

# Wasted Potential

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[0:00] Matthew 25, it's called the parable of the talents.

It's a parable, it's a story that Jesus told to illustrate a spiritual truth.! And the truth is about stewardship.! And it's about using what you've got, not burying it and wasting it.

This story teaches us how we can use our lives, how we can employ our abilities, and how we ought not to bury our talent.

And there's four simple learnings that I'd like us to note tonight. And the first one is, God gives abilities. God gives us our abilities. I know there's some people, they've been trained in teaching. God can help us learn abilities. There's people who have got natural abilities in all kinds of the skills of the world, of spiritual things.

[1:05] Different abilities. And the number one lesson is, God gives our abilities. And we see that from verse 14. Here's the story as our Lord told it. Matthew 25, verse 14.

It says, He left these three men with some property to take responsibility for.

And our Lord uses this picture that he paints to illustrate how God gives us abilities. These men, these three men, were given ridiculous amounts of money.

If you were to translate that into modern day currency, think of what it would mean. One talent. One talent. Now the talent is the name of the coin.

The article of money was called a talent. And one talent, this sum of money was equal to what an ordinary labourer could earn over some 15 years.

[2:31] That's what people tell us. That it was so valuable that it was worth 15 years of the average labourer's kind of income. So the value that the master left in charge of these servants was enormous.

It was a huge amount of money. Imagine getting 15 years' salary and just in a purse or in a wallet and given charge of that. It was enormous.

And who gave it to them? The owner was the distributor. The master was the one who gave it to these men. And like that too, God is the owner and the distributor of what we have to enjoy in our lives.

God has given each of us some different abilities, unique talents, callings, abilities and gifts. That God has distributed to us. Every one of you as a born again Christian has an ability or several. And it has been given to you from God. Everything that you have belongs to God. God gets the credit for everything in terms of our abilities.

[3:43] He sees what you're capable of. He sees your potential. I know I was walking in the building tonight and I had the guitar under my arm and we just picked up some people for church and little Lily said, I'm a multitasker.

Sometimes we can be a multitasker for God. We can have different abilities, different capacities, different gifts and callings and things that we're able to do.

It would be good if we can all be multitaskers for the kingdom of God. But even if it's just one, God sees your potential. Even if it's just one area that you can serve Him. What is your latent potential? There's a lot of modern day talk about realising your potential. We're not talking about worldly success or vanity in terms of potential. But what is your potential in terms of what is really valuable? The kingdom of God. How can you be a potential valuable person for the kingdom of God? What is your latent potential?

[4:46] Or for you will it be wasted potential? I pray not. I pray not. The owner gave them his goods. Then he went off on this journey.

He went away. Like that too, God gives you different gifts, different abilities and then He leaves you alone. He leaves you, as it were, in charge. He leaves you to learn responsibility, to use those gifts

and callings and abilities.

He leaves it up to us. God gives abilities. We see that in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 17. But as God has distributed to every man.

As the Lord hath caught everyone, so let him walk. As God hath distributed to every man. Every one. Every one of you dear people here.

God has distributed to every one of you. God has distributed gifts to us. Our story goes on. Verse 16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same.

[5:52] And made them other five talents. He had five. He traded. He ended up with five extra. Verse 17. Likewise he that had received two.

He also gained another two. The second lesson. Employ your gifts.

Employ your gifts. Do something. Do something. We don't know what they did, but they did something. Something happened in between them receiving and then giving a count.

They were given five. He got five extra. Ten. He was given two. He got two extra. Four. Something happened in between receiving and giving a count.

Do something. Do something. Use your God-given gifts. Use what God has given to you. Each of us. For each of us they may be different.

[6:53] In Romans 12.6 it says, Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, where the prophecy let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

And various other gifts. We'll come to that scripture again later. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Use them.

Use the gifts. Verse 18. Now we come to the one talent man. The one talent man. It says of him, He that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money.

What do we learn from the one talent man? You can choose to be inactive and passive with your gift. You can choose to bury the gift and ability that you have and just dig it into the dirt and waste what God has given to you.

You can be like that one talent man. This man wasted what he was given. He wasted what he was given the stewardship of. He was not being faithful. His talent was buried in the dirt.

[7:53] His ability was shelved and covered with dust. Sadly, many Christians are like this man. Their abilities, their gifts are covered with dust or rust.

Now I've had occasion to meet many people and they come and go. And some are out of fellowship tonight.

There's dear people that I know. There's people more qualified than me to be a preacher. They've done more years in theological school. They've got a degree on their wall. They've got latent potential.

They've got such potential. But they're doing nothing. They're sitting at home. They're not in fellowship. It grieves me.

It grieves me. You know, the Word talks are giving account of some with tears. Because you see the waste. The waste of such potential. The waste of such potential.

[8:56] Friends, you know, there's folk that have ministered here in our youth group. And an individual I know, he scarcely goes out of his home now.

Wasted potential. What a tragic, tragic thing. Tragic. As much as I seek to encourage, I see no response. Wasted potential.

Buried talents. It's such a tragic thing. When Christians cover their gifts with dust or rust by being, really burying their talents.

Friends, it's such a sad thing. Verse 19. After a long time, the Lord of thy servants cometh and reckoneth with them. It says that the Master came back.

The Master came back and it was time for reckoning. It was time for giving account. God expects you and I to use our talents. It's our responsibility. It's your responsibility to use what God has given to you.

[9:56] One day God will ask me, what did you do with what I have given to you? That should make us really sit up and consider, shouldn't it?

What have you done with what I have given to you? That would be his question. Verse 20. And so he that received five talents came and brought the other five talents.

Saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents. Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. He had these five coins or items of money, talents, and he gained five extra.

He'd done some trading. He'd used that resource wisely that the Master had given to him. Verse 21. Verse 22.

Verse 22. Verse 22.

[11:24] I'll explain that. Verse 24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou had not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.

Verse 25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine. He gave him back the one talent that he had been given.

Verse 22. It's wrong for me to bury what God gave me. The first man doubled his talents. The second doubled his talents.

The third buried his talents. Why? He was afraid. He was afraid. He was scared. He was scared. Fear keeps me from using my talent.

Verse 26. His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, you're wicked and lazy, he said. Thou knewest that I wrink where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed.

[12:26] Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchanges, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. So the least he could have done would have been to put it in the bank, as it were, as we could compare it to nowadays, and to gain some interest.

The third servant, that one talent man was actually obeying the rules of the day, I'm told, that was saying such things as, whoever immediately buries property and trusted to him is no longer liable because he's taken the safest course conceivable.

So the law of the day would say, if you get someone else's property, the safest thing to do is hide it. Then you're not going to be liable if it goes missing. Someone steals it.

He was just following the rules of prudent behaviour. The master's reaction was to say, You wicked, lazy servant. Verse 28. Take therefore the talent from him, give it to him which hath ten talents.

For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath, and cast thee the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.

[13:37] There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When an owner places a value in our hands, something of value, he wants us to use it to benefit his kingdom.

And it's like that with our Lord, our God. Every one of us has been given a life to live, a service to serve, a capacity. God has created every one of us with special gifts, and he expects us to use them for his glory, for the purpose that he has given them to us for.

But something, it's too scary. It's too scary for me. Something, I'd rather play it safe. I'd rather just hide and just sit in the background and just not get involved too much.

Not move too much outside of my comfort zone. For some, it's even song leading. There was a fellow, he stepped out of the comfort zone and led the songs.

And our brother this morning, led it for the first time this morning. And stepping outside of the comfort zone, it's doing that which is scary. It could be a Bible study. It could be sharing a testimony.

[14:54] It could be reading a Bible reading. It's scary the first time, isn't it? Especially the first time. And the one hundredth and one thousandth time.

And it's still scary when you do something for God. Don't be scared of using your ability.

Don't be afraid of moving outside your comfort zone. The first time is the scariest. It gets less scary after that, you know. But the enemy would say to you, he'd whisper in your ear, the enemy of our soul would say to you, he'd whisper things like this.

Don't get involved. Don't volunteer. Don't volunteer. Don't risk your talents. Just bury it instead.

It's easier that way. It's less scary. You won't be scared if you just bury a talent. Friends, we can listen to the enemy of our soul.

[16:00] We can do nothing for God. We can choose the easy way. The way of the no talent, or the one talent man, who really wasted what he had.

Your talent and ability is God's gift to you. Every one of you. Every one of you here. God's given you something that you can do. Make the most of what you've got.

And find a way to serve. Your time. Use it wisely. Your intellect. Your reason. Your compassion. Your industry. Your energy.

Some of you are younger than me. I'm getting a bit past it. But even for us older saints, and older than me, there's much that we can still do.

There's much that we can still do. Brothers and sisters, we're not making light of age or anything. We've all got ability. Use the breath you've been given to praise Him. Use the mind you've been given to seek Him.

[17:01] Use the eyes you've been given to read His Word. To take it in. To apply it. Use your memory to memorise God's Word. Use your energies to do something.

It could be practical things for you. There's something every one of us can do. You know, I was encouraged tonight when I got a call from a young lady who was sitting at the back there, and she was thinking, she rang me and said, I'd like to bring some rice tonight.

I thought that wasn't probably something that we could use that conveniently, but she was keen enough and willing enough and interested enough to want to bring something to church to share with the rest of you folk here tonight.

That says something, doesn't it? A little girl. And I'm not meaning to embarrass her tonight, but she was willing to do something with what she had. The ability that she had. Invest your life.

Do something. Do something. That's what the people did. The chaps with the five and the two, they did something. Be used of God. Be reliable. Be faithful.

[18:08] Be willing. If we don't use it, we'll lose it. If I use my talent wisely, I'll be rewarded. God entrusts us with his property.

Even the abilities you have, it's because of him. It's through him. It's from him. It's from his hand. We can't claim any merit. We can't make any boast about anything that we can do or think we can do, even the poor things that we attempt to do.

It's God's helping us that makes it all possible. But one day God is going to settle accounts as the master in this story. He's going to settle accounts with every one of us one by one by one.

Will his words be to you, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Even some people might count it insignificant that there's someone manning this responsibility here tonight. Of this little video camera going.

[19:11] And we thank God for faithful little people. And again, we don't want to embarrass anyone, but thank you for that. It's something simple, and yet the potential of what is being streamed through that camera can go worldwide and reach many.

And so it's worth it, isn't it? Well done. It's not the amount of talent God gives us, it's the amount of increase we return to him that he's interested in. And he does not ask more from us than what we're able to produce.

He trusts us to use what he has given to us. The fourth point is being an active Christian. Be an active Christian. Instead of being geared to passivity, get out of neutral.

Shift the gear stick out of neutral. Mobilise your energies and your motivations. Do what you can do. Be a volunteer. You know, I struggle. People, I honestly do struggle.

There's some people that are total fanatics to do everything that needs to be being done. I don't even have to ask them. They just jump up and offer, and then they worry that they're getting overworked. But people, we need volunteers in the army.

[20:21] We don't want to have to go conscripts where we've got to go using pressure tactics and blame games and, you know, making people feel guilty.

You know, putting people on a guilt trip so that you want to do something for God. That could be simple things. You know, the simple things that I could think of watering the garden here. I mean, it's a simple thing, but if nobody does it, we're going to have a lot of dead bushes around this place that we meet. It's a simple thing. Mobilise your energies and do what you can do. Find ways to serve within your church. Find ways to train, to develop, to learn new skills. How will you learn and grow unless you say, I'm willing to do that which is scary for me? It's always scary the first time. And thank God, God can use the most unlikely of people. You might think, how can God use such as me? God can use me.

[21:19] God can use you. God can use you people tonight. Here's some suggestions someone put together. Help the young children.

Help the people less able. Help the busy mothers. Find a baby, a bottle for a baby. Welcome people. Shake hands. Again, it was the little one here tonight was making the effort to shake hands with some new people tonight.

Where are the men and women who will step up to the challenge and get involved, honestly? Help plan the place. Pray for people in this fellowship, for the saints, for the service.

Visit the sick. Visit people in prison. There's people who need counselling. I can't do it all. There's people who need help in all kinds of ways.

And there's more call than there's time available often. But there's latent potential sitting here.

Latent potential in you. Every one of you here tonight.

[22:28] Potential. Opportunities. To take a cuppa to someone who's less able. To speak to newcomers. To offer to drive people to and from church. Someone suggests here, offer free haircuts to the elderly.

Or disabled. Or financially struggling. Young parents. Some of us don't need too many haircuts. But... And it could be like starting a recycled clothing fund for people who need clothes.

Someone suggests here, to swap clothes with children as they grow. And practical things. Learn sign language so you can communicate to people who are hard of hearing.

Help prepare the church newsletter. Offer to provide secretarial support. Serve communion. Take up the offering. There's plenty that every one of us can do.

You know, here tonight, I was just called on, as it were, well I wasn't called on, I had to do it, to play the guitar. Dust off the guitar. I haven't played it for months. It's something, I've got some minimal ability to do, but I've got something I can do.

[23:32] Not very well, but I can do it sufficiently unto the need of the time. You might have musical abilities that are sitting dormant. Neglected.

Gathering dust. Friends, every person has a place in the kingdom of God to serve. We're all different. We've all got the same body temperature.

I think so, last time I checked. I'm 37.6 degrees. All of our blood is red. We all have a brain. I think I've still got one. But no two people have the same fingerprints.

We're all different. Every one of us. Thank God you don't all look like me. That would be terrible.

And you know, we all are different. We need one another. We need differences. It's a good thing to be different.

You know, you're not all as good looking as me, but you know, we all have got different potentials, different abilities. We've all got different callings. And God is wonderful enough to entrust every one of us with something different that we can do.

[24:32] Different abilities, different talents. But one day, He's coming back to settle accounts. He's coming back just like the Master in our story. He's coming back. The question is, as you could read it, in 1 Corinthians 4 verse 7, what do you have that God hasn't given to you?

God has given you everything in your life. That's 1 Corinthians 4 verse 7. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Everything we've got has been from His hand.

It's from Him. And it should be unto Him that we use it. We're only stewards of what we've been given. He's placed things into your care. There's things that are in your care that are not in others' cares.

It could be souls that you have been given to shepherd, to witness to, to encourage. We all have ability and opportunity. Don't waste it.

