

Matthew 25: 14-23 // Faithfulness

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[0:00] It's Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 to 23. You know, I just want to say flat out, I love hearing the sound of kids in a service. I really do.

And I actually had, there was one of my favorite moments in Vancouver was I was doing a sermon. This kid runs up, grabs my leg like as kids do to a dad kind of thing. It wasn't my kid either. And I just kept teaching because I thought, isn't this amazing? Shouldn't we show the children more and more how welcome and loving church can be and that they belong? So I love it.

So please know that I'm thrilled. I want to hear more kids in this house. Something came up in the Bible study this morning that hit me in a way about this passage that I wasn't really prepared for. And it was just, it was a memory. It was something that, you know, when I was about 16 years old, I had met Jesus. And, and I, you know, I was, I was in that mode of like prayer and trying to understand him with this new understanding that I was gaining through his word.

[1:04] And, and the words, well done, good and faithful servant came across my eyes one day. And I thought, that's how I want to be received into heaven. That's, that's it right there, Lord.

I want to come home and have you say, well done. I didn't yet know what it would take for that to be said. I didn't yet understand what living a life for Jesus would mean in the long term.

I was just learning everything brand new. I was even learning the idea that God was real, brand new. It was all new. But that phrase has stuck with me all the way through the years. When I go home, well done, good and faithful servant is what I hope I hear. So we are continuing our walk through the fruits of the spirit.

And this week we are on faithfulness. And it seemed an interesting passage to go through the parable of the talents. You may know this, you may not, but let's look at it afresh together.

[2:06] I'm going to start with verses 14 to 15. For it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, another one, to each according to his ability.

And then he went away. This was pretty common back then when a master left the house to give the servants financial responsibility. That was not uncommon.

So this would be, if you were hearing it back then, it would be like, yeah, okay. You know, he left the keys to the house to the people that live there and work there. That makes sense. But we have to understand what a talent is.

Because, you know, we could hear that and immediately think, oh, like juggling. Right? It's not a talent in that way. And I know you know that. But if you didn't, let me unpack it just a little bit more. Talent is a weight of money. It's not an amount in the sense of, I have 10 talents, therefore I have 10 bucks. It's not like that. It's actually considered a weight of currency, depending upon the metal that was used.

[3:14] So you could have it as 1,200 U.S. dollars, roughly about now. Or it could be hundreds of thousands of dollars. Too much can be given to the servants to manage.

So let's understand that this was a group of servants that would be giving talents, something to manage while the master was away. But in such a way where each was judged individually. And each was given individually what the master knew that they could handle. If it was on a group, then we're going to go through the math a little bit. Well, not that much. I don't want to do that. But I'll just say that at the end of this, you know, the group made about 15 talents out of the eight. That's not a bad return. But it wasn't being judged on how the group did.

It was being judged on how the individuals did. And so that's what we have to pick up and what we have to look at. Because a talent was a big amount of money. And it is appropriate and okay to look at that and then look at, well, how can this relate to us now?

[4:19] It's appropriate to look that we all have resources. And I'm not talking about money. We have the resource of time. We have a resource of authority.

Maybe we're given that. We have a resource of abilities. And yes, we have the resources of money. How are we stewarding those things for God right here, right now?

How are we taking care of those things that God has given us and put into our lives? And what are we doing with them? One servant received only one talent.

Like I said, it's not necessarily a small amount. But everyone else received according to their ability. Because the master knew what they could handle. You know, a question was asked earlier. And I'll kind of repackage it a bit this way. Imagine having something taken from you that you thought was yours.

[5:19] How do you react to that? You know, it's one of the first tests of a servant. Because a servant has everything with open hands. And they'll say, so long as it blesses the Lord, so long as he is praised.

The person who has ownership is like, no, mine. Right? Mine. You can't touch that. That's not a servant's attitude. A servant's attitude has open hands.

That all are from the Lord, to the Lord, and in the Lord. That's what really we can look at here. So if the master knows that someone is, no, mine.

Sorry, that was my fault. That was my fault. If someone does that, right? Then why would they be entrusted with more?

Because the more you're entrusted with, the more help you need. The more hands may light work. Anyways, I'll get off that rabbit trail. Bye. Then we'll get to that in a bit. You know what?

[6:19] I actually will take that segue. Hold on a second. Just go with me for a moment. We have the elections today. If you want to blame anybody, blame me.

Okay? I probably should have brought this up a couple of weeks ago, and I didn't. I know Sean's shaking his head, but I said, no, this is my bullet to take. So that's my fault. But I will say this.

The word deacon comes from the Greek word diakonos, which means servant. Okay? It's an important word. Because you can't be a servant if you are serving in servitude.

And that means obligation. It's Sunday. I've got to go to work. That's servitude. Quit. Stop what you're doing.

That's not the right heart to enter into the house of God. Servanthood is like, I get another day to be God's messenger. I get one more day to serve God's family.

[7:17] I don't care if it's cleaning the toilets, doing the sermon, worshiping, doing kids ministry, whatever it is. There is no small task. And when you take it with that heart and like, you know, I get another day to do this for the Lord and for his family.

This is so exciting. That is a servant attitude. One of the things that I have been absolutely blown away by this board is that's who they are.

I keep running into circumstances and examples. Well, that's their heart. So these two guys that we're voting on, I can just say coming in with fresh eyes into this town, they have servants' hearts.

They are quick to serve, quick to get hands dirty, even, you know, when necessary. I love that about our board of directors, board of elders, deacons board, however you want to say it.

Our band of brothers. I love that about these guys. So I'll leave it there. Faithfulness means something. And it's obvious that you can see it. Verses 16 to 23.

[8:22] He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more.

But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now, after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you've delivered to me five talents. Here, I've made five talents more.

And then 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.

The man who received five talents traded them.

[9:29] It was a direct action. He worked quickly. You notice that? They didn't just kind of sit around and say, Hey, this is great. We've entrusted. Let's just, you know, coast on this for a while.

No, he didn't do that at all. As if in a hurry, he went out and used what he was given to increase what he was given for his master.

It wasn't for himself. He went to increase what he was given for his master's benefit. They used what they had. They did their work promptly.

And they worked hard. Whatever the master had given them. And when the master came back, they were ready to give it an account. Now, if you've ever been called up on something, you really want to have all your ducks in a row.

You want to have all the details sorted. You know, if you've ever had the horror of being audited, you know exactly what I mean. You want to have all things in proper order.

[10:29] Okay. Where the Lord will come back. I think, you know, I don't want to presume what is going to be said. I can't read. I don't know what that conversation is going to be like. But if you'll allow me a little bit of artistic license, I do wonder if the question will be, have you learned how to love yet?

I wonder if it'll be like that. It won't be like, you know, have you learned how to be a good teacher? Have you learned how to be a good this or that? I don't know. But I do wonder if it'll be, have you learned how to love yet?

Has that ability to love increased inside of you? We're given time, abilities, resources, and we have the responsibility to use those resources for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom, not our kingdom.

You see, there's a big difference between someone who is gifted and knows that gift comes from God than someone who is gifted something or entrusted with something and believes it's theirs. That never lasts and will be taken and given to faithful. That's the kind of readiness I believe Jesus is talking about, to be ready with what we have been given, with our hearts open and our hands open, knowing that whatever we've been given, it comes from God and is for him.

[11:57] Verse 23, his master said to him, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enjoy or enter into the joy of your master. So notice the reward has been the same for everyone so far.

It's been a fairly familiar story. It didn't matter how much came back. You notice that? It's not like you said, oh, you gave five. You know, I give you five talents and here you bring that back. This is great.

You did such a better job. I'm going to honor you so much more. And the two, it's like, you got a B plus. Not bad. All right? That is not what happened here.

They were faithful with whatever they were given and they brought it back. They brought, sorry. It's like an anime sneeze. It really is. Sorry.

I can poke my head that way. Anyways. So, that wasn't the point. So, it wasn't the point of how much they brought back. It was the point of what they did and how they used it and how they honored the Lord with it.

[13:00] Notice it doesn't say the master looked for their character first. Like, he's, sorry. Notice it doesn't say that he'd say, well done, doubler of my money.

Right? Notice it doesn't say that at all. Well done, you know, he who, you know, expanded my financial kingdom. No, it was well done, good and faithful servant.

He looked at their character first. That is what mattered. And that's why whenever we do anything for church, our faithfulness stems from our character. We have to have that as a part of ourselves.

So, if you have a situation where it's like you have something to do and you do it, but it's your kingdom and you do it when you want to do it, I'm sorry to say, you're not going to be entrusted with the ten other things.

That's just not how it works. I was given advice and I've used this practice many, many, many years. You want to look for leaders in the church, you look to who shows up to the prayer meetings.

[14:02] You look to see who has a heart to pray before the Lord for this church. In private, that's cool too.

In a group, that's great. Who has a heart to pray for this church? Are we like, no mine? Or are we, Lord, this is yours. I want this to look like you.

I don't want this to look like me. I want this to be your church, your house. I want you to fill it with people that need to hear you, not me, not anybody else here. There's a difference in our attitude towards servanthood, faithfulness.

I believe you're entrusted with more when you have the right heart and attitude and character. I truly believe that. I've seen this. Verses 24 to 25.

He also who had received the one talent came forward saying, Master, I knew you to be hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

[15:02] So I was afraid. And I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. Like I said, the master judged each of the servants individually. If it had been based on group effort, the group itself would have done okay.

But let's face it. If you've been to school, college, university, high school, whatever it is, and you've done a group project with people, there's always that one person that doesn't do anything, right? There's always that one person that's like, I'll let everybody else do that, you know. And it harms the group and it's difficult. But that's not how the Lord looked at this. That's not how the master in this parable looked at this.

He looked at each person individually. So it came to this guy. The servant who buried his talent tried to excuse himself because he knew his master to be all-powerful.

Someone who takes what they want, reaps what they don't sow, and that's an authority. And he knew that. He was afraid. I think there was a genuine fear there. It's like the servant was saying, you don't need my help.

[16:14] You can do anything. So I'm just going to sit back and relax. I think that's a terrible attitude. I really do. Because that's not what was entrusted with the person. When we think that our little efforts don't mean much to the kingdom of God, we're wrong.

Even the smallest act of kindness means great things in the kingdom of God. The smallest praise, the smallest gratitude, even the smallest little bits can mean everything.

I don't know. You know, forgive me if this is an embarrassment. You know, one of my favorite things that's happened so far in the six months is that Zaley gave me a welcome card.

It's still in my office. It's on my table. I'm never removing it. Right? Because it was one of the most sweet things I've ever received. It was just pure welcome. And I loved that. That has affected the kingdom of God in my life in a positive and, dare I say, dramatic way.

I'll never forget it. And as far as I am able, I will never leave that little stand. I'm not meaning to be weird about it. It's just saying, like, look, your small efforts, the efforts that you think are small, do big things.

[17:30] Because Zoe made a movie for this church, a video for this church, you know, that was a part of the application process. We came here because we saw the Holy Spirit through what she did in the lives of the people that she was talking to.

That little thing that maybe no one even thought twice about, it brought us here. So you can blame Zoe for it from now on. Anyways, so, thank you.

It meant as much praise as I can give. That's what I mean. We never know what our efforts do in the kingdom of God. So don't minimize them for yourself. Be faithful. Have an open hand with what God has given you.

Okay? Verse 25 says, So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talents in the ground. Here you have what is yours. What's funny is that he's almost proud of it.

You notice that? He's almost proud. That's what I find very humorous about this guy. But no improvement was made on it at all. He's almost like, hey, I knew you were a hard guy. I didn't lose a thing.

[18:31] Here. But that's not what the master asked him to do. What he wanted him to do was something completely different. But I do think in his favor, at least he understood this.

The talent belonged to his master. I mean, he was not an evil man. There's nothing evil about this guy. Okay? Misguided. Fearful. Sure. But the fact that he knew that this talent was his master's, that goes a long way.

I do think. I really do. He's already head of many Christians who hold on to things and think, no mind. This servant didn't spend it on himself.

He didn't go out partying. He just didn't use it the way that he should have used it. He wasn't responsible with what he should have been responsible for. He didn't think. He didn't work.

And he didn't try. And all he had was excuses. Verses 26 to 30. But his master answered him, So take that talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents.

[19:56] For everyone who has will be given more. And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness, into the place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. I'll get to that in a moment. Because we have to talk a little bit about God's will here.

If it means anything to you, I'm not a Calvinist. I have about 100,000 reasons why. Hopefully that's not an offense. But then you should have seen it coming anyways.

No, sorry. That was a cheap shot. Okay. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. There's a difference between God's permissible will and God's sovereign will.

God's sovereign will is that he made us. There is a timeline. He's bringing history to an end. And it will close. And we can read that in the book of Revelation.

[20:58] Whether we like it or not. Whether we're ready or not. There will come a day when Jesus returns. That is God's sovereign will. I could go on and on and on. All day talking about other examples.

But let me leave it at that for now. God's permissible will is a little bit different. Because it doesn't mean you're out of his will. I just don't think it really matters what color t-shirt or button-up shirt you wore today.

You are allowed to make choices. We have free will. But we need to seek God and his will for the things that we do. And sometimes the answer to that prayer is wait.

Because sometimes God's will is that we wait. Sometimes the answer is no. Sometimes it's yes. But it's a different thing than his sovereign will planned for the ages.

Because both are important. But this servant had a choice of what he could do with what was given to him.

[22:01] He chose poorly. He chose fearfully. He chose selfishly. And I might even say he chose lazily. Because the word slothful is used here.

What do you do with what you have in your hands right now? What are we doing with whatever God has given us? We can get overwhelmed by thinking like, Oh man, I've got to do this and this and this next year.

It's like, no, no. Right here, right now, for today. What are you doing with what God has given you in your hands? Right now, today. What is that? Because this isn't something we work out towards heaven.

This is something for here and now. Have you buried what God has given you? Oh, it's too hard. You know? I'm worried about displeasing him.

I'm worried about making mistakes. You know, one of my favorite Instagram reels is just when it comes up. And I'll try and paraphrase it at least. And it's just that when God called you, he took your stupidity into account.

[23:02] Okay? And obviously, that's not how he sees us. But think about that. He took our frailty. He took our problems. He knew all of that about us. He knows who we are.

He's watching us walk our lives out. And he's still faithful to us. Still loves us. Still cares for us. Has grace and mercy for days and days and days and days.

So don't be afraid to step out and try. If God has given you something in your heart and you've hidden it away because you're afraid of failure, well, welcome to the club. Because we're all afraid to fail.

The thing that I have come to understand is failure is not a person. It's an event. Nothing more. You cannot be a failure. You just encounter it as an event. Get up and keep going.

Don't try the same thing over and over again. Right? That's, you know, we've heard that's the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting different results. But that's what we have each other for church for.

[24:04] Try it. Do that thing. Whatever it is. And if you trip and you make a mistake, you know what? You'll be in good company because we've all tripped and we've all made mistakes. So there's no reason why somebody would judge you.

We'll walk with you. When I trip and I make mistakes, not if, but when, I'm going to hope the same. Walk with me. Help me up.

Let me try it a different way. Remind me if I'm doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Those who do not pray or evangelize because they feel that God is sovereign, there's no point.

They're missing the heart and nature and character of our God. God, the one that said, go and make disciples of all nations, preaching and teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Go with what you have. Go. Do it. Do that thing. Be brave. This third servant, like I said, he wasn't evil, but he didn't appreciate what he was entrusted with.

[25:12] Oh, you know, all I do for church is I fill up these cups. That's all I do. Nobody even knows that I do it. I don't. I'm, you know, speaking up, right? I know the people that do this.

Do you have any idea what you're doing? The importance of this? The beauty of this gesture? You're serving the church by honoring the crucifixion of Christ to obey something he told us to do. You're making that happen. There is no small job. None. Thank you for all of those who prepare communion and the cups. I do know who you are.

And I'm very grateful. Because this is no small job. And I think has an eternal significance. And you know what? Anybody who does this, if they came to me with an idea, I'd be like, how can I help? Anything you want to do. I am so down. Whatever I can do to help. Because you know what? They serve in the quiet, faithful parts where nobody sees.

[26:17] That's a beautiful, faithful thing. So, well done, good and faithful servants. Thank you. Verse 29.

For to everyone who has more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even that will be taken away.

There are people who have things, but they hold on to them in such a way as if they had nothing. Let me repackage that. There are those of us who have things we do in the Lord, but we hold on it so tightly because it's like it's my identity.

You know how dangerous that can be? It's so dangerous that if the Lord has a heart and a mind to pass on and spread out and build up, he might not use those who hold on too tightly.

He'll use those who have a heart to build up. And I've said it before and I'll say it again. My heart is to have several guys from the church be teaching from this pulpit.

[27:33] I have three that I've targeted right now. And I've asked them, you know, as early as last week, pick something you're passionate about, make some notes, and let's make a plan and a date.

Because that's what you do is you build up, you spread out. Because it isn't yours. It's the Lord's. It's God's. This pulpit, this church, it is God's.

And anybody who is strangling for control, you'll lose. Not because of me. I have my own battle with that, right? I submit that to the Lord all the time.

Because I want to go home and have him say, well done, good and faithful servant. Well done. Well done. Verse 30.

And I'll close in a second here. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The servant here that we're talking about, the one who wasn't an evil person, they weren't a true servant of the master at all.

[28:45] They didn't have a heart to serve the master. Not really. They didn't want to be under the master's care. So you have to ask yourself, why would they continue to be under the master's care?

As the master isn't going to trust them with anything again because they're not faithful with what they've been given. Then it leaves a big hole to try and understand this. And as it was rightly pointed out actually earlier, the parables are difficult to wrestle with.

They are. Because they speak mysteries that we have to work through. They're difficult to look through sometimes. They say one thing, but they're really meaning something much more grand, much more eternal.

So I'll just say this. How I understand it. I'll skip the example I used earlier in Sunday school. But there are moments of such deep and incredible regret that what are we left to do but to hold our heads, grit our teeth, and just be like, no, I missed it.

If only you might have experienced those deep, deep regrets in life. If only you might have experienced those moments.

[30:03] And so that's why it's so very important to take God's word important now. To hear his message, his heart, his passion for you now.

To go out and do those things that he has given you to do now. Because you don't want to be in a place where you're thinking like, oh, I could have done that. What was I thinking?

Because there's other weeping and gnashing of teeth. Oh, I don't have control. The other one is, Lord, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have missed this.

I have such regret, Father. I'm sorry I wasn't a good servant. You see the two opposite sides, how they play out. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There is a place that is separate from God.

He desires no one to be there. But if we do not want to be with him, then we will get that. So do it now.

[31 : 04] Speak those words now. Accept Jesus into your heart now. What are you waiting for? If the Lord has given you something to do, he will work with you to see it to the end.

And it might be a powerful ministry, and it might be filling communion cups, which is a powerful ministry. See, we shouldn't define those things for ourselves. We should simply just put our hands and feet to work while we still can.

Today. Let's pray. And I will just say, too, that I know we have the elections and stuff, but if you want to come and dialogue about this more, I will be around, and I will be happy to pray with you.

Okay? Let's just end in prayer. Let's pray.