

The Parables

Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30

January 24, 2016

Opening:

- Open your Bibles to Matthew 25...

Today is part 2 of a 3-part miniseries on the parables in Matthew 25

- **Last Week: The Ten Virgins**
- **Today: The Talents**
- **Next Sunday: The Sheep and the Goats**

Each of these parables are taught in the context of **God's people wondering about the end times**, specifically, Jesus' long answer to a question in the first part of Matthew 24, verse 3:

- **Matthew 24:3; As (Jesus) sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things (*the destruction of the temple*) be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"**
 - Jesus takes the rest of Matthew 24 and all of 25 to answer the question.

Last week – the parable of the Ten Virgins – ready with oil – I encouraged you to get one of three books on the Holy Spirit and His role in your life:

- **Knowing God, JI Packer**
- **Surprised by the Power of the Holy Spirit, Jack Deere**
- **Discover Your Spiritual Gifts, C Peter Wagner**

Did anybody get them / order them yet?

- Half.com and amazon.com are great resources.
- All of these books can be had for under \$5

Before we read the parable of the Talents, let's pray, and then I want to begin with an illustration...

(next) PRAY

Illustration:

Let me begin the day with a brief history of my personal employment that greatly relates to the parable of the Talents, then we'll read it and study it...

- Growing up, **I had many jobs....**
 - First full time job was at age 14 – 3 months as a painter's assistant
 - When I started school my sophomore year, I got an after-school job at Hayward Lumber
 - Then I worked 4 years in sales and the stock room for Macy's
 - Old Bath House restaurant on the ocean in Pacific Grove
 - Same time... 70+ hours, and the others were committed to my rock band
 - In college I was a janitor on school grounds
 - And for the first 4 years of married/family life, I worked for an upscale home construction contractor.
- I mention all that because in every job I had until the construction job, the bosses were universally loathed by the employees.

- The employees at Hayward were always talking smack about the bosses
- Macy's might have been the worst...
- The restaurant business is notorious for rifts between servers and owners/managers
- And my janitorial boss on campus hated everybody.
- And I entered into the fray of smack-talking about my bosses.
 - I was as bad as anyone
 - I also figured every boss in every company was equally despised by all employees everywhere.
 - On TV, it was true. Must be so in real life, right?
- Then I got the construction job
 - I'll never forget my first day on the job.
 - Now, granted, two years had passed since I came to faith in Christ Jesus.
 - But I was still thinking bosses everywhere were detested
 - But early on, I overheard praises about the boss.
 - My first thought was, no way. Can't be.
 - But soon it became evident, Dave was indeed awesome.
 - He was open – welcomed questions – communicated well – was well KNOWN.
 - He was so well-liked, the employees enjoyed the work, were productive, knew their roles, liked pleasing the boss, and looked forward to coming to work, working hard, and getting dirty.
 - And many of his employees went on to own their own construction company.
 - And in my opinion, it is all because the BOSS was trustworthy and made himself easy to know and work for.
 - With that, let's read the parable of the talents...

Mat 25:14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

Mat 25:15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

- Talents = "a large sum"
 - Depending on whom you're talking to, a monetary talent (most certainly was Jesus is referring to here) was worth between 1 and 20 years worth of wages.
 - Really hard to determine, except it was "a large sum"
 - Jesus is using money to teach the parable, but talents are:
 - Body
 - Mind
 - Wife/husband
 - Children
 - Passions
 - Ability
 - Truth
 - Empowering gifts of the Spirit
- Ability = dunamis = force (literally or figuratively); specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself): - ability, abundance, meaning, might, power, strength, violence, mighty (wonderful) work.
 - 120 times in the NT
 - Only ONCE is it translated "ability" (right here)
 - I find this a very interesting and intentional use of words by Christ.

Mat 25:16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

Mat 25:17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.

Mat 25:18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

Mat 25:19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

Mat 25:20 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.'

Mat 25:21 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.'

Mat 25:22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'

Mat 25:23 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.'

Mat 25:24 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 seed,

Mat 25:25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

Mat 25:26 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?

Mat 25:27 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.

Mat 25:28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

Mat 25:29 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.

Mat 25:30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

“Caption This”

- Get into groups of 4 or 5 and give a title other than “parable of the talents” to this parable.
 - **What is Jesus teaching? (in 6 words or less).**

My stab at a caption: **Kingdom living is Active living. (phrase of the day)**

- On earth, AND in Heaven
 - Kingdom is here but not yet
 - You won't be hanging out on top of clouds when you die!
 - I'm not certain as to what the work is, but you won't be idle.
- Every single parable regarding the Kingdom of Heaven is about ACTION.
- **There is no parable about the Kingdom of Heaven that suggests an overabundance of studying God's Word.**
 - The biggest tragedy in the church is a bunch of inactive fat heads sitting around discussing theology, while doing nothing with what they know.
 - And these tend to be seen as the “wise leaders”
 - You know what such wise leaders produce?
 - More fat heads doing little work.
- Certainly, studying God's Word is key to knowing God and His will.
 - But I know a lot of people who do 90% study, and 10% action.

- I want to encourage you to find the balance.
 - Study hard, and DO just as hard.
- “Kingdom living is Active living” has two sub-headings:
 - **I must have an accurate view of the master**
 - **Ownership mindset**

Now, let’s break down the parable with the two sub-headings:

1) I MUST HAVE AN ACCURATE VIEW OF THE MASTER:

Mat 25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.

- (also v23)
- Everybody wants to hear this, right?

You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.

- Greater things – greater challenges
- Not to make things harder for you, but because He entrusts you with MORE than He did before your last challenge.

Enter into the joy of your master.'

- **Joy!**
- Remember, these 3 parables are in response to what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.
 - So 3 things here:
 - **One, there is JOY here on earth**, as God’s Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Joy comes from the Master’s work being accomplished while He is away!
 - He takes joy in it, and YOU take joy in it.
 - **Two, there is great Joy in heaven.**
 - The idea Jesus gives is that faithful servants of the talents God gives will live in eternal, ever-exceeding joy WITH God, who is full of joy.
 - **The Master is a joyful Master**
 - (I must have an accurate view of the master)
- **Question: What does God seem to get excited about in scripture?**
 - YOU
 - Full trust in Him
 - When people see His love
 - Salvations
 - Maturity
 - Giving to the needy
 - Healing the broken
 - So it’s really no mystery as to what God’s servants should be about.
 - Your faith is ACTIVE.
 - It is no private or quiet.
 - It is not rude, overbearing, or obnoxious either.
 - But it is ACTIVE.

Mat 25:24 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 seed,

Mat 25:25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

Back to my opening illustration, **What do you think of the Boss?** IOW, What is your view of God?

- If I were playing the “caption this” game with 4 or 5 of you, I might have tried to convince you to name the parable “The Parable of the Assuming Servant”
 - He “knew” the Master to be a harsh, thieving tyrant.
 - **And that drove his actions.**
 - Who you believe God to be – His character and involvement in your life – drives what you do in His kingdom.
 - **It is the largest driving force, no question.**
- This servant erred on the side of viewing God too harshly
 - He so misunderstood God’s grace
 - As if God was a mean boss, giddily watching and waiting for him to fail
 - He’d heard rumors that the master was a hard, cunning thief (24)
 - And he operated accordingly – taking no risk with what the master had given him
- On the flip side, some view God a pushover
 - The parent who never says no, never disciplines, tolerates the screaming fits and gives in eventually
- Some view God as aloof, uncaring
 - Set things in motion, but doesn’t involve himself with trivial human activities
- Some view God as having no sense of humor
 - The big cosmic thumb in the sky, squishing out all our fun
- **How you view God MUST be in line with Whom His Word says He is.**
 - You will have a distorted view of Him if you don’t read His word, study it, pray through it, obey it, talk about it with others, work through the hard to understand things, and TRUST Him when obeying His Word means taking risks.
 - This assuming servant so misunderstood the Master that He was AFRAID.
 - He thought hiding the talent would please Him.
 - And boy was he wrong!!!
 - Not just “whoops, missed that one...”
 - But life-and-death, eternally WRONG.

2) OWNERSHIP MINDSET:

Notice the three servants’ responses to the Master:

- The first two say, “You delivered to me these talents, here I have made more!” (v20,22)
- The third doesn’t acknowledge he was given anything, and instead says, “I hid YOUR talent... here, have what is YOURS.”
 - With the first two, there is ownership and partnership.
 - With the third, there is clearly a Boss/Employer mindset.
 - God wants to break that in you.
 - He gave, it’s yours AND God’s to be used for the Master’s AND your joy.

Mat 25:26a But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant!...

- Slothful = lazy.
 - Lazy about knowing the master
 - Lazy about what he did with the talent

- I've rarely meet a lazy entrepreneur.
 - They exist, sure. But they're rare.
 - Why? Because owning something is a different animal than managing something
 - By boss owned his company.
 - And he took great joy in His work.
 - Do you remember when you bought your first car?
 - **Mine was a 1981 Honda Civic**
 - I remember sitting in that car when I drove it home the first day
 - I'd never owned anything that large before.
 - I sat there for 30 minutes before I went inside.
 - And I took WAY better care of it than my dad's cars that he let me drive before that!
- If you're honest enough with yourself, laziness is usually the reason why you don't follow through with the Master's plan.
 - Other things distract you.
 - TV, sports, hobbies, Facebook.... (typing) *"I'll be right there, Lord, but somebody on the internet is WRONG...!"*
 - **We are an easily distracted culture.**
- **Laziness isn't necessarily the art of doing nothing. It's the art of looking busy while accomplishing nothing of value.**
- Obviously, God is not a fan of laziness.
 - You can KNOW that.
 - Laziness is among the worst of attitudes, according to God's Word.

Mat 25:26b ... (the master) You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?

- Emphasis on "**knew**"
 - It's the same tone as God in Job 38-42, questioning Job on what he thought he knew.
 - It might have even been said with a snort!

Mat 25:28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

Mat 25:29 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.

- I've heard some pretty lousy interpretations of this verse.
- This is not about "the haves and the have nots"
- I sat and listened to a poor teaching on this parable some 20 years ago, with one of the main points being: The rich will get richer, and the poor will get poorer – that's just how it goes. DEAL WITH IT. In fact, his title might have been "Deal With It".
- Now, as much as some sentiments of that view are correct in certain sectors of society, that's certainly not what Jesus is teaching here – not even close.
- It's simply this:
 - When the Master has servants who know Him well, do well with what He gives, and joyfully do the Master's bidding, **that Master is going to continue to give more to that faithful servant.**
 - It's called training, mentoring, entrusting...
 - And to the ones who are lazy and bring excuses, that Master is eventually going to cut him off.

- It's not about the rich and the poor.
- It's about OWNERSHIP.
 - Gen 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
 - Psa 8:6 You have given (mankind) dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet...
 - Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Kingdom Living is... Active Living

A few applications:

- **Everyone has been given multiple "talents" from the Master.**
 - As I said earlier, your body and mind are two of them.
 - Care for your health, SO THAT you can care for the Master's bidding.
 - As I said last week, all believers have been given spiritual gifts.
 - Read the books I suggested – get familiar with your gifts as you serve Him.
- **If you're a parent, your child is "the large sum" – the talent God has given you.**
 - If you're a parent, you have a clear, direct mandate to "present" your child back to Him, with joy, faithfulness, and sweat on your brow!
 - Train up your child in the way he/she should go (Prov. 22:6)
 - Model kingdom living for them!
 - Balance grace with discipline.
 - Create and model a forgiveness environment in your home.
 - Watch them – study them – raise them in the Kingdom mindset
 - Equip them in their gifts, and they will honor the Lord.
- **Home Groups can model the "active living" mindset.**
 - Study together, but also do projects together.
 - Partner with GVR
 - Do prayer walks in your community
 - Have a BBQ at a family park in the neighborhood you normally meet, bringing enough for everyone
 - Helping people move
 - Etc...
 - If you're not in a home group, GET IN ONE.

(next) Kingdom Living is Active Living!

Pray