

“Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant” Sermon on Matthew’s Parable of the Talents.

In our time here today, I want to talk to you about the Parable of the Talents. Now, the biblical sense of the word talent is not used in the way we commonly think of exceptional human ability. The word talent in the Bible was used as a unit of measurement, a weight of about 75 pounds, measuring silver or gold. In Jesus’ day, one talent was worth about one year’s wages. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells three parables back-to-back. But first, let us go back to Matthew 24 as Jesus answers a question from the disciples about the end times. They said, “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age? In verses 6 through 12 of Matthew 24, Jesus gives specific instructions and details about the world’s end. Here is a highlight of the signs of the times before the second coming of Christ. The deception by false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pandemics, earthquakes, persecution of Christians worldwide, hate, falling away from the faith, increased wickedness, decreased love, and ending on a positive note, the global spread of the Gospel for the purpose of eternal salvation.

At the end of chapter 24, Jesus concludes his thoughts with this urging in Matthew 24:44. “Therefore, so you must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” So, at the end of Chapter 24, moving into Chapter 25, we see what it means to be ready for a second coming; we see Jesus teaching a simple story, a parable using illustrations from everyday Jewish life to express a more profound truth to get his point across. The main point is about his second coming; he wants us to be watching and ready. Jesus’ words remind me of the song recorded by the Temptations! “Get ready because here I come.”

We can see the disciples are scratching their heads. We can see the disciples thinking I do not know what you are talking about. Jesus sees they are confused, and as he usually does, he says let me tell you a little story. Again, Jesus tells three stories about what the end of the world will be like. He tells the parable of the virgins, the parable of the talents, and the parable of the sheep and goats. The parable of the virgins says don’t miss the party. The parable of the Talents says Don’t wait around wasting your life, and the parable of the sheep and goats is to take care of those God cares most for in the hurting and the lost. In other words, depend on the gospel, declare the gospel, and demonstrate the gospel, and you, my disciples, will do just fine when I return. But for today, I will dig into the middle parable, “The Parable of the Talents,” which should apply to everyone here, regardless of age. But before I do, let us take a moment to pray.

Heavenly Father, we gather this morning and submit ourselves to your Will and power. Father God, I thank you for the precious gifts of this life and that we would not waste a moment of it. God, we would not waste our money or our time, and every opportunity to serve is because every good and perfect gift comes from above. God that we would take advantage of an incredible risk for the glory of the renown of Jesus. I pray this world would be different and from this church that these brothers and sisters would not waste their lives but risk everything they have because it comes from you and is all for you. I pray that they would not be afraid but instead resurrect that calling in their life, and it is in this that I pray. Amen.

Before I begin, the word servant is, in actuality, a servant slave, most likely someone who could not pay his debts. Listen and follow along as I read from verse 14. “It (talking about the end of the world) will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to

them his property to them.” Who’s property? The Master’s property. Everything we have, every opportunity and chance to share the gospel, every dollar and relationship, is a gift from God the Father. In the context of our world today, especially even in the church we minister at. We are just stewards and managers of everything. God gives pastors to churches, not vice versa, and we shouldn’t confuse the order. Let us not obscure the fact pastors are chief servants of the church.

The parable says he gave one servant five, another two, and another one talent according to his ability. Fairness? Remember, the Sovereign Lord decides who gets what and when. Here’s a warning, folks. The most crippling thing we can do in ministry is to compare ourselves to one another, and anytime we compare, comparison cripples us because we either get pumped up with pride or put down with condemnation. Neither pride nor condemnation is the language of the Father. Whether you like it or not, we are comparison junkies, especially in the church, and it becomes a no-win situation. Right? Churches compare numbers all the time. How many people do you have coming on Sunday? I get this all the time. One of the worst things we can do is compare ourselves with somebody else, and we should not use this parable to shame others.

So, he handed out the talents, and the first man “went at once.” That’s important to note. Underline the words **“went at once.”** The servant did not wait; instead, he put his money to work and gained five more talents. You know delayed obedience is disobedience. Some of you here now understand what God has called you to do, and you are waiting for what the Master would have you do. The servant who received two talents didn’t waste any time either, nor did he compare or complain about the servant who received the five talents, and he went out and gained two more talents. But the servant who received one talent dug a hole, and he hid his master’s money. “Now, after a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.” Remember the words “settled accounts,” for it is crucial. Every single one of us will one day stand before our Maker, and he will settle accounts based on what He has given us and what Christ has done on the cross. Brothers and sisters, whatever God has given you, He is telling us: whatever you do, do not waste your life.

In verse 20, who shows up first? It was the one who received the five talents that came forward. Sure, he did. He crushed it. While the boss was out of town, he knew he crushed it and was the first to show up. Hey boss, how was your vacation? Hey, boss, guess what? You gave me five talents; here you go; I brought you five more. And the Master says, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Notice the Bible does not tell us the Master took the talents, only a pat on the back in the form of a blessing. Along comes the servant who received two talents and brought back two more, and the Master says the same thing: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” But here is what the Master does not say: “Well done, good and fruitful servant.” Do you realize that God will one day settle the accounts of us breaking new soil? And when the Lord returns, what use do we make of the talent of what we have sowed based on our faithfulness, not our fruitfulness? One of the worst things we can do is compare the fruit God gives somebody else. Great is thy faithfulness. And so it is that we should be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are called; every single one of us is called to bring God the glory. The servants who received and returned, in addition, received the same blessing—well done, the Master says, a gladness so radiant that it compensates overflowing for all the delay and all the irksomeness of labor. You have been faithful over little, and I will set you over much, and you will enter into the

joy of your Master. One of the worst things in the world is to be somebody else. Nobody can be the next Billy Graham, and even so, if we were to try, it would be a sin that the Almighty God, when he knit together you in your mother's womb, God knew exactly who he was creating for his glory and your joy. One of the primary ways you can glorify God is to live your life for the purposes he has given you. You will be judged on your faithfulness, not on your works.

Then, the servant who received the one talent came forward, and here is where the music changes. "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered any seed, so I was afraid." Mark it down as another critical moment. Underline the words ***"I was afraid."*** I went and hid your talent in the ground. Do you know the opposite of faith is not doubt? If you have serious doubts, you can make an incredible disciple! Remember doubting Thomas? Here's what you do if you have doubts. You pick up your doubts and questions and follow Jesus. When you surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus, one day, all of your doubts go away. Not next Tuesday or Wednesday, but nobody will have doubts when we all get to heaven. The opposite of faith is not doubt; it is fear. Faith produces action, and fear paralyzes us to the point of believing in the circumstances. This guy admits it, saying, "I was afraid."

Verse 25. His Master answers, "You wicked and lazy servant. Some Bible versions say "Slothful," meaning slow! I don't know too many slothful lazy people, but I do know "selective lazy people." The first two servants went and invested in what they received, but the other guy went and worked hard to hide what he received to make sure nobody knew where it was—working himself to the bone to avoid the faithful. We get really busy doing church stuff, all in an effort to prevent that kingdom stuff that God has told us to do. We get busy with our hobbies but get lazy instead of building relationships with the people God has put in our lives. We get really busy with work and really lazy with our faith. We get busy entertaining ourselves and lazy developing our gifts. Jesus says, "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. Everyone who has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Cast this worthless servant outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here is the message of Jesus as we anticipate His return. "Don't waste your life!" Don't waste your money, time, or opportunity to serve. Go back to the area of your life with a shovel and dig up that incredible talent you have inside. Because of fear, you have dug a hole and put that thing away, but God says to search for that gift and dig it back up. English Novelist Charlotte Bronte, given her success, wrote a phrase saying, "Better to try all things and find all empty, than to try nothing and leave your life blank."

Everything we do in this life will either bring regret or reward. The question is: How would you describe your life? Is it based on being comfortable or on being afraid? If you could do anything for the Lord, what would you do? Billy Graham was once asked if he could preach one last sermon, what would it be? Without hesitation, he said, Galatians 6:14, which reads, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. This man spent no time in comparison. Graham's life was defined by doing for and sharing the gospel. On February 21, 2018, Billy Graham heard these words. "Well done, good and faithful servant." Enter into the joy of your Master. I hope and pray that whatever talents God has given you, you will get after the Master's business.

You don't have to know many things in your life to make a lasting difference. You don't have to be intelligent, good-looking, or from a good family. You only have to know a few basic, glorious, majestic, obvious, unchanging, eternal things, be gripped by them, and be willing to lay down your life for them. Amen

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