

# The Parable Of The Talents

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Date: 06 March 2016

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[ 0 : 00 ] There is a company in this region with very peculiar bathrooms.

! You start working there, you might be surprised when you first walk into one of the bathrooms.! If you pay attention, notice that there are some stalls that remain closed all day long.

Why is that? And more importantly, what on earth does that have to do with the parable of the talents? Well, let's dig in and we will see. 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 his ability. Then he went away. Now, the first question we should ask about this passage is what is it, right?

What is, you know, he says, for it will be like a man going on a journey. What is it? This parable doesn't appear all by itself, alone, in the text.

[ 1 : 08 ] And so if you look back, back into chapter 24, Jesus has been talking about the coming day of the Lord. That day, the last day, when the Lord is coming to bring final restoration to the world.

That means final justice. It means final peace. And as we will see in this passage, it means final joy. And so leading up to this parable, he's been telling his followers to be ready for that last day, to be vigilant.

And this parable now tells us what we are to do while we are waiting eagerly for his return. And so the second question we need to ask is what is a talent?

He's giving people talents. We need to know what that means. To you and me, a talent means an ability or a skill. We have talent shows, right? In the ancient world, a talent was a measurement of weight, like a pound or a kilogram.

This one was pretty heavy, nearly 100 pounds. And it could be used to measure valuable things, generally either coins, copper, silver, or gold. So we don't know exactly how much it was worth, but it was worth a lot of money.

[ 2 : 18 ] Most estimates are in like, you know, the million dollar range per talent. The issue isn't necessarily the exact value, but the issue is it is very valuable.

So what point is Jesus making when he says a master entrusted these valuable things to his servants and then departed on a journey?

Well, just like all of the other parables, he's using a common image to relate a spiritual truth. And so he's talking about the valuable things that he has gifted us, our possessions, our abilities, our opportunities, our time, our circumstances.

And he means for us to use them well, just like he expects, this master expects the servants to use it well. When Arthur put it this way, he said, anything through which we might glorify God is a talent. Our gifts, our influence, our money, our knowledge, our health, our strength, our time, our senses, our reason, our intellect, our memory, and our passions, our privileges as members of Christ's church.

[ 3 : 30 ] Our advantages as possessors of the Bible, all, all our talents. The point of this story is that waiting for Christ's return and being ready for it are not passive matters.

We must work faithfully and energetically for him now. And we see that in the first two servants, don't we? Verse 16. 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 two talents made two talents more. Two servants went out, actively invested, and grew what their master had entrusted to them.

What does that look like for us? What does that look like for you and me? What are we supposed to do in response to this? Well, let's start here today, like literally in this room.



To us, this looks like an ostrich burying its head in the sand. But actually, in the ancient world, this was an accepted practice for protecting valuable things. Because the banks really weren't FDIC insured like we have. So we literally have here buried treasure.

Back to the bathroom. Probably the only time I'll ever say that, Ms. Herman. You see that stall. It's closed all day. And, you know, it's a bit weird. So as you pass by, you glance at it. Now, you glance at it out of the corner of your eye because you're not a creep.

And you notice that the gaps at the edges of the door are covered from the inside. And is that? That's toilet paper. Buried treasure indeed. Let's see how that develops alongside the parable of the talents.

Verse 19. Now, after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. The master was away for a long time, Jesus says. Enough time to make you think, maybe he's not coming back.

[10:03] Enough time so that he's definitely not the first thing on your mind when you wake up each morning. But he did return. And there is coming a day when Jesus will return.

The master was there to settle accounts with those he had entrusted his fortune. And on that day, too, we will give an account. We will give an account for ourselves to the master.

And it will go one of two ways. First, verse 20. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents.

Here, I have made five talents more. He reports back. But it's not just a cold recounting of facts.

It's not just a data dump. That word there in the middle, here, I have made five more. Depending on what Bible you're reading, it might say, see, or look.

[11:06] It's an exciting term. Here, see, look. I've made five talents more. There's excitement in his voice.

He's pumped to show the Lord what he's accomplished on his behalf. Now, we need to keep that sense of joy in mind as we go through the rest of the parable, because we will soon see the very opposite of it.

Verse 21. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

How beautiful will it be to hear those words one day. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into your master's joy. And that's why I wanted you to see the servant's joy so clearly. The faithful servant joyfully served a joyful God.

[12:16] A few weeks back, in one of the other parables, we quoted A.W. Tozer. What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Because if you don't have a right view of God, you're not going to respond to him rightly.

Well, this servant knew that it was a good and joyful master. And he served him joyfully.

And we need to know that the God of the Bible is a joyful God. He is not an angry tyrant, a stern dictator in the sky. We don't serve a cold, uncaring God.

We serve a God who delights, he says, in mercy. Who rejoices, he says, over his people. Who celebrates, as we saw just a few weeks ago, when one sheep is found.

In John chapter 15, Jesus says, These things I have spoken to you. Why? That my joy may be in you. And that your joy may be full.

[13:24] Psalm 16. You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

In Galatians 5, Paul lists the fruit of God the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. What is the very first one? Joy. And he lists goes on and on and on.

I love this quote by Charles Spurgeon. Our happy God. Should be worshipped by a happy people. A cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature.

And when we do that, when we faithfully invest our talents in the God of joy, we will know joy in this life and in the life of God.

It's a beautiful thing to spend ourselves on the king. His kingdom and the people that he made in his image. And when this life is at its end, he will say, Enter into the joy of your master.

[14:35] And we will walk into a new home with him, where we have stored up imperishable treasures. Verse 22.

And he also, who had the two talents, came forward saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents. Here, see, look.

I have made two 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. Why are there two faithful servants? When one would have been fine to show the contrast between a faithful servant and an unfaithful servant, why do we need the second faithful servant?

It's to show us that it isn't gifting that the Lord's after. It's faithfulness. I wonder how the two-talent servant felt when he saw another servant get in five.

[ 15 : 48 ] How tempted he was to compare himself. And it's so easy for us to fall prey to comparison too, isn't it? Children do it with their toys.

Teenagers do it with their popularity. College students do it with their grades. Parents do it with their children. Adults do it with their houses, their salaries, whatever.

Pastors do it with their congregations. We're always comparing. Why? Why? We want to see how we measure up.

We want to feel better than so-and-so. But how does the master react to the two-talent servant? It is an identical response.

Last week I was speaking with Rob about this passage, and he put it really well. He said, it's not the value of the gift. It's what you do with it. And that's exactly right. The master praises his servant's faithfulness.

[ 16 : 55 ] He praises, hey, you were faithful, he says. He doesn't say, you were super productive. He says, you were faithful. He praises the faithfulness, not the results.

So if you think you're not special, if you think you don't have much to offer, if you don't think you can make a difference, the five-talent servant had more than double what the two-talent servant had.

And the master said to both of them, you have been faithful over a little. To the master, they're both little. The amount wasn't the issue. The master said to both of them, I will set you over much.

The reward was the same. And what's more, he said to both, enter into the joy of your master. The ultimate reward was for both of them.

So don't compare yourself to others because God doesn't. There's coming a day when you will stand before the Lord and give an account for what you've done with the blessings he's given you, but it will not be in comparison to others.

[ 18 : 07 ] Like we just said, it's faithfulness that he commands. And as we are about to see, faithfulness comes from genuine faith.

Verse 24. He who had received the one talent came forward saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

So I was afraid. And I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. We just spent several minutes considering how God is a happy God.

Joyful. What do we see here? What does the unfaithful servant accuse God of? He says, I knew you were a cruel man.

I knew you were a thieving man. And that is why it is so important that what we think about God is the most important thing about us.

[ 19 : 26 ] Because if you think God's like that, you're going to act like this servant. He did nothing. He didn't love his master. He doesn't find any joy serving him.

So he didn't serve him. Now, it's interesting. He doesn't lose the money. He just hangs on to it. How we live and what we do with the gifts that God gives us is really an indication of what we believe he's like.

Two servants said, I can't wait to serve a wonderful master. And one servant said, if God is a cruel thief, why bother serving him? Now, you've returned from that strange bathroom to your desk.

Co-worker peeks over the cubicle wall. You ask, what's with the closed stalls in the bathroom? Oh, well, some people clock in in the morning and then just go play on their smartphone all day long.

And they hide in the stalls and they just clock out at the end of the day. Verse 26. But his master answered him.

[ 20 : 48 ] And catch that there? But his master answered him. He's not buying the excuse. You wicked and slothful servant, he says. You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed.

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

talents.

For everyone who has will have more, more will 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.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Verse 30 is the exact opposite of enter your master's joy. It is the precise opposite of that.

The blessings God has given him are stripped away and he's sent to hell. But he didn't do anything wrong, you might say. Right? The talent's still there.

[ 21 : 52 ] He just didn't do anything right, maybe, is the way to put it. And he gets weeping weeping and gnashing of teeth. Really? One pastor put it this way.

I did nothing wrong is the defense of a stone, not a man. It has no claim of life.

And it was Jesus who said, whoever is not with me is against me. There is no middle ground. Now, I want to be very careful here because we could very easily misinterpret this passage.

Jesus is not saying you need to double your investments for him to accept you. Even the servant with the five talents, a tremendous value in our minds.

To the master's eyes, he's been faithful with very little. He says, you've been faithful with little. It's a trifle to the Lord. And that's why in Acts chapter 17, Paul said this, the God who made the world, who made the world and everything in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, is not served by human hands as though he needed anything.

[ 23 : 04 ] We're not earning something because there's nothing to be earned. He doesn't need anything from us. So he doesn't need anything. And so on the final day, he's just going to ask us, hey, did you produce enough to enter heaven?

That's not what Jesus is teaching in this parable. Look at verse 19. The master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. The real question here is, when will your accounts be settled?

Now this parable appears in Matthew chapter 25. It's the very end of his teaching ministry. If you turn the page in your Bible, what happens next?

Jesus is arrested on a false charge. He's tried and found innocent. And then he's executed anyway. What we see here is that if you are in Christ, God has already settled accounts with you at the cross.

So in Colossians 2, we read, and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Jesus, having forgiven all our trespasses.

[ 24 : 24 ] And here is where he settled accounts with us. By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, how? How did he settle our account like that?

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. You see, if you could settle your own account with God, then Jesus didn't need to go to the cross to nail your account there for you.

And so your faithfulness isn't the thing that puts you right with God. God puts you right with God.

We are sinners saved by grace, not by our works, because we couldn't settle the account.

repent. And when we do repent and put our faith in Jesus, he saves us by his grace, and he gives us new hearts that day by day rejoice more and more in the things that he rejoices in.

Hearts that day by day want to invest in his kingdom. Because we know it's a joy to serve our master, and it's a joy to us.

[ 25 : 39 ] And so the faithfulness is an overflow of the faith. What does that look like? What do hearts that love him look like?

It is that faithfulness. Through the cross we know who he is, the God of love. Through the cross we see his love for us in particular, and we love him in return.

And because we love him, we serve him. And there we have the very heart of this parable.

The unprofitable servant isn't just lazy. Verse 26, the master says he is wicked because he doesn't love God. He thinks God is a cruel thief. He doesn't love God, so he doesn't serve him.

And he will give an account for himself alone. His account will not be nailed to the cross, and he will perish.

[ 26 : 40 ] The other servants, though, they know the Lord. They are united to him through faith, and their record is nailed to the cross.

They know he's a joyous master, and they can't wait to serve him. Now, they are still responsible to live faithful lives, but faithfulness stems from a heart of faith.

It can't be faked. Now, if you would like to know this joyful God, but don't.

If you would like to be reconciled to him, if you would like to have your record of sins that separates you from him nailed to the cross, so that you bear it no more, if you would like to learn to invest your talent in his kingdom, the Bible says simply repent and believe.

And for those of you who are in Christ, whose accounts are already settled at the cross, the Lord does hold you responsible to be wise servants who've already talked about what that might look like in your life, remember the grace that God has shown you at the cross.

[ 28 : 03 ] Remember your high calling as his servants and invest the valuable things he has entrusted you. So what will we say?

It's easy to say that you're God's servant without being God's servant. You can sit here all your life and that could be you. But if you have faith in the Lord, you will be faithful to him.

If you have faith, you will be faithful. One last time. A few days after you figured out the mystery of the bathroom stalls, you're sitting at your desk and the CEO walks in.

which employees does he invite to lunch? Let's pray. Lord, you are a good master, a joyful master. Keep us from thinking of you as a cruel God. Help us to express our faith in faithfulness. for those who do not yet know you.

[ 29 : 20 ] Pray that you would draw them to your joyful heart. Lord, I pray that as we are charged here to express our faith in faithfulness, that we would not take that responsibility lightly.

Father, we cannot wait to hear you say, well done, good and faithful servant. We can't wait to enter into your joy. So, Lord, keep our hearts set on you, set on that day.

We pray these things in the name of Christ, our King. Amen.