

# Parable of the Talents

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] let's turn to the matthew passage that we read matthew chapter 25 the parable of the talents page 1001 and we'll take up the reading at verse 23 when the master returns having given or having invested his money into the hands of his servants who then in turn invested them into the hands of the bankers and brought back the interest that was demanded of them except for the third servant verse 22 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 he also had received the one talent came forward saying master i knew you to be a hard man reaping where you did not so 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 but his master answered him you wicked and slothful servant you knew that i reap but i have not sowed and gather where i scattered no seed you ought therefore to have invested my money with the bankers and at my coming i should have received what was my own with interest and so on those of you who were with us last sunday morning will remember that we spoke about jesus ascension that moment after he had died and rose again where uh 40 days afterwards he took his disciples out to a certain location and there he was taken from them he was literally lifted up and while they were gazing into heaven two angels stood by them in white robes and here was the message that the two angels gave to the disciples on that occasion they said men of galilee why do you stand looking into heaven this jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven now we didn't have time last week in the morning to look at precisely the message that these angels brought to the disciples but it's a very important message because it gives us some information about the second coming of jesus it tells us first of all that jesus will come again let me say that again jesus will come the second time as sure as he came this the first time nobody denies that because it's in the past it's attested by all kinds of historical resources nobody denies that jesus came the first time but christians according to the bible believe with 100 certainty that he will come the second time but he's coming the second time will be completely different to his coming the first time here's what the angel said to the disciples they said this jesus the same one as you've come to believe in the same one who's died at calvary and who's risen again and who's ascended now to be with god he will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven what that means is that he won't be born in bethlehem the second time he will not be born in a stable or in a manger and he won't be born with the cattle and the cows and the mary and the joseph and all the the elements of the story that we know so well the second time he comes he will come in the same way as the

disciples saw him going up and that means he will come on the clouds he will come in the air in the sky in full view of everyone and this time his glory which was veiled the first time will not be veiled the second time there will be no question no doubt no jubiety in anyone's mind that this person who is in full view of the whole entire world will be jesus christ of nazareth that's the promise that the angels gave to the disciples and that's the promise that the church has looked to and believed in from for two thousand years now i'm not saying that the church has always been perfect and in its understanding of how and when jesus comes the bible tells us that nobody knows when that day will be it could be tomorrow it could be a hundred years from now it could be a thousand years ago but just as really and truly as he came the first time he will come the second time that's the promise that we read in acts chapter 1 and verse 11 and you don't just it's not just the angels that brought that message jesus himself on several occasions made it clear to the disciples that this was going to take place and the passage we've just read in matthew 25 is one of those passages in which jesus declares that there will be a second coming and on that day the world will be judged according to how we have related to jesus christ and the question the primary number one question will be this have we trusted and believed and followed jesus christ because everything else flows

and arises out of that question what does jesus mean to me or let me put it as jesus himself said to his disciples on another occasion he said who do people say i am disciples say well well some people say you're john the baptist some people say you're elijah the prophet yes but jesus said who do you say what do you think what do you believe about jesus and that's the question what do you believe not just about jesus but do you believe that not only is he the son of god incarnate coming into the world to save us from our sins but in calvary but do you follow and trust in him as your savior is he your hope tonight and that's of course what determines whether we're a christian or whether not whether we live decent lives being a christian is whether we belong to and live by faith in jesus christ and it's only as as belonging to jesus and as followers of jesus that we can possibly be ready for this momentous occasion when jesus will come again and that's the thrust of matthew chapter 25 the message in two words is this be ready first of all jesus he tells the parable of the ten virgins or the ten bridesmaids five of whom were wise five were foolish the wise ones had prepared enough oil in their lamps to light up the wedding when the bridegroom came they didn't know at what time the bridegroom was going to come so they had to have enough oil in their lamps the wise ones had enough oil the foolish ones went had to go out and buy and by the time they came back again it was too late the door was shut they were shut out and jesus is saying that there will be some shut out on that day when he comes because we weren't ready here we have the parable of the talents closely followed on the heel for it will be like a man going on a journey and here we have the story of a i don't know what you want to call him a manager you can call him a manager you can call him a director you can call

him the company owner you can call him a master or a landowner it doesn't really matter but he's certainly got a lot of money because a talent was a significant amount of money apparently a laborer would have to work 20 years to earn one talent so we're not talking about a few pounds here we're talking about a significant amount of money in other words this man was a wealthy man an incredibly wealthy man who as any i suppose person with spare money wants to do he wants to make the most of it he wants to invest that money so that he will get return and that's exactly what there's something very simple about this parable something that most people you don't even have to be a financial expert to understand that when you invest money into a bank or a building society then you can reasonably expect i'm not sure about the kind of climate in which you and i live in right now you certainly can't expect much to in today's world but hopefully that will change and today's world doesn't necessarily reflect normality but nevertheless in jesus day it was exactly the same that if you put your if you invested your money with the bank then you could reasonably expect in 20 years time or whatever to get interest back as well as the money that you had invested so this talent this parable which is divided into three parts is all about the master who lends his money or rather distributes his money amongst his servants and they go away at least two of them and they invest the money into the place where the master expected them to invest it all except one one of them the one who had received the one talent went away and he buried his master's money in the ground the third and the last part of the of the parable tells of how unexpectedly the landowner or the master came back at his return the first two servants the one who had received the five talents and the one who had received the two talents they both met with their master and they produced not only the five talents that he had given them but five talents more the second servant produced not only the second the two talents that they had been given but two talents more because these two had been faithful and they had invested their master money into the banks and they had got money in return interest lots of it it would appear but the third servant he comes and he confesses i'm not sure how genuine his confession is but it's a confession nonetheless master he said i he said i knew that you were a hard man a reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not seed so i was afraid and i went and hid your talent in the ground here you have what is yours now the master's reaction to the first two servants is exactly the same it's one of joy and one of praise and one of welcome the third reaction the reaction to the third servant is completely the opposite where the master said you wicked and slothful servant you knew that i reap what 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 so take the talent from him give it to him with the ten talents for to everyone who has will be given more but from the one who has not even what he has will be taken away and cast the worthless servant into outer darkness so that in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth what then is the point of the story what are we to draw from this parable parable means a earthly story with a heavenly meaning here jesus is using something i guess that was common enough in his own day the idea of investment the idea

of banking the idea of money and what you did was with money in your organization it's very similar to what you have nowadays you don't need a london stock exchange to have this kind of setup presumably there was a more primitive version in jesus day as well what's the point of the story well let me first of all suggest what the point is not of the story it's nothing to do with whether investment is right or wrong it's nothing to do with the sinfulness or goodness or legitimacy or otherwise of the stock market some people try and argue that a parable like this is a kind of a subtle way in which jesus attacked man-made institutions and financial institutions it's nothing of the sort it's got nothing to do with whether jesus approved of investment or not so get that out of your mind if that's what you think neither is the story supposed to suggest that we can be saved by what we do for god perhaps you read this story earlier on with me and you've said well i've read the rest of the bible read the rest of the new testament and i've listened to people preaching for year on year and the message of the gospel is that we're saved by faith in jesus christ here it appears that jesus emphasizing these servants who do things in order to be welcomed by their master in order to have the master say to them well done good and faithful does this mean that there is another way of being saved that i can be saved by my works or my faithfulness or what i do for god no it doesn't this parable fits perfectly in with a gospel as we find it in the new test there is only one way to be saved and that is by jesus christ and faith in jesus christ in as our savior and as our sacrifice neither and this is a bit more controversial now neither does this is this parable about whether christians are committed or not or whether they use their talents for the kingdom of god or not i say that because i heard quite recently a sermon being preached not in our own church but in another church in which the man who was a very good preacher and a very sound preacher he was trying to suggest that the whole point the difference between the first two faithful servants and the last unfaithful servant was the difference between those who take god seriously and go and commit themselves fully and 100 to the work of the gospel and the kind of christian who's lazy kind of christian who doesn't bother he's a christian but he doesn't well it's obvious from this parable that the last servant has no love for his master in other words he cannot be a christian in the first place because he doesn't regard his master at all that's the point and that's the difference between the first two and the third servants so having got that out of the road what is the point what can we draw from this parable that will be of use and which we believe that the lord was saying was talking and telling his disciples and those who were listening to him at the very outset it tells us that every single one of us is accountable to god let's start there every single one of us is accountable to god the bible says we must all appear before the judgment seat of christ now perhaps there's somebody here tonight and you're saying count me out of this i haven't signed up for this i'm not a christian i'm just here as a spectator i'm here out of interest and i really don't want to be told about my accountability to god because i don't even believe in god and after all there's so many people in the world who believe in all kinds of different things and all kinds of different religions then how can you say that i'm accountable to your god when there are all these other people telling me about their god and and so on and so forth you've heard it it's what you call a being belonging to a pluralistic society but let's say and i've said this so often before i'll say it again and again and i hope i'll say it as long as in this pulpit let's say there is only one god and let's say he has made himself abundantly clear to this world so that it is obvious that there is a god and it's obvious that we have been created by god that means that we have absolutely no excuse whatsoever well that's what the bible tells us bible is not concerned whether you're an atheist or whether you're a pluralist or whether you're an agnostic or not that makes no difference to the fact that you are accountable as accountable to god as i am and it makes sense isn't it doesn't it if god is god for god to be god and if god has made himself known to us in the pages of the bible and if god has given us an antenna within our hearts that registers to the being of god in which by which god makes himself known to us then we know that ultimately whatever arguments and objections we put up we are accountable to god as his servants daniel webster was a man who lived at the turn of the 18th century and he became a very famous politician in america and he was a very respected orator and speaker and leader in the united states and someone asked him once what is the most serious thought that has ever crossed your mind and this was his answer my accountability to god so i would like you tonight i'm going to suggest to you tonight if it's never crossed your mind that from now on you wake up every morning for as long as you live in this world and the first thought that comes into your head ought to be i am accountable to god for my life i'll tell you this it's the most profound serious thought that you'll ever think but it's true and don't think that you're only hearing this because you're in stornoway don't think that it's only the free church that believes this

it's not the church worldwide believes this i could take you to churches in the far east to churches in america to churches in australia

[ 20 : 20 ] to churches in korea that are bursting at the seam and they're all preaching exactly the same as you're hearing tonight it's not just in the the wild northwest the doer presbyterians that believe this believe me that is not the case at all the church worldwide is saying exactly what i am saying tonight we are accountable to god and that means that there is a correspondence between us and god there's a link there's a bond between us and god in which when we read the bible then we there's something in us that registers that this is the truth and that's why we are here we are here to serve god and mankind or humankind i should say is uh is that is is not going to be at rest until it finds its rest until we find a rest and and the problem is of course that because of what the bible calls sin then there's a struggle that goes on as soon as we begin to grapple with this great truth that we are accountable as god's servants that uh there's something within us that wants to break free well of course that's been going on ever since the beginning of time since adam and eve chose to go their own way they tried to be free and what happened was they didn't find their freedom at all they found only misery and bondage and corruption and death in trying to be free from god and that's all you're going to find as well let me promise you that tonight that's all you'll find there's the kind of happiness that we look for in this world outside of god in ourselves trying to live for this world trying to live for what we can get in this world it's not going to bring us ultimate contentment and happiness at all i can promise you that you may get it for a for a few moments or a few days but ultimately it'll leave you cold and insecure and lifeless and you'll leave you confused as to what your future is and what your life is you will never ever find true contentment until you find it in serving god and that's what happened with these first two servants you know that they were given they were given the the two the one was given five talents and the other one was given two talents and have you ever read this passage and have you ever noted the joy that there is in the obedience of the servants they're going away right away and there's something you can almost kind of hear them whistling as they take the money that the master has given them and they just run away they it can't come soon enough for them for them to run to what to do and the reason is because they love their master they love their manager now of course this is not just a this is not just the kind of situation you have nowadays where there's the the managing director and you have the employee this these servants were owned by their master and that meant that if there was a good relationship between the master and the servants then the servants were happy and the master was well here we have a good relationship they absolutely love their master you know why because their master loves them and because he they know that he has regard for them and they have regard for him there's a two-way bond of affection so when he asks them to do this it's no problem because they know that they're never as happy as when they are serving their master let me tell you that you will you we are never as happy as when we are serving god it's when we try to break out of serving god and we try to find happiness elsewhere that we fail but when we come into god's kingdom and when we hear his voice and when we respond to what he tells us to do then we do it out of love you only discover what love truly is when you discover the love of god and that that way what jesus said once my yoke is easy and my burden is light

it's a joy being a christian we love being christians don't we we love the lord tonight we absolutely adore jesus christ because of what he has done for us and so when he tells us obey my commandments it's not some kind of drudgery it's not kind some kind of burden it's not something we want to get away from it we're not like the kind of employee that shirts and and tries to avoid his responsibility and get us way away with as least as possible because we hate what we're doing no when you live the christian life you've you've discovered what life is and you've discovered what god is you've come into a personal relationship with him you love him and everything you do you do out of love for god that's what the christian life is and you know when it goes wrong when you allow stuff to creep into your heart that you know that god is displeased with you know is sinful and then you begin to feel uneasy you begin to feel that there's something wrong with your christian life and you've lost the joy well if you've lost the joy tonight then come back to him repent come back and start because god will forgive you god promises to forgive he promises to pardon and and and and and pull us out of the the miry clay and the fearful pit and set our feet on a rock that's the christian's experience on several occasions several different times in his life so we do so when you discover that personal relationship with the lord you discover what it is to love god and that's the first two let me throw something in here you notice that there's three servants and two of them are obedient two

of them love their master two of them and one of them doesn't do you think that is Jesus way of saying that at the end of time on the day of judgment there will be more people who come into heaven than those who are separate from God and go to a lost eternity three of them two are accepted and welcomed by the master on his return and one of them that's two thirds do you think that that may be an indication that heaven will be full of far more people than hell will I'll leave that with you I actually believe that heaven will be a far bigger place than hell I'll leave that with you I don't know I'm not entirely sure I can't be absolutely sure but I believe that there are indications in the new testament that certainly suggest to me that heaven will contain more people than hell and so what happens is not only did these servants go away and joyfully put their master's money to good use when he returned again they were absolutely delighted you know why because they were ready for him they knew that they didn't know when it was going to be but they lived every single day as if he was going to come that day and that's what a Christian we as God's people must live every single day as if Jesus was going to come that day the problem is we don't do we I don't I very often live a whole day without even thinking about whether today might be the day that he might come but that's why we have to come back to the bible because the bible reminds us that it could be today it could be tomorrow could be imminent we don't know it could be imminent even if Jesus doesn't come to the world right now the day we die is for us the day that Jesus returns again and that will be for us the day of judgment and so the first two of course when they see their master they are absolutely overjoyed so will we be

tonight and it kind of puts everything else into perspective doesn't it all the things that we get hung up about in this world all the things you lose sleep over all the things that play on our minds and become burdens now I'm not trying to belittle anyone's problems tonight I know that there are problems and big ones and massive ones but it's very often the smaller lesser problems that weigh more heavily on our minds and that worry us and that stress us isn't that the case when you ask yourself when you stop and you say how does this fit with the second coming of the Lord how does this fit in the light of eternity am I not right in saying that very often the things that we get hung up about are the things that pass just as quickly and when you think about them what are they in the light of eternity Paul says this I consider that our present sufferings whatever these are are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed so Paul is looking at his own life he's looking at all the elements the things that really weigh so much on him just like ourselves and he's thinking stopping himself and he's thinking about them in the light of and I suggest that we do the same tonight I suggest that we stop and we look at this passage we look at revelation chapter 20 and we remind ourselves that we are heading for that we are in the direction of a marvelous eternity where to be with Christ is far better do we live every day as if it was our last every day as if Jesus was going to come that very moment now the first of course you've you the the the when G when the the master comes back you have the first two servants who come to him and they joyfully explain to him what they've done not in some kind of proud selfish way but because they have loved him so much that they've invested what he has given to them so they're ready for him is coming and he says 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 same with the second servant he only had been given two talents it doesn't matter he gets exactly the same response well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of the Lord you see this parable is as much about feeling it's about atmosphere as it is about the exact words that were you you sense don't you you actually get excited for the first two servants don't you there's something that really pleases you you know that as you read these things that this is the way it should be these servants have done just what their master has asked them to he hasn't asked the impossible of them he hasn't asked them to do anything that they couldn't do God never expects from us what we can't do he tells us he gives us his son Jesus and he says believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so these first two servants you're kind of happy for them aren't you you're happy that they've done exactly but the third servant you're kind of you know you you know what's coming and you don't like it you read through the passage you say there's something wrong there's something wrong why is it that this third servant has done it so differently to the first two and you begin to feel more and more uncomfortable as you make your way through the through the story and then he comes and it's his turn to explain himself and he says I knew that you were a hard man

reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had no seed so I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground here you have what is yours now you don't know how to cope with that do you you don't know because on the one hand there's a kind of plausibility to it you kind of

think maybe he's right maybe the master was a hard man maybe he expected things that were unreasonable and this poor man he was afraid i mean how can you blame him for that this poor man he hasn't murdered anybody he hasn't stolen from anybody and how could he and yet at the same time you know that there's something wrong and it's not the wrongness is not found in what the man did that's the problem isn't it when we think of wrongdoing and sinfulness you automatically think of what you do whether you steal or whether you're corrupt or whether you lie or whether you cheat or whether you commit adultery or whether you whether you murder that's what we think of when we think of wrongdoing but here is a prime example where the bible tells us that wrongdoing is what we don't do god's first commandment to us is this you shall love the lord your god with all your heart and mind and soul and strength that's what god expects of us to love the lord that's the first commandment i'm gonna ask you this question tonight do you love the lord with all your mind and soul and strength and heart because if not we have fallen short of what god expects of us and that's where this man fell short and whatever excuse that he tried to come up with all these excuses were so plausible aren't they i was afraid he's saying i was afraid how can you blame a man for the poor man is afraid how can you blame him for that well the master did he had no right to be afraid he actually wasn't afraid that was an excuse it was a lie and he tried to concoct his own image of the master that kind of fitted in with this excuse try to describe his master you are a hard man reaping what you have not sown and gathering what you have not scattered well who's to blame the man the poor man for that but it wasn't true the man the master didn't expect anything he expected exactly the same of the third servant as he expected of the second servant and the and the first and yet here he is and he's trying to he's trying to create his own image of god so that he so it is convenient for his unbelief and i wonder if that's what you've done tonight as well it's not just that you've chosen not to follow jesus you have created your own reason for not following jesus and a lot of our reasons as to do with the nature of god maybe you think tonight of god as just angry i don't know where you got that one from there is an anger in god the bible does present god as angry but it's a controlled righteous proper reasoned anger but god is much more than anger he is love he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son herein is is love not that we love god but that god loved us and gave his son to be a to be an atoning sacrifice for our sin god is love it's easy enough to say i don't want to believe in your god because he's anger well that sounds very plausible but you're wrong there is no reason for you not to come to god and then people's good people come up with all kinds of reasons like for example

the the very famous one god why does god allow suffering in this world now i know that that is a a real question in this i don't want to belittle that in any way i don't want to downplay that it's a question that we've all asked from time to time but that doesn't mean that we can disregard god it doesn't mean that we're not accountable to god there is suffering in this world this world is a broken world a world that has fallen but that does not give you the reason to live as you want the fact is that god has entered into this suffering world in the person of jesus christ and he he in himself has suffered so if you know anything about what it is to suffer jesus knows more and he completely and fully understands all that we go through in this world the fact is that this man was simply making up an excuse as to his own laziness his unbelief and his refusal to have trusted in the lord jesus christ and i hope that there is nobody here this evening with a similar excuse no matter how plausible we're all accountable to god god has asked of us one thing that we come to him personally that we put our trust in him that we follow jesus christ and discover his love for sinners and that we live for him and in him and that is the way to be ready for his coming perhaps you're saying tonight well i've lived my life so so many years and i've i i dug a hole many many years ago and i put my talent into the ground what point is there now i've lived too long to dig it up no you haven't because as long as you live in this world there is a forgiving god a god who delights to have mercy so go and dig it up again and put it to the use that the lord has asked you to put it put jesus in the first place come to him and love him as he has loved you let's pray our father bless your word to us now we pray and and we pray that your word will speak to us and that it will draw us draw each one to a loving and a saving relationship to jesus christ for we ask in his name amen