

## 5. The Talents

### Matthew 25:14-30

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<sup>14</sup>“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. <sup>15</sup>To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. <sup>17</sup>So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. <sup>18</sup>But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup>Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>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.’ <sup>21</sup>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.’ <sup>22</sup>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.’ <sup>23</sup>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.’ <sup>24</sup>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, <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup>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? <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

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#### 1. Describe the context of this parable and how it fits into the overall passage of this and the previous chapter.

Context is important to observe in understanding parables. This parable is immediately following Jesus dialogue in chapter 24 of the return of Christ. He tells his followers to be ready for nobody knows the time of his return.

The essence of this parable, in the context given, is that Jesus is going away but returning and we are to use the resources and gifts that He has given us to accomplish His purposes. Let's look back at chapter 24 through 25

- Chapter 24:1-31 is the dialogue on the return of Christ.
- We are to observe the signs of the times to see when His return is closing in (Matt 24:32-35 – the Fig Tree)
- but know that we do not know when He will come (Matt 24:36-44)
- Therefore, we are to do His work like the good servant who manages the master's kingdom effectively, not like the servant that says He will never return. (Matt 24:45-51)
- We are to wait like the 5 virgins who were prepared with a proper heart towards Him and not waiting without receiving the gift of salvation. (Matt 25:1-13)

- We are to accomplish what He has entrusted to us with the lives He has given us, the resources, and the knowledge that He provided (Matt 25:14-30)
- Finally, we are to accomplish the good works that He has for us to do as if we are doing them directly for Him. (Matt 25:31-46)

Chapter 25 contains two parables and a conclusion that finishes this dialogue. The first parable is the parable of the 10 virgins. This parable reinforces the need to be ready and waiting for Jesus return, and contrasts those that seem to be waiting but are not ready with those in the previous parables who are just pretending that the master is never returning. In the parable of the ten virgins all ten are waiting, but some are ready and others are not. This speaks to the salvation that Christ offers, and the truth that many can be waiting for His return that do not know Him, and will not be accepted into his kingdom.

**Matthew 7:21-23** - <sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

The parable of the talents is next in this passage and discusses the works that those that are waiting for Christ’s return should be doing. This is not an illusion to a works based salvation, but a recognition that deeds flow out of the life of one who has a transformed heart.

The conclusion of this dialogue is in vs. 31-46 where Jesus tells his followers the works that they would be doing. This passage shares that our love for our neighbors that are less fortunate – or in need – is a sign of our love for Christ. Jesus says when those around us are hungry, or thirsty, or sick, or in need and we help them, it is as if we are doing it directly to Him.

2. **A talent is a weight of precious metal often used as a standard of measure for valuing transactions. It was a large sum. The master entrusted many talents to his servants, thus the master would have been considered rich. How does this fit with Psalms 24:1-2, Haggai 2:8, and Psalms 50:7-11?**

**Psalms 24:1-2** - The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, <sup>2</sup>for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Haggai is a prophesy of encouragement to Zerubbabel that God owns everything and is in the work of rebuilding the temple. God promises that He will bring in the silver and Gold of the land to the temple and restore it to its glorious days. God owns everything and uses wealth (and poverty) to accomplish His purpose.

**Haggai 2:6-9** - <sup>6</sup> For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup> **The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts.** <sup>9</sup> The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.”

**Psalms 50:7-11** - “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. <sup>8</sup> Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. <sup>9</sup> I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. <sup>10</sup> **For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. <sup>11</sup> I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.**

God is the owner of everything. He created it all, and as such, He owns it all. We only hold into it for a brief moment and then we are gone – our stuff (that we value so much) is left. If God own everything already, but allows us to have stewardship of His possessions, then what ought our attitude be towards the things that he has provided for us?

**Luke 12:13-21** - <sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” <sup>14</sup> But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” <sup>16</sup> And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup> and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup> And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ <sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

### 3. Identify the main characters in this parable:

- a. **The master:** Jesus! He is traveling to Jerusalem soon to be crucified. He knows that his time on Earth is short, and begins to tell his disciples and followers that He is going away but will return. He wants to make sure that they know that He is not leaving them, just going to prepare a place for them.

**John 14:2-3** - <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

- b. **The three servants collectively:** the church (little “c”). The group of people that identify as followers of God or Jesus. Those that are associated with the church, but not all those that have surrendered their lives to Christ. Remember that there was mostly a large crowd of people following Jesus throughout His ministry, but only a small handful

that stuck with him in the end (and even they ran when faced with persecution). There is also today, many that would associate with the Christian church, but many of those do just in word and not in deed. They say they are one thing, but their lives are exactly the same as those of the world.

- c. **The first two servants specifically:** Those that hear the Gospel and submit to it. Those that accept Jesus gift of forgiveness, allow Him to be Lord of their life, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Those that produce fruit of a changed life through their connection with the vine of Christ. Those that exhibit the fruits of a changed life and are truly a child of the king. *This does not mean that we secure our place in the kingdom through works that we do, rather that our works are evidence (or fruit) of our changed life and heart towards God. Look at the parable of the vine and branches – Jesus is the one attributed with the works, the source of the fruit – we are only to abide in Him.*
- d. **The last servant:** One who rejects God and runs from Him. The knowledge of God is in all men. Romans 1 tells us that God is known by all men, but that, in our unrighteousness, we suppress the knowledge of God.

**Romans 1:18-23** - <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, <sup>[g]</sup> in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

God has revealed himself to all men. The servant that buries this knowledge of God, and lives like there is no return, or day of accountability, who does not repent, will be judged when Christ returns.

**4. How does the master's leaving for a journey and then returning compare to our knowledge of past and future events based on the Bible?**

Jesus is coming back. He came to die and be raised again to secure our salvation. He returned to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14) and to wait until all of those that are His turn to Him (Romans 11). He will then return to claim His Church and to judge the sheep from the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

**5. What are the talents that the master gave to his servants? How are they to be used to do His work?**

*The Talents are all of the resources that God has given us.* Starting with the knowledge of God. He has given us an internal knowledge of His existence, the Scriptures, and access to the many teachings and resources of millions of Godly scholars that have gone before us. Having received a knowledge of the Gospel, and understood the message of salvation we all have received

talents from God, and we are accountable for them. In today's day in America – where there is a Bible within the reach of everybody (either on paper or virtually) none are without excuse.

**Jesus is returning and we will all be accountable for the resources and knowledge that God has given us. Some blessed with eternal life for accepting the changed life of salvation, and some condemned to eternal suffering for their rejection of Jesus.**

If the talents are knowledge of God and the Gospel and the resources (spiritual and physical) that God has given us, then we as Christians have a final talent that we are accountable for – the indwelling of His spirit that helps us by changing our lives and hearts. How much more ought we to be accountable for with not only all of the blessings that Scripture promises, but even more with the indwelling of God's spirit to guide us and direct our paths. He produces the fruit if we abide in Him.

**6. What is the increase that the Master is expecting from the talents that He has given his servants? Does Matthew 25:31-46 help us to understand the work and increase that the master expects from his servants?**

I believe that the increase that God is expecting from what He has given us (talents) is good works. This seems to be the point of vs. 31-46. Jesus says that they clothed the naked, fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, and visited the sick and in prison. This is the “works” that results from a changed life. These are not prerequisites to salvation, but the evidences of a changed heart and life in Christ.

This makes sense with the rest of Scripture. God originally created us to fill the earth with His image. This means His wish was to populate Earth with representations of God. ***Were we to represent God in the way we look? How we dress? Who we know? The jobs we have? Cars we drive? – No. We were to represent God in the way that we love others.***

Jesus was asked which of the commandments were the most important in Matthew 22. He responded first to love God, then to love your neighbor.

**Matthew 22:36-40** - <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”  
<sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

***So does this mean that we need to look for a lot of “good works” to do to prove our salvation?*** NO. John 15:4-12 tells us that our role is to abide in Christ and He will change our heart to His will and produce the fruit (good works) that He desires. This is not our work. Look at the actions we are to take in this passage.

**John 15:4-12** - <sup>4</sup> **Abide in me**, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide in me**. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever **abides in me and I in him**, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do **nothing**. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch

and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

So at the end of telling His disciples 6 times to abide in Him, he tells them that they are to love one another. This is the fruit that God desires from the Christian life. A life that is changed by our abiding in Christ and on His words and demonstrates the love of Christ to the world. The action item for us it to abide in Him, and in His word.

**Romans 12:2** - <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The rest of the chapter goes on to discuss "good works" of the Christian life. Friends the life of the Christian starts in the Word of God. This is the nourishment and food that we need to accomplish the Fathers work. Only when we have a proper balance of abiding in Christ (through His Word) can we live out a life of deeds that produce a return on the things God has given us. This life will lead to our hearing those words from the master to us, "*Well done, thou good and Faithful servant. You have been faithful over little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Master.*"