

Matthew 25:14-30

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[0:00] We thank you for your goodness to us. God, we thank you for your loving kindness.!

God, I pray that you would speak to us today. You are the living God who speaks.

And you have spoken through your word, and we want to hear, God, what you have to say to us this morning. So, God, do that work among us today through your word.

Lord, let me get out of the way so that you can work here for your glory and for the edification of your church. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Good morning. For those that don't know me, my name is Mike. I'm one of the elders here at Shoreline. And today, on behalf of Fidelity Investments, I want to talk to you guys about three steps to use your gifts and your talents to make your money work for you.

[1:23] Right? Like this, this is America. Right? This is the land of opportunity, the land of entrepreneurs, the land of capitalism. And we actually, we live in New England, if you know that.

This is the land of the Ivy League schools and elite yacht clubs. This is what God's word has to say to us. This is what he wants for you. I hope you don't take me seriously by your laughs.

I hope alarm bells are going off. And if I was being serious, you'd be storming the pulpit at this point, like tackling me to the ground, dragging me out. And somebody else would come up here and preach God's word. That's what this passage says today.

If you strip it entirely of its context and its true biblical meaning. This passage certainly, it does have something to say about your talents and your money. But it's definitely not that.

So Lord willing, by God's grace and through his Holy Spirit, we're going to uncover the true meaning of this parable. So we've been walking with Jesus and Matthew for some time.

[2:21] Actually, over two years now. I think it was January 7th of 2018. We've been going through the book of Matthew. We've seen a lot of stuff. We've seen how Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior and the King, and the very Son of God.

We've seen how Jesus has all authority, right? The authority of Scripture, the authority of truth, the authority of power, and even the authority to forgive sins. We've been taught what true discipleship looks like and also what it doesn't look like.

And then a whole bunch of other things besides that. And since November in chapter 21, we've been looking at the last week of Jesus' life before the cross, known as Holy Week.

The Gospels dedicate a huge proportion of their time to that last week of Christ. And we see that Jesus, his face is set. His mind is made up. He's going to the cross, as he says in chapter 20, to give his life as a ransom for many.

And in these last couple weeks, chapters 24 and 25, Jesus has been preparing his disciples as a good pastor and shepherd for what's to come, for the last era of this present world in which we find ourselves today, right?

[3:34] Between Christ's ascension and his second coming. He prepares us for the hardships to come so that we are not alarmed. He tells us to be wary of false Christ and false teachers so we are not led astray.

He tells us to flee from unnecessary harm. He reminds us that he who began a good work in us will complete it. He tells us to lean on the Lord. He shows his affection for us.

He guarantees the success of our mission. The Gospel will be preached to all the nations. He guarantees that the birth pains, the trials that we face in this time will be cut short.

And he guarantees that he is coming for us. We looked at that two weeks ago. And then last week, we saw that Jesus further prepares his disciples by telling them that his second coming will be delayed.

And it will come unexpectedly. And we need to be ready. We need to be ready. And to illustrate this, Jesus offers a series of analogies and parables, a few of which we looked at last week.

[4:34] And today, we consider one more parable, the parable of the talents. So here is the big idea for today. This is the big idea. True disciples pour out their lives in active, faithful service to the king while they eagerly await his return.

True disciples pour out their lives in active, faithful service to the king while they eagerly await his return. We're going to keep coming back to that. So here's what we're going to do in our time together.

First, we're just going to observe the parable. We're going to look at it, who's involved, what's going on. And then we're going to interpret and apply that parable, uncovering what Jesus wants us to learn as it relates to these last days and impressing that, Lord willing, upon our hearts and our lives. So that's what's going on today. So let's look at the text right now. We're just going to observe some things. So verse 14, Jesus says, For it will be like a man going on a journey.

It will be like. What's he talking about? He's referring back to verse 1. Look at verse 1 of chapter 25. Then the kingdom heaven will be like. And he talks about the parable of the bridesmaids.

[5:41] Remember, the original prompt from Jesus' disciples that led to this lengthy discussion from Christ is this. The disciples asked, after witnessing, you know, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple, and then the disciples were thinking about it.

And then they say, tell us, when will these things be? This is verse 3 of chapter 24. Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

Right? And so Jesus launches into a discussion about the last days. Mixing prophecy of the temple destruction and prophecy of the end times. He's talking about the period of the birth pains, as we talked about.

The trials, the tribulations, the hardships, the false teachers that will come. The period that began after Christ's ascension and continues to this day. Right? So when he says, it will be like, that's what he's talking about.

It will be like a man going on a journey. So this man that we read in his text is a master. He has servants who work for him. Right? And he goes away, verse 15, on a journey, it says there in 14.

[6:43] And he does not return for a long time. That says it in 19. Now, after a long time. So, master going on a journey, and he entrusts stuff to his servants. Look there, verse 14 still.

For it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

Then he went away. So this master leaves. He entrusts stuff to his servants. He's entrusting money to them. And keep in mind, the word for servant there, it's actually really slave.

We've kind of like softened it a little bit. The master owns these people. They belong to him. They have an obligation to do what he's telling them to do. And just as a side note, Jesus is not condoning slavery any more than he was condoning robbery back in chapter 24.

He's just using the societal construct of the day to make a point. The master gives each of these servants talents. Now, a talent was a unit of weight.

[7:45] We actually talked about this several chapters ago. It's a unit of weight. And what is in view here is really a bag of money. So if you have either the NIV or the NLT, you see this in your translation.

The NIV translate talent as bag of gold, and the NLT translate it as bag of silver because it could have been either one. A talent of silver would have been worth about a year's wages, whereas a talent of gold was worth about 20 years' wages.

So since gold is cooler and more expensive, we're just going to assume it's a bag of gold. The point is the master entrusts his servants with a significant amount of his wealth, right?

And even the guy that only gets one talent is still getting a lot of money. If it's 20 years' wages, think of like a million dollars he's been entrusted with by the master. So then the master goes away, right?

And then we see in verses 16 through 18 what each servant does with this bag of gold that he's given. The servant who's given five talents makes five talents more, right? The servant who's given two talents makes two talents more.

[8:44] The servant who's given one talent, he goes and buries it in the ground and preserves it. When the master returns, we see verse 19, there is a settling of accounts, right?

Each servant must give an account for what he has done with the master's money while the master was away. And the master then judges each servant accordingly.

So the five talent and the two talent guys are commended by the master for their faithfulness in stewarding his money. As a result, they are invited into the abundance of the master, right?

They're entrusted with abundantly more. The one talent servant is condemned. We see that in verse 26. He's condemned as wicked and lazy. The one talent that he did have is taken away and he is cast into outer darkness where there will be, as Christ says, weeping and gnashing of teeth. So that's the story itself, right? That's it. But now we're going to look back through this parable and figure out what does this mean for us? What does it mean for us today? And like I mentioned, we have one driving main point that's right here and we'll keep coming back to.

[9:50] And then we have like 23 sub points. I'm just kidding. We only have six. But when I said 23, now six doesn't sound like as much because six is kind of a lot still.

This passage has like, it's so deep and there's so many things you can keep drawing from it. And I'm sure if you were to go home, if you go home today and study this passage, community groups that go through this, you will probably find more lessons applications to pull from this.

We're going to talk about six sub points to this, okay? So let's keep the main point in mind. True disciples pour out their lives in active, faithful service to the king while they eagerly await his return. And six sub points. So here we go. The first one is this. Christ's return is delayed, but it is certain and will come unexpectedly.

We kind of already talked about this last week. See, Jesus' disciples hearing this, they weren't supposed to think that his return was imminent. Like it wasn't going to be, you know, in the next few years.

[10:48] In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, which we saw last week, the bridegroom was, verse 5, delayed. Here we see the master goes on a journey, verse 14, only returns after a long time, verse 19.

The apostle Peter and other apostles in the New Testament pick up on this. Peter says in 2 Peter 3, 8, 9, But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness. Right, Christ hadn't returned yet when Peter wrote this, and some people thought he was being slow. And Peter says, no, no, no, the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Guys, we live in the age of grace, right, where the gospel is advancing, and by God's grace, more people are joining the kingdom of Christ. And so God is delaying his return so that people can come be a part of his bride.

And even though it's delayed, his return is certain. The three servants all knew their master was going to return, right? The bridesmaids, they knew the bridegroom was going to come, and so we too know that Christ will return.

[12:05] And we also know that he will return, and it will be unexpectedly. The timing will be unexpectedly. As we saw last week, like the flood that came in the days of Noah, and like the thief that comes in the night, Christ will return at a day and an hour where no one knows.

That's 2436. So I think 2,000 years now after Jesus spoke this parable, I think it's easy for us to understand that his return is delayed, right?

Like it's been 2,000 years. That's a delay. Get that. I think it's easy for us to understand that it will come unexpectedly because like we just don't know when it's going to come. Of course it's going to be unexpected because he didn't give us a date in Scripture like many people have thought, and Dave talked about that a couple weeks ago.

I think it's harder for us to take to heart the fact that it is certain, right? Friends, Jesus is coming back. He's coming back. He has promised it.

And he has proven time and again, which we've seen that his word is sure. In 2435, he said, Heaven and earth will pass away. My words will not pass away.

[13:14] He's coming back. But before he does, we have work to do. This is point number two. While we await Christ's return, we have work to do for the king.

So we see in the passage here, the master entrusts his servants with significant amounts of money to steward while he is away, right? And then the master expects his servants to be busy capitalizing on what he's given them.

He expects them to be busy investing that money and earning as much as they can. And how do you think that the five-talent and two-talent servants went about actually making more money?

They couldn't just download Robinhood app and invest in the latest tech company and just like sit and watch their investments grow. They didn't have that back then. With the amount of money they were given, they probably bought a business, say a carpentry or a masonry shop or a fishing enterprise or a merchant trading company.

And they would have had to work hard, right, to make that business grow and expand and then sell it for more than it's worth. See, they were busy working for their master.

[14:24] And remember, like we mentioned above, these servants were really slaves. So they belonged to the master and as such they were obligated to work hard for him and to serve him and to advance his cause.

Psalms 24 verse 1 says this, The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all and those who dwell therein.

We belong to the Lord. We are his. Everything in this universe is his. He lays claim on it because he spoke it into existence.

And everything that we have been given, we've been given to us to steward for his purposes and his glory. Everything. Everything. And I'm not just talking about possessions.

I'm not talking about the things that you own. And in fact, I don't think this parable is primarily about that. I don't think it's about stuff. It certainly involves your stuff. But I like how one pastor put it.

[15:24] He said this, The talents represent all the responsibilities and opportunities that are given to us in this life. All the responsibilities and opportunities that are given to us in this life.

Does it involve your talents? Sure. Does it involve your gifts, your abilities, your things? Yes, all of that. But all the responsibilities and opportunities that are given to us in this life.

So, with those God-given, God-entrusted responsibilities and opportunities, employ yourself. Employ yourself in service to him.

Devote yourself to him by using these for his purposes and his glory. Let's get a little specific.

Devote yourself in relationship to him. Right?

Like we talk about the spiritual disciplines. Devote yourself to prayer. Devote yourself to the studying and reading of God's word. There's a small movement of people that have been fasting lately in this church and have seen awesome fruit come from it.

[16:26] It's not fun to fast. Like it sounds cool. I think sometimes, yeah, I'm going to go fast. Awesome. Love Jesus. And then we do it and we're like, well, this kind of stinks. Like I want food. But it is a good thing to do.

Like devote yourself to it and you'll find that as you deny the flesh, your spiritual awareness is heightened and you have time to think about the Lord and be reminded like, oh yeah, I'm hungry physically, but oh wait, I'm way more hungry spiritually.

God, I need you. Devote yourself in relationship to him. There's a myriad of other ways. Devote yourself in service to your family. Right? Like God wants you to use your marriage.

He wants you to use your parenting. He wants you to use these things and work hard in them and advance them for his glory. Devote yourself in ministry to the church. God has blessed us with this body of believers.

Praise the Lord. Devote yourself to this body. All right? To the gatherings that we have, to community groups, to discipling one another. He calls all of us to disciple one another. We've been talking about that in our Friday morning group with the men.

[17:29] Devote yourself to using spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12 through 14. We've been given gifts according to the spirit to use for the edification of this body. Right? Use them.

Steward them for the advancement of this local body. Devote yourself in advancing the gospel. Right? We talk about missions and evangelism. This is what God calls the church to.

Devote yourself in your vocation. Right? Whether you're a professional, whether you are a student, whether you are a mom, whatever you do, devote yourself to it, work hard, steward it.

Right? These are all just examples of opportunities and responsibilities that God has entrusted us with and he intends for us to work hard stewarding them for his glory.

Now the good news is, unlike in the parable where the master leaves, right, and he leaves the servants to carry on their work all by themselves. Right? We are not actually left alone.

[18:33] Right? Jesus actually says in John 16, verse 7, his departure would be to our advantage. Why? Because the helper would come. Who is the helper?

Well, right before his ascension in Luke chapter 24, Jesus says, and behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. Church, Christ's word is sure and that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell upon the church to dwell on them and to indwell their hearts and their lives.

And so we, today, if you have faith in Christ, you are filled with the Spirit. You are clothed with power from on high. The power of God in you, right, to use, to advance his cause by stewarding your responsibilities, your opportunities that you've been given for his glory.

You're not left alone. Praise the Lord. Point number three. So God gives us responsibilities and opportunities as he wills and according to our abilities.

[19:44] We see this in verse 15. To one, he gave five talents. To another, two. To another, one. To each, according to his ability. Now this might be one of the harder points to swallow from this passage.

Christian, God has entrusted you with the responsibilities and opportunities in your life as he has seen fit, right?

And he's done it according to your abilities. He is a wise God. Amen. He is a loving and a powerful God.

Amen. And God is, he is sovereign over this world. He's spoken into existence. He determines the rise and the fall of kings and kingdoms and nations. He's reigned sovereignly over this world and he is sovereign over the circumstances of your life.

He is sovereign over it all. And so, the place that God has you in right now, right now, think about your responsibilities, think about your opportunities, think about the things that are going on in your life right now, the place that God has you in today.

[20:56] He means for you to accept from his hand and steward for his purposes. Singles in this room. Nice.

God means for you to accept your singleness from his hand in humble submission, right? and to use that opportunity to advance his cause in this world.

So how are you going to capitalize on that, on your singleness? We have a couple engaged couples in this room. God intends for you to glorify him in holy anticipation, in eager patience, in the midst of your engagement.

How will you capitalize on your engagement for his glory? Married couples, unlike what the world thinks, your marriage is a gift from God, an opportunity, a responsibility to be used in service to him. Your spouse is not your possession. Your spouse is not for your own selfish desires and needs to be fulfilled. He or she belongs to God and so do you.

[22:12] So invest in your marriage to the glory of God and the good of your spouse. Cadets and students, I'm looking over here because most of

you are here. I don't know if I'm here. Cadets and students, God wants you to work hard, right, in what you're doing, in preparing for what's to come in your life.

He wants you to do that. He also intends for you to pour out your life right now in service to your peers and your classmates and maybe you have a part-time job.

I don't think cadets are allowed to. Maybe you others have a part-time job. He intends for you to receive that from His hand and to steward it and to pour out your life in service to those things for His glory.

Residents of Southeastern Connecticut, whether it's, I don't mean like the technical definition. I mean if you're here, you're a resident of Southeastern Connecticut, that kind of resident. You are here by God's design. That's not my design.

Yeah, it's God's design. I didn't choose Groton, Connecticut and choose New London, Connecticut. Navy guys, how many of you guys had Groton, Connecticut on the top of your list? Not too many. Right?

[23:18] I don't think I've talked to anyone that has. He does not have us in San Diego, California right now. He does not have us doing overseas missions work right now. Maybe some of you want to be in those places but right now you are here.

Right? And He wants you to steward that, to receive that from His hand, to be content with it and to use it for His glory. And the prophet Jeremiah has some excellent words for us this morning.

This was to the exiles in Israel. You might feel like you're in exile in Groton, Connecticut or New London, Connecticut. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

He wants us to love the people around us, the place that we're in and use the opportunities He's given us to advance His cause.

See, the faithful disciple receives that from His hand and then actively uses it for His glory. Alright, we're only in like the first three verses of this passage so we're going to move on.

[24:26] Point number four, God will judge based on faithfulness not fruitfulness. We're going to read some more here. Verse 16 through 23, here we go.

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 have made you five talents more. 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. And he also, who had the two talents, came forward saying, Master, you've delivered to me two talents. Here, I have made two talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

[25:26] You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. Now what do you notice about the master's response to the first and the second servant?

Anybody? Yes, it's the same. But one guy made five talents, one of them only made two. Like the guy made two and a half times more than the second guy. Right? So if his return was bigger, shouldn't his reward be bigger?

Right? Now there might be some engineers in the room saying, Well Mike, they were both 100%. It was both 100% prophet. Yes, that's true. And actually, that's the point.

Right? They were both faithful with what the master had entrusted to them. Right? That's why the master responds to each, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little. Now this sounds, this kind of smells a little bit like works righteousness, doesn't it? When Christ comes back, he's going to judge me based on my faithfulness, based on what I've done for him.

[26:26] And if I've done enough, he's going to say, Well done. And if I haven't done enough, he's going to cast me into outer darkness. Right? That's kind of what it sounds like. Last week, Pastor Dave said that, I love quoting Pastor Dave.

It's, you know, he's part of our church. Last week, Pastor Dave said this, talking about this grouping of parables, we could mistake passages like this to mean we need to earn our salvation by our good works.

But if we've heard the Sermon on the Mount, if we've heard Jesus explain the great commandments, we know we have no hope of earning our place before God. And if the same week he says these things, he's going to the cross to be crushed for our iniquities, it is not so we can earn our place before God.

The cross of Christ is the sure and certain testimony that we cannot earn God's favor. If there was any other way, he would not have offered his son over to death.

Friends, the only way, the only way to be prepared for the coming of Christ is to be made new, to be born again. How does this happen? This happens by God's grace through my faith in Jesus and through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

[27:38] It happens when I admit my spiritual bankruptcy and turn to Christ for my salvation, right? It happens when I believe that while I could never do enough to avert God's just wrath, Christ has already done what needs to be done, right?

By going to the cross, by nailing my sin to the cross, by rising from the grave in victory. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

It is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2, 8, 9. That is the gospel. That's the gospel.

Now, Pastor Dave went on to say, no, these are not earn your place passages. These are fruit reveals the tree passages. The Lord will examine his servants and it will be evident who is his and who is not.

So yes, when Christ returns, there will be a judgment according to works, but the works are simply the outward evidence of the inward reality, right?

[28:41] The inward reality for a disciple of Jesus is that my heart that was dead has been raised to life through the Holy Spirit. It's been made alive through the gospel and it's now filled with love for my Savior and King.

And what that looks like on the outside is active, faithful, serviced to him. Right? Paul goes on to say in the next verse, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in him.

Friends, God judges based on faithfulness and my faithfulness shouts, Jesus Christ is my highest treasure. Right? All my hope, all my trust is in him.

That's what my faithfulness says. But notice, it's not based on fruitfulness. Now, I'm making a distinction here that's important because disciples of Jesus ought to bear fruit.

And what I mean by that is that my life is transformed, my heart is transformed, I look more and more like Christ, the fruit that is born in me by the Spirit. But it's not talking about, we're not talking about the fruit, sorry, what I am talking about right now, the fruit as in the success of my efforts.

[30:01] Okay, so God judges based on my faithfulness, not the success of my work. That's what I'm talking about right now. Right? Disciples don't necessarily see results from all their efforts.

And the good news, the good news is that God's judgment on you is not based on the success. It's based on your faithfulness. I cannot raise my coworkers' dead hearts to life.

Right? I cannot, I can't do that. I can't transform them. I can't make my children love Jesus. I can't make my community group into a rich, vibrant community of believers.

I can't do that. It's not in my power. It's not in my control. But God wants me to faithfully proclaim the gospel to my coworkers, right? Regardless of what happens. If I get opposed the rest of my life and I never see a convert, He wants me to faithfully proclaim that word to them, right?

He wants me to faithfully raise my children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, even if they walk away from the faith, right? Even if they don't come to faith in Christ. We're trusting Him for it,

but I can't do that work in them, right?

[31:12] He wants me to faithfully lead my community group towards a love for Christ and His word, regardless of what happens. And the results are in God's hands.

And notice how Paul captures this so well in 1 Corinthians 3. What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

I plant, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. Christian, are you weary? Are you weary in your service?

Are you weary in ministry, right? Are you weary in your responsibilities? Moms, are you weary in being a mom? Anyone weary in the workplace, the pressure that's on them right now?

[32:13] Take heart that God sees. He sees your faithfulness. He sees it. He knows it. And the results are in his hands, right?

And you are storing up treasures in heaven that cannot be taken away. Cannot. Galatians 6, 9 says, And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. Now what will we reap? We're going to talk about that later.

First, I want us to look at this third servant. The third servant and its implications. Point number five. False disciples either don't know the king's heart or don't care and will suffer for it.

You might have been anxious this whole time to understand who this third servant represents. And if not, you should have been because there was a serious warning here. Let's look at verses 24 and 25.

[33:21] 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 seeds.

So I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. Now the third servant is either telling the truth or he's lying. If he's telling the truth, then he doesn't know the master's heart.

He doesn't understand it. He thinks his master is cold and unjust so he's fearful of what would happen if his investment fails, right? And so he just buries it in the ground. Now, if the third servant is lying, and I actually think he is, then he simply just doesn't care, right?

Then his heart is not filled with love or loyalty to the master and rather than act out of selfless concern for the good of the master, he acts out of self-preservation, right? He's putting on the facade of fear, falsely portraying the master's character, falsely portraying himself as if he's, oh, this wonderful servant, here you have what is yours, like I'm great, here you go, the wise master exposes the hypocrisy.

That's a familiar word, right? We talked about that for like three weeks straight. In chapter 23, the wise master exposes the hypocrisy of the servant, which is more reason why I think the servant's response is one of deceit and not truth.

[34:43] Look at verse 26 and 27, 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.

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. Now the master's question here, verse 26, or yeah, 26, I think it's filled with sarcasm.

So I think what he's saying is, oh, you knew, did you? You knew that I reap where I don't sow? Like you knew that I gather where I have not scattered? I feel like that's how he's saying this here.

Clearly, the master's not cold and unjust, right? He actually did scatter and he actually did sow. So he deserves to reap the benefit.

He gave his servants his money. He deserves to reap the benefit of his servants' work who belong to him, right? And we just saw from the first and second servants, the master is filled with love and generosity.

[35:43] He said, enter into the joy of your master. The master is not cold and unjust here. He goes on in verse 27, right? He says, you ought

to have invested my money with the bankers and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

He's saying, look, if you knew that I was cold and unjust, that should have made you all the more diligent to make money on what I've given to you, right? You should have been all the more diligent to work hard because you were afraid of me because I'm cold and unjust.

Like that's what you should have done. The master came up with a better plan in about five seconds than the servant had the entire time the master was gone on this lengthy journey. So clearly, the third servant had no concern for the well-being of his master, right?

He had no love, no loyalty for him. So what happens to the third servant? Look down in your Bibles at verse 28. The master says, so take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. 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 and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness and that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[37:01] We've heard this language from Christ before, actually several times in Matthew. We just heard it last week in chapter 24. The third servant is stripped of everything he did have, right?

And he's thrown into a place of everlasting joylessness, right? Friends, the third servant is cast into hell and his condemnation is final.

Now if you're here today and you think of God as harsh and unfair, if you think, well, I believe in a God of love, right? I believe in a God of forgiveness but I don't believe in a God of wrath and judgment.

If you think that you can pick and choose who your God is and what portions of the Bible you believe in, friend, you do not believe in the one true God and you stand in a dangerous place. The triune God is real. He is active. He is alive. And he speaks. He speaks. He has spoken to us through his word. And unlike man-made idols that are stupid and foolish, as Jeremiah says in 10:10, but the Lord is the true God.

[38:14] He is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes and the nations cannot endure his indignation. Now what you may not understand is that God's wrath is actually the evidence of his perfect justice.

Right? A perfectly just God cannot tolerate sin. He can't stand for it. It destroys what he made to be good and so out of perfect justice He has wrath towards sin. He cannot allow evil to go unpunished. But what's more, because He is perfectly just and perfectly loving, He came down. Right? God came down in the form of a man, Jesus Christ.

He gave up the joys of heaven and He endured the agony of the cross on which He absorbed the full weight of God's wrath. Right?

It fell on Christ for us so that we would not have to endure that wrath. Right? Justice and mercy collided at the cross. God suffering in man's place.

[39:21] Friends, that is the God of the Bible. Trust in Him today and you will receive and be welcomed into everlasting joy rather than everlasting condemnation.

Now if you're here today and you know all this, you've heard the message of the gospel but you just don't care all that much. Rather than pour out your life in active faithful service, you'd rather watch TV.

Right? Rather than spend time with the loving, living God, you'd rather read the news. Rather than suffer reproach for the name of Christ through bold evangelism, you'd rather just talk about sports. Rather than use your money for advancing the church and the kingdom, you'd rather pad your investments. If that's you, this is a strong warning from Christ.

Now those things are not inherently bad, right? Watching TV, reading the news, talking about sports, investing your money, those aren't inherently bad things. But if you care more about those things than you do about Christ, that's an indication that your heart is not in a good place.

[40:23] Right? It's an indication that you don't care about the Master's well-being. It's an indication that you just may not be born again. And I don't, and the elders of this church don't, want you someday to present your work before the living God, the judge of this universe, and to have

him say, you wicked and slothful servant.

Right? And that's why we don't skip over passages like this. We care enough to warn you, to warn you of what's to come. And this is the same warning that Pastor Dave gave last week, so I'm going to quote him again.

He said, I want to caution you. It is very likely that you are not ready for that day and hour when the Lord returns. Verses 50 and 51, and this time 28 to 30, they are not idle threats.

They represent the true and severe punishment that belong to all who have not been born again of the Spirit. So to those here who don't truly know God, and to those here who just don't care about him and advancing his cause, hear the warning from Christ.

Heed the warning and turn to him today. Right? He longs to welcome you into his everlasting arms. He longs to spread his wings over you. He says in chapter 23, he will receive you.

[41:41] He will forgive your sins. And rather than receive his condemnation, you'll be welcomed into everlasting joy. And that's far greater than anything this world has to offer.

Far greater. And that brings us to our final point today. So quickly, let's recap where we've been. Right? This is our main point. True disciples pour out their lives in active, faithful service to the King while they eagerly await his return.

We saw that Christ's return is delayed, but it is certain and will come unexpectedly. We saw that while we await Christ's return, we have work to do for the King. We saw that God gives us responsibilities and opportunities as he wills and according to our abilities.

God will judge based on faithfulness, not fruitfulness. And we saw that false disciples either don't know the King's heart or don't care and they'll suffer for it. Finally, let's look at what the Master says to the first two servants.

And the point is this. True disciples receive a reward immeasurably greater than anything in this life. Look at verse 23. His Master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

[42:51] You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Master. This will be Christ's response on the last day to all those you trust in him.

This is his response to all those who demonstrate that faith by pouring out their lives in active faithful service to the King. And notice this threefold response. He says first, well done, good and faithful servants.

Note this, true disciples of Christ will share in God's favor. Right? Like his divine acceptance will be upon you, true disciple of Christ. He says, you have been faithful over a little.

I will set you over much. True disciples of Christ will share in God's portion. Now it seems a little dismissive for the Master to call what he entrusted to the servants just a little.

Right? Like we said, it was like 20 years wages to the guy with five talents. It's not just a little. The point is this. In comparison to what he will be entrusted with, it was just a little.

[43:58] And church, we will actually share in the inheritance, we sang about it, the inheritance of Christ. And we will actually reign with Christ eternally. That's what's to come.

That is immeasurably greater than the responsibilities and opportunities that you have in this life right now. It's immeasurably greater and better. We will share in God's portion forevermore. And finally, he says, enter into the joy of your Master.

True disciples will share in God's joy. So his favor, his portion, his joy. One of my favorite passages in the Psalms, David says in Psalms 16, 9 through 11, Therefore, therefore, my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

My flesh also dwells secure, for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption. You make known to me the path of life.

In your presence, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Christians, faithful followers of Christ.

[45:04] We cannot even begin to understand the glories that await us in heaven. Right? And that's why Paul says in Romans 8, 18, the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed.

And he says in 2 Corinthians 4, so we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day, for this light, momentary affliction might not feel like it. But in comparison, it is. This light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. So if the foothills of temporary pain or worldly pleasure or if the foothills of hard, fruitless labor are clouding your vision, right, that's all you see, lift up your eyes and see the glorious mountains of majesty that await us in heaven.

Lift up your eyes. And when we have this perspective, fixing our eyes on things above and not below, seeing what awaits us in heaven, it frees us up to pour out our lives in active, faithful service to the king.

Hebrews chapter 12, it reminds us that we're surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, a cloud of witnesses, by faith-filled saints who have gone before us, right, saints who have poured out their lives in active, faithful service to their master, saints who have, as it says in Hebrews 12, run with endurance, the race marked out for them.

[46:47] They are, they're looking on right now, right, like they see what's going on and they're cheering us on like we're in a marathon. They're saying, keep it up, right, like good job, you're doing good, keep moving, keep pushing forward, keep your eyes fixed on Christ.

It's so much better up here. You cannot wait. You don't even know what you're missing and they're cheering us on. Right, maybe some of you personally know some of those saints, right? and you know they're looking down and you know that they're in heaven and they're experiencing everlasting joy and they're cheering us on and backing us, backing us to push forward and to pour out our lives.

The chapter before, Hebrews 11, it's known as the Hall of Faith, right? It tells stories of some of these saints and how they persevered in faith and after talking about Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Sarah, the author of Hebrews writes this.

He says, these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

[48:06] For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is, they desire a better country.

That is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city. Friends, Christ has gone.

He's gone. And one day, he's coming back. It could be today. It could be tomorrow. It could be 100 years from now. Right? But he's certainly coming back and he's coming back in power and in glory and he's coming back to judge the world and in the meantime, he has left us here on earth with his spirit.

He's left us here to steward the responsibilities and the opportunities that he's given us to advance his cause, right, for his glory. And he's preparing for us a city for all those who trust in him, for all those who have poured out their lives in faithful service to him.

And that city is going to be glorious, right? God is going to dwell with his people. There will be no more pain, no more tears, no more crying, no more death.

[49:18] And everlasting joy will abound. So may we join with all the saints of old. May we pour out our lives in faithful, active service to the king until that day when he returns and we hear, 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. Please pray with me.

Father, we cannot wait for that day. God, give us eyes to see. Lord, give us perspective on this world.

Lord, so often our minds are filled with the things that seem urgent, the things that seem better, the things that seem impossible to overcome.

And Lord, we lose focus on the big picture. God, you are doing something in this world that is glorious. Like all over this world right now, you are orchestrating time and history and space and events to prepare for yourself a bride, your church.

[50:50] You have proven your love for that bride. You sent your son to die for us. You sent your son to bear upon himself the full weight of your just wrath.

Yes, you are holy and just and wrathful and yes, you are loving and merciful and compassionate. And so God, we live in this in-between, right?

After Christ left, before he's coming back, in the age of grace and you are advancing your kingdom because of your patience and your mercy and you've given us work to do.

So God, fill us with power from on high today to dedicate our lives and faithful service to you. Not to earn your favor, but because we have your favor.

We have it. We have your righteousness. And so out of love and loyalty, God, we pour ourselves out to you imperfectly, but we do.

[51:53] We want you to take our lives. We surrender ourselves to you. God, use us to advance your kingdom. Use us to advance your cause. And God, even if we're in a place right now that we don't want to be, God, like good soldiers for Christ, we receive our orders from you.

You are the master, the commander, you see the big picture, you have the vision, and you have deployed us to our assignments. God, may we steward those assignments well for you.

We might have a task that we don't like, we might have a task that seems too big and great for us, but whatever it is, it's from your hand and we receive it. God, all of our ways are known to you.

Hallelujah, all of our ways are known to you. Let that fill us with peace, let that fill us with strength.

Lord, may we not grow weary in doing these tasks that you have assigned to us, and we cannot wait till that day when you welcome us into your everlasting arms and everlasting joy.

In Christ's name we pray, amen.