

Where are you investing your life?

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[0 : 00] Turn to Matthew 25. As you're finding your way there to Matthew 25, may I say that this evening we begin our new series that I planned to do a long time ago but hadn't on Colossians, and that is keeping the faith until the very end.

Keeping the faith until the very end. It's hard to be a Christian, but God has resourced us with everything he needs to in order to keep the faith until the very end.

But that's this evening. This morning we're on Matthew 25 and beginning at verse 14. Now hear God's word.

Let me just set the context here because it begins with, for it will be like a man. Well, what will be like a man? So let me just set the context. The context is Jesus is speaking about the kingdom and the coming kingdom and how the kingdom is coming on earth.

And so, with that in mind, with the kingdom coming on earth, for it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

[1 : 32] To the one he gave five talents, to the other two, and to another one, each one according to his ability. Then he went away.

The one who had received 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.

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

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents, and here I have made five talents more.

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

[2 : 38] He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents, here I have made two talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. 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 did not scatter.

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 I reap where I have not sowed, and I 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 and give it to the one who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance.

[3 : 56] 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 where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And a happy new year. We turn back there to Matthew 25, This parable, like all parables, is one where you have to read carefully, lest you draw the wrong conclusion.

It's to illustrate this, it's the illustration that I often use. You take with children, you tell a child, don't touch the vase on the mantelpiece, because if you do it, it might fall off in break.

And so what happens is, the child touches the vase on the mantelpiece, and it falls off in breaks.

And the child naturally assumes that the issue, the issue is the broken vase.

And yet the parent knows that that's not the issue at all. The consequence is the broken vase, the issue is the fact that the child didn't listen. And in the same way, this parable can, if you don't read it carefully, can lead you to believe that this is all to do with ability.

[5 : 22] And that the good and faithfulness, the reward is to those who have used their ability well. But actually, that is part of it, but it's not all of it.

In fact, it's not the main point that the parable is trying to get at. It would be to miss the point to think that this is all about using your ability to serve God.

It has a much more acute purpose in this parable. And it's one of those parables where some people say, you know, did Jesus really say that?

You know, you read your Bible several times a year, or at least once a year, or at least once every two years, I don't know, maybe once, never, I don't know.

Hopefully you read it. Hopefully you're reading your Bible. But we've all had perhaps that experience where we read a passage that we've read several times before, and all of a sudden, a few verses jump out and go, whoa, I've never seen it in that light before.

[6 : 27] Well, in the same way, this parable can do the same. Did Jesus really say, you wicked and slothful servant, out you go into outer darkness?

Are my ears deceiving me? Did Jesus actually say that? In other words, if it does anything, it reorientates your view on what God is like.

Now, if you have a Christian life, I don't mean a life, I mean a Christian life. If you have a Christian life, you'll know that the life was given to you. But when the life was given to you, just like the talents, it came with a whole load of responsibilities.

So that the life you have to live is a life that you have to live before God. It came with responsibilities. You don't get a Christian life in the same way you get a Christmas present, where the Christmas present becomes, after a while, divorced from the person who gave it, and also it becomes immaterial as to when you use it, how often you use it, how often you play with it.

The Christian life is very different. When you're given a Christian life, then that Christian life comes with daily responsibilities. So if you have a Christian life, the responsibility is to live a Christian life.

[7 : 50] Okay, it's as simple as that. If you have a Christian life, then the responsibility is to live a Christian life. In exactly the same way, these servants are given talents.

They've been given talents, and now they have to use their talents for the glory of God. They have to use what they have been given in order to serve the one that gave it to them. And so here you are sat this morning with this life.

It is your own, but it's your own as you have received it from God. So what are you going to do with it? Because even though it's your own, it comes with a bucket load, a drawer load, an absolute full amount of responsibilities, because God is expecting a return on what he has given you.

And what he has given you, not just the life that you have, but all the blessings and all the abilities that come with it, is to be used for the purposes of God.

Now in Ephesians, it puts it this way, just in case you think this is a parable for people that are not the same as today. This is what Jesus says about the church, or Paul says Jesus did for the church.

[9 : 02] It says that he gave grace to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men.

So the purpose of Jesus dying on the cross, or at least one purpose of Jesus dying on the cross, is so that through his resurrection, through his victory, he could give you gifts to then serve him in this coming kingdom.

And so here we are. We have a life that has been given to us, and now we have certain abilities that have also been given to us. And so what are we going to do with the abilities that we have and the life that we have?

What are we going to do with it? Well, there is only one question you can ask, isn't there? And that is, what does God want me to do with it? Okay?

If I've been given it, what does God want me to do with it? And so the lesson here is a fairly hard lesson. Hence, you can tell by the way the parable ends. And the lesson's this.

[10 : 09] It's whether or not you are presently investing your life and your abilities into the kingdom of God. It's whether or not you're investing your time, your resources, your whole life for the benefit of the reign of God on earth.

It's very hard to tell whether or not you're doing that, just looking at you. It's a bit like having a congregation or an audience, let's say, of Christians and atheists.

You can't tell by looking at their clothes necessarily what they're wearing, who's the Christian and who's the atheist. You have to wait until they get outside and see how they respond in relationships and how they respond to serving and that.

Then you begin to tell the difference. And so the lesson is whether or not you are investing your whole life and the abilities that you have in your life to benefit the reign of God on earth.

Or whether or not you think, well, it's going to happen with or without me. Well, it happens through Christians, through believers. One of the ways is that when you tell somebody else the gospel, you are investing in the reign of God.

[11 : 23] You're investing in the kingdom of God. And so if you're not living the gospel or telling the gospel, then you're not making that kind of investment. You're burying it, but you're not using it.

Loving your neighbor, again, would be loving your neighbor and the way that God expects you to love your neighbor is investing in the kingdom of God. It is investing in the reign of God.

Not to love your neighbor, again, is to bury that ability and responsibility. Okay. And I've always said that it's always easier to love your neighbor in Botswana than it is the one on your road.

Because you can just send a few hundred pounds, okay, and I'm loving them, I'm loving them, but my neighbor's going to take my time up. My neighbor just might come knocking on my door.

My neighbor just might ask me questions that my life can't answer. Okay. So when we talk about loving neighbor, it's easy to say, well, I love my neighbor in Botswana or Uganda, wherever it may be, but it's a lot harder to love your neighbor the one that's two doors up.

[12 : 36] Because now your whole life comes into play. See, before you're just paying taxes, doing your bid, but now you begin to realize that your whole life comes into play.

And so what God is looking for here is a return on his investment, but not just that. What he's looking for primarily is faithfulness in actually using what he has given us.

Now, you'll notice here that the master of the house is like Christ who goes and Christ who comes back and in the meantime has given us certain gifts according to our ability.

So if you're sat here thinking this morning, you know, I can't do what that person does. Well, good news, you're not meant to do what that person does. Okay, if you're a banker, then you're to be a Christian banker.

If you're a farmer, then you're to be a Christian farmer. You're to do everything to the glory of God. If you're a housewife and you're a mother, you're to do that to the glory of God.

[13 : 41] You're given what you're given according to where you are and what you do and according to your ability. Now, the fact is, is that God is assuming in when he gives us things that we all have the ability to do something with what we have been given.

So the one who's been given five talents has been given five talents simply because of his ability. The one who's been given two talents has been given two talents because of his ability.

And the one who's been given one talent has been given one talent according to his ability. Now, you'll notice that nobody makes more than anybody else here apart from the person who does nothing with it.

Okay? He doesn't make anything. The one who makes five talents more makes exactly the same as the one who makes two talents more because they both double what they had been given.

Okay? Do you understand that? The one who has five talents doesn't make any more than the one who has two talents. He makes exactly the same amount but quantitatively it's more because he had more to start with.

[14 : 45] The only person who doesn't double anything is the person who didn't do anything with what he had. He only had to make one talent more but because he didn't do anything with it quantitatively he was less but also he was less because he did nothing at all.

So this idea of Christian competitiveness you know that I need to do more in order to receive more in the future just isn't the case. Okay?

Those who achieve more in the church in this world under God are those who have been given more to achieve. So quantitatively it looks more.

They've been given five talents they make five talents more it looks more. But the person who's been given the lesser amount and doubles that out is doing exactly the same thing. but in this world we never see things like that because everything has to be more.

I have to you know even in business business is pretty hard I know that when I you know when you send tenders out for a job there's no way of getting around it that if I get the job and that person there doesn't then that's bad for him.

[16:03] Okay? No one's a winner. You know if I go and get five jobs and I only need four and this person only needs one and he doesn't get it because I've just followed the other one up I mean that's just that is just the way that the world works.

So everything's a risk everything's a competition in the world but God is looking for something entirely different than that. He is looking for a return on what he has given you but he's looking to see whether or not you will be faithful with what you have been given.

In Proverbs it says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and therefore fear causes us to love God it causes us to follow God it causes us to do what God wants to be done but this man here who buries his talent in the ground says the reason he does it is because he fears the master but anybody who fears God ends up with a deep concern for God's affairs anyone who fears God has a deep concern for God's will on earth but this man here is basically saying you know I feared you and that's why I did nothing the reality is is that he's lazy the reality is that he's slothful the reality is that he has no concern for his master's affairs he just doesn't care but he has what the master has given him he just doesn't care about what the master expects from it and so the lesson again is whether or not you are investing what you have been given to benefit the reign of God on earth it's very hard to tell isn't it because there's not a measurement by which we can show one another or even show

God in the present whether or not we're doing that only you know in your own heart and standing before God whether or not you are investing your life and your abilities to the reign of God on earth now the reward for those who serve God guess what it's more serving okay now the reward let me say that again the reward for those who serve God faithfully in this life is more serving God in the next notice the reward he says you have been faithful over a little then I will make you faithful over much okay so when God returns and he sees your faithfulness then the reward for your faithfulness is more of the same more responsibility and this this is where we've got to have the best picture the only picture really of the future and that is please remember that you were created to live on earth okay you were created to live on earth and there is coming a new heavens and a new earth okay in which righteousness will dwell and everything will be wonderful and in which you will serve God so if you have been faithful and a little in this life serving

God in this world then God knows that when the new kingdom comes and God's will on earth will be done as it is in heaven then God knows that in that place then you will also be faithful and so this in many ways is a bit like a very long interview a very long training camp a very long place where God is able to determine whether or not you are going to be faithful in the future and the way that God tells whether or not you will be faithful in the future is by looking at whether or not you're faithful now so are you faithful in the reign of God now now what God doesn't fall for is that he doesn't fall for what I used to tell my boss yeah but if you give me the bigger job it'll be different this time yeah but if you keep giving these jobs I don't want to do I'm not going to do them but if you give me the bigger job with the better money then

[20:22] I'll go out and I'll show you that I can do it and we used to have a guy in the yard we used to call him his professional title was an estimator however all the men that work for Lewis's used to call him a guestimator and we called him a guestimator because the prices were so bad that there's no way how could you send us out to put a roof on for that amount of money we want more money it's not because we were greedy it was just because you try climbing a ladder with this amount of weight on your shoulder and so we used to call him the guestimator so we were always wanting the bigger and the better jobs but Lewis's had a very simple principle that first prove yourself on a garage then you'll get the stately home prove yourself on the garage then you'll get the stately home and it's nice to think that when I finally finished roofing I did a beautiful slate 18 and a half thousand slates it was sort of like I finally arrived and now God is sort of telling me to leave

I finally got to where I wanted to be and it's like right that's enough now you know no more of these cushy jobs and so God doesn't fall for that God doesn't say you know you can't come to God in the new kingdom and go yeah do you know I know I didn't do anything then but this time it'll be different see the one thing about commitment is that commitment involves responsibility and I've met enough people that have claimed the will of God for walking away from the responsibility I just don't feel that it's God's will and there is we can turn to it in scripture where there are people who do that use

God's name to justify their own sinful actions and it's easy to attach Jesus to everything isn't it you know well I bought this because you know I really believe that it's what God wants me to do you know I'm doing this now because I really believe this is where Jesus would have me if anybody can attach

Jesus to anything and and sort of try and validify it and make it valid but but that it doesn't count for anything so we can't just pull God in and expect him to justify our reasons for not doing anything or you know I feel that God would have me take time out well more than me more than you you know how do you come up with these ideas and so responsibility doesn't work like that you've been given responsibility and in the book of proverbs it clearly points out that if you try and jump the queue it says of a young man trying to get money without working for it and then he gets the money without working for it you know you know a little rest a little slumber a little folding of the arms and you come to ruin but it doesn't always work like that a little rest a little slumber a little folding of the arms and you win the lottery you know how's that fair but you'll notice that the person who's got all that wealth and got all that responsibility can't handle it because when you get the wealth when you get the blessings and you don't have the process you can't handle it the reason why as I said just after Christmas blessings are dangerous blessings can actually corrupt the Christian you know Claude and Mather faithfulness faithfulness faithfulness begat prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother they were given blessings and then the blessings destroyed their faithfulness and so blessings are incredibly dangerous to handle if you don't know how to handle them if you've not gone through the process and so those who want to jump to the front of the queue with God those who want to get to the end of the road without walking the road those who want to have the manager's position but without actually working on the shop floor can't ever handle the manager's position that's just the way that God has designed it to work because certain character traits are bypassed and this is where we get to the point of the parable because when the master returns where is his emphasis is it actually on what he's received well it is but it's not what you think he's received it says that when the master returns he says to the two you'll notice well done my good and faithful servant let's pick it up in 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 where's the emphasis he doesn't say well done you good and faithful servant you've made twice as much as I gave you that's not where the emphasis is put he says well done my good and faithful servant what why am I good and faithful because I've made twice the amount no because you have been faithful over a little that's what the father is looking for he's not looking to see whether or not you're profitable only but he's looking to see whether or not you are faithful over a little what am I good and faithful servant you've made twice the twice the amount I gave you no that's not what the master says he says what am I good and faithful servant you have been faithful over a little and so notice the two did not get what they get in the end because of their ability okay you've been faithful over a little then I'll set you over much okay they did not get what they got or will get in the future because of their ability they're getting what they're going to get in the future because of their character and it's the same with the one who buried his talent in the ground he doesn't receive what he doesn't receive not because he didn't do anything with his ability he doesn't receive it because of his character you're a wicked and slothful servant see the issue here is not really ability and it's not as if the man didn't have any ability it's just that they all had the ability hence why they were all given something from the master but what the master is testing is not the ability but whether or not they have a faithful character two out the three have faithful characters one out the three does not and so the two did not have what they had because of their ability they had what they had because of their character and the one person did not receive what he did not receive not because he didn't use his ability but actually as the master says verse 26 you're a wicked and a lazy servant and so the person who is entrusted with one talent does not have his talent taken from him simply because he didn't use it he had it taken from him because of his character and his character is that he was lazy and that's why he didn't use it okay it's not that he didn't use it and become lazy okay he didn't use it because he was lazy because he was wicked and so if the parable stopped there we think okay I can handle that he's been given and then he has what he has taken away from him and it's given to another person but the parable doesn't stop there and so so far so good we feel fairly comfortable but the parable ends with quite a shocking end verse 30 where it says and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness in that place where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth

[28 : 42] I mean that is shocking I mean that is that is horrendously shocking but the issue remember the issue is not ability the issue is character why don't my good and faithful servant why you're a good and faithful servant because you have been faithful over a little and why is this person being cast into outer darkness because of his inability no it's got nothing to do with his ability it's got to do with his character you wicked and lazy slothful servant I think the reason why this is so shocking is because the man doesn't seem to have committed any kind of crime he doesn't seem to have done anything that bad but whatever he has done well we know what he has not done according to the master he is to be thrown out into the outer darkness into the place where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth

I mean that is frightening that is absolutely frightening and so when we think now about well how are we serving God how am I investing the life that God has given me to benefit the reign of God on earth how am I loving my family my wife my children my husband how am I loving my neighbour how am I loving my community how am I loving the fellowship that I'm in how am I doing what I'm doing and why am I doing what I'm doing and am I actually doing it in the first place am I doing anything to benefit the reign of God on earth and so remember the lesson the lesson is whether or not we are investing what God has given us to benefit the reign of God on earth given the fact that everything that we have has been given by

God in the first place never forget that this is God's world God doesn't have to fight for it it's his sometimes we tend to think that we live in this world as though the world was a neutral battleground you know a neutral battleground and that we fight for God and the other side fight for whoever they want to fight for and good will win and we go off and we be with God in the future that's not that is not what the Bible says about the world the world is God's and everything in it and therefore everything that we do relates to God and everything that we use relates to God and everything that we say relates to God God is completely forever interacting with every single one of us and in every single thing that we do so the lesson is whether or not we are investing what God has given us our life our abilities our talents our minds our hearts to benefit the kingdom of God on earth it is a sobering parable that wouldn't surprise me if some people were sat here this morning saying did Jesus really say that is that really what

Jesus thinks is this really something that that Jesus has said so remember this God has a reputation of honoring those who honor him okay first Samuel God has a reputation of honoring those who honor him and so this parable though it's about how God relates to human affairs how the kingdom of God relates to human affairs and how God relates to us humans it causes us to think about our relationship with God but it also causes us to think about our relationship with everything else and with that said we hear the words of Jesus with a sober mindset and we leave this morning knowing that it's not simply enough to having just heard this we now must do what God wants done Amen Amen

So, that's our cost again.