is through parables.

Did you know that? We did talk about that at one point, but that's a lot. A third of his teaching and he was a prolific teacher. And as we've talked about before, there's more than 40 parables of Jesus of various lengths recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

[3 : 36] And remember, you may remember, there are none in the Gospel of John. None. And some of the Gospel accounts include different accounts of the same parables.

So as I said at one point during our series, these weren't stand-alone. So Jesus didn't tell the parable of the prodigal son one time. One show, that's it.

You missed it? Too bad. These stories would have been stories that Jesus told multiple times. But we also recognize that in the Gospel accounts, there are unique parables in some of the Gospels. So there are parables that appear in one Gospel and no others. And there are different versions in different Gospels. So the authors of the various Gospels told from their perspective, which is not surprising.

And we've also learned in this series that some commentators suggest that the parables of Jesus can really be grouped into five categories or five subject areas.

[4 : 39] And you may remember them, or you may not. Refresher. Parables of the kingdom. Parables of salvation. Parables of wisdom and folly.

Parables of the Christian life. And parables of judgment. Parables of the kingdom, salvation, wisdom and folly, the Christian life, and judgment.

And as we conclude our series this morning, we're going to look at one final parable that falls into this category of judgment. And that's the parable of the talents.

Our parable this morning is found in Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30. So you can go ahead and turn there. Matthew 25, 14 to 30, or you can just listen as I read.

You may have it in your Bible. I have a few different translations, not surprisingly. I have it with a different subheading in some translations.

[5 : 40] So why not have it with this massive subheading of Jesus tells the parable of the loaned money. But it really is most commonly found under the heading the parable of the talents.

Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30. And in here, I'm going to read these words of Jesus as he describes the idea of judgment in the kingdom of God through the lens of a parable.

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one, he gave five talents of money.

To another, two talents. And to another, one talent. Each according to their ability. And then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more.

So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

[6 : 48] After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. Master, he said, you've entrusted me with five talents.

See, I have gained five more. His master replied, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things.

I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness. The man with the two talents also came. Master, he said, you entrusted me with two talents.

See, I have gained two more. His master replied, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things.

Come and share your master's happiness. Then the man who had received the one talent came.

Master, he said, I knew that, know that you were a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

[7 : 55] So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you. His master replied, you wicked and lazy servant.

So you knew that I harvest where I've not sown and gather where I've not scattered seed. Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have even what he has will be taken from him.

And throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The word of the Lord.

So thank you for the people who did that. So Connor gave me some perspective. He said, I think people may feel that's too Catholic that I ask us to say that. Thanks be to God.

[9 : 04] The word of the Lord. It's just very liturgical. And so I personally as your pastor believe that mainstream Christian churches have kind of drifted away from recognizing the weight, the power, the significance of scripture.

Especially when it's read out loud. So I want us to get back to setting that apart. So that's the point of that. So there are a few big themes we can recognize in this parable, aren't there?

In a very basic way we can recognize responsibility. We can recognize stewardship or wise management of what someone has been given. But I also want to walk through this passage and identify some important phrases and concepts that Jesus presents us.

Because right from the beginning we read in the passage that the master has entrusted his property. That's the wording to his servants. What they've received, what they've been entrusted with, doesn't belong to them.

Never did. That's an important perspective. We learn about the idea of talents in this parable. But Jesus is very specific in saying talents of money.

[10:25] And we'll look at that more in a minute. We also recognize that while each of these three servants that we read about were given different amounts of money to look after, they were entrusted with different things, the third servant obviously approached his responsibility very differently.

We can see that the master viewed each servant's specific situation and circumstances exactly the same. He ascribed exactly the same amount of importance and value to all three of those situations.

Circumstances were different. The importance was no less. And I want you to take note of something else. Verse 19 tells us, after a long time, the master of those servants returned and did what?

Scripture tells us he settled accounts with them. Very specific wording. When we recognize, when we reflected on the parable of the unforgiving servant last week, Jesus made it clear there too, as he told that parable, that an accounting would take place.

Remember that? That judgment would be made over what we have done with what we have been given. This idea that there will ultimately be a reckoning, an accounting for what's been given, how things have been managed, that everyone's account will be settled, everyone will stand under God's judgment.

[12:08] That's important to recognize. Most of you by now know that I'm a movie fan. And there's a line from a movie that I love where a character says, the bill always comes due.

That's heavy, right? The bill always comes due. We learn that the first two servants received the same response from their master when he returned.

Do you recall what that response was? Indeed. Well done, good and faithful servant. In this parable we have a relationship between master and servants.

There's a specific relationship established here that's similar to what we see in other parables.

We've seen a king and servants. We've seen a father and his sons.

We see a person of authority representing God and other characters representing God's people, God's children. Not just in Bible times but to this day as well.

[13:21] Because this represents even folks, you and me. The central focus of this parable is the responsibility that comes in managing, in stewarding, in caring for and nurturing something that's been entrusted to a person by someone else.

What's been given to the servants in our story comes from the master. As we touched on, it is his property. Just as, I hope we can recognize, what we have been given comes from God, comes from our master.

Do you believe that everything that you have, not just your money, but everything that you have comes from God and is ultimately not yours at all, but is his to use as he sees fit?

Do you believe that your skills and abilities, those kinds of talents, as we recognize that word now, as well as your time and your finances, are all gifts from God?

Do you recognize that? We did a sermon series, short sermon series on stewardship about a year ago. And we dug into this quite a lot, the use of our time, the use of our gifts and our abilities, the use of our money.

[14:46] They're all from God. So we need to be engaging with him and how he wants us to use them. So if we answer yes, and I hope we do, to these questions of where does it come from, to whom does it belong, then I have another question for you.

What are you doing with those things in your life? These things that God has given you personally, you specifically, to manage.

What are you doing with them? Are you seeking God's will for how you use those gifts and blessings? Are you seeking to invest back into the kingdom and for God's plan, not only for your life, but also for his kingdom to come in the world?

Are you willing to release what you have been given? Or do you keep it to yourself and hold it primarily for your own benefit?

This may sound like solely a giving sermon, but it's way more than that. I hope you're getting way more than that. I'm not saying open your wallet at the end of the service.

[16:02] That's part of it, but there's so much more. So in looking at this parable, I once had someone sincerely ask me, why did the last servant get in trouble?

Wasn't he being really the smartest by keeping what his master had given him safe? He was the smartest, the wisest, the whatever, however you want to frame that.

And that's a fair question, really. You minimize risk, but do you minimize reward as well? I reminded that person that faith is about trusting when we don't know what the future holds.

Welcome to COVID-19. It's about trusting God in the unknown. It's about trusting that his plan, his sovereignty over all things is more than up to the task.

More than. So out of a fear of the unknown, this servant took no risk. We even recognize that he made assumptions about the master's character.

[17:14] You make money where you didn't do any work. That's what he's implying by what he said. And the master's response is a good one. Oh, so you're going to make those assumptions about me.

Well, if I follow the logic of your assumptions that you just made about me, then I should be able to assume that you would at least put the money in the bank. But you didn't.

Those assumptions made about his character are revealing. Sometimes there is no reward without risk. Right?

We recognize that. We can recognize that in investment or in spending time in relationship with someone. I'm sure we've all been burned by an investment that went badly.

I have friends who invested their life savings with someone who was a Christian investment person and he decided their money was his money. Talk about crushing.

[18:14] Right? Talk about shocking and hurtful. So there is risk we recognize. And sometimes the easy way out, I think, and we'd all recognize this, is no way at all.

And I mean that from the perspective of doing nothing kind of gets you nowhere, doesn't it? So just as with the master and the servants in this story, God gives to each person according to their need and also we recognize according to what they can handle.

God knows us. He knows our capacity. And I believe that we can tend to become distracted by talents. Can't we? When we use that contemporary definition.

We can be distracted by the talents, the financial situation, the blessings that someone else has. Right?

Can you relate to that? And particularly versus what we have ourselves. Do you compare?

[19:31] Do you contrast that idea of keeping up with the Joneses? I just read this morning an article about the increasing mortgage and consumer debt that is just going through the roof in Canada.

Pun intended, I guess. But people buying houses they can't afford. People buying vehicles they can't afford. Just to keep up. Just to try and maintain some sort of standard that is elusive at best. And I believe that when we become distracted by envy or jealousy, we quickly forget about our own circumstances.

Right? How God is calling us to use what he has specifically given to us. I know many of you and I know your stories and you have gifts that astound me, many of you.

All of you, I'll discover over time, have been gifted by God, have been blessed by God in specific ways. So recognizing that everything we have, everything that we've been given, came from God, we also need to recognize that he intends for us to be investing it.

[20:49] Not just in a monetary sense, although that's definitely part of it. But as we've explored together in the past, God gives us time. He gives us skills and gifts and other resources according to our abilities.

And he expects us to use them wisely and invest them knowing that he is coming back. Do you have a sense of urgency knowing Jesus is coming back?

I don't always. What if Jesus walked up the aisle right now and said, I'm back. Everybody line up. We're going to have the accounting now.

Do you kind of go, not ready? Something to think about, right? If Jesus came back tomorrow, are you ready to have your sheet balanced to account for what you've done and haven't done?

So I encourage you, my friends, to take a serious look at the blessings, the talents, the skills, the gifts, all the richness of your life and your unique circumstances that God has given only to you. [22 : 04] Don't hide them away. Don't hoard them for your own benefit. But ask where God wants you to use them. You may be hearing this and saying, I have nothing left to give.

I'm in the last chapter of my life. I'm too young. I'm too old. I'm too poor. That's not God's voice, friends. And I wouldn't talk to you like that.

So if you hear that voice in your head, too late, too old, too short, that's me, too tall, too white, too dark, that's a different voice than God's voice for you.

My prayer for all of us is that like the servants in our parable this morning, when our master returns, this is when I don't want to choke up, when our master returns and judges how we've invested what we were given, that we, too, this is my goal in my life, my friends, that we, too, can hear those amazing words.

Say them with me. Say them with me. Well done, good and faithful servant. Amen.