

The Parable of the Talents

- Mat 25:14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.
- Mat 25:15 To one he gave **five talents** of money, to another **two talents**, and to another **one talent**, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
- Mat 25:16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more.
- Mat 25:17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.
- Mat 25:18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.
- Mat 25:19 "After a long time the master of those servants **returned and settled accounts with them.**
- Mat 25:20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'
- Mat 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been **faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.** Come and share your master's happiness!'
- Mat 25:22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'
- Mat 25:23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been **faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.** Come and share your master's happiness!'
- Mat 25:24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, '**I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.**
- Mat 25:25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'
- Mat 25:26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! **So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?**
- Mat 25:27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.
- Mat 25:28 "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.
- Mat 25:29 For **everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.**
- Mat 25:30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"Investing in your future"

INTRODUCTION

This is the second sermon in a series of three on Matthew 25. Last week we saw how the Gospel of Mathew demonstrated that Jesus had the power to command His disciples to spread His gospel to Jew and Gentile alike throughout the world.

We saw that Matthew liked Jesus to the great leader Moses by dividing His teaching into five sections thereby reflecting the five books of Moses. The first section is introduced by Jesus teaching on a mountain just as Moses had done.

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Matthew 25 is from the last section and contains the teachings of Jesus about the future.

Tonight I want to look at the Parable of the Talents under the title

“Investing in your Future.”

YOUR FUTURE

What we do now has an impact on the future. For instance if you refuse to forgive others it will certainly effect your future. Forgiveness does not change the past, but it determines the future.

What you do in the present has implications now and in the future. Jesus taught a parable about investment which highlights this fact. The Kingdom principle is that **"to whom much is given, from that person, shall much be required."** What we do in the present with what we have has eternal outcomes of reward and consequence. Let's examine this parable.

The Talents (25:14-30)

This parable goes beyond the first three (24:42-25:13) Matthew 24:42-44 The Thief; Matthew 24: 45-51 The Servant; and The Foolish Young Women Matthew 25:1-13. in that it expects the watchfulness of the servants to manifest itself during the master's absence, not only in being prepared and performance of duty, even if there is a long delay, but in **an improvement of the allotted "talents"** till the day of reckoning.

The parable is frequently compared with Luke 19:11-27, the parable of the ten minas. The majority opinion today is that there is only one original and that most likely The language of the two pericopes is rather different, and most of the differing details cannot be reconciled on normal grounds. The few parallels are well within the bounds of the speech variation of any itinerant preacher. Moreover the emphasis in each of the two parables is somewhat different, and Luke's is tightly tied to the Zacchaeus episode. The somewhat similar parable in the later non-canonical Gospel of the Nazaraeans.

14 The introduction to this parable in the Greek is somewhat abrupt (lit., "*for as,*" without mention of the kingdom, "it" [NIV]; or a verb [NIV, "will be"]; the closest parallel is Mark 13:34). Probably this parable is so tightly associated with the last one as to share its introduction (see on v. 1).

Slaves in the ancient world could enjoy considerable responsibility and authority. The man going on a journey entrusts his cash assets to three of his slaves who are understood to be almost partners in his affairs and who may share some of his profits. The departure and the property are integral parts of the story and should not be allegorized (to refer to the

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Ascension and the gifts of the Spirit), though doubtless some early readers after Pentecost read these into the text.

15 Modern English uses the word "talent" for skills and mental powers God has entrusted to men; but in New Testament times the *talanton* ("talent") was a unit of exchange. Estimates of its value vary enormously for four reasons.

1. A talent could be of gold, silver, or copper, each with its own value. *Argyriion* in v. 18, a word that can mean either "money" or "silver," may hint at the second option.
2. The talent was first a measure according to weight, between twenty-six to thirty-six kg, and then a unit of coinage, one common value assigned it being six thousand denarii.
3. Although it is possible to calculate by weight or metallic value, another problem remains. For instance, eighty pounds of silver at fifteen dollars an ounce would mean that a talent was worth about nineteen thousand dollars. But modern inflation changes silver values so quickly that prices are soon obsolete. Yet such equivalences are passed on from generation to generation of reference texts have the same figures!).
4. It may be more sensible to compare the talent with modern currency in terms of earning power. If a talent was worth six thousand denarii, then it would take a day laborer twenty years to earn so much - 2 million Rand (+- 300.000 \$. On any reckoning the NIV's footnote ("more than a thousand dollars") is much too low.

So the sums are vast--much larger than in Luke 19:11-27, where a "mina" (one hundred drachmas) is very close to one hundred denarii, or one-third of a year's wages (R30000.00). In Matthew's parable the talents are distributed according to the master's evaluation of his servants' capacities, whereas in Luke each servant is given the same amount. In Matthews therefore, **the parable lays intrinsic emphasis on the principle "to whom much is given, from him also shall much be required."**

Attempts to identify the talents with spiritual gifts, the law, natural endowments, the gospel, or whatever else, lead to a narrowing of the parable with which Jesus would have been uncomfortable. Perhaps he chose the talent or mina symbolism because of its capacity for varied application.

16-18 "At once" (v. 16) relates to the servant's promptness to put the money to work (NIV), not with the owner's departure. The point is that the good servants felt the responsibility of their assignment and went to work without delay. NIV's "*put his money to work*" does not mean the servant invested the money in some lending agency. Rather he set up some business and worked with the capital to make it grow.

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But one servant, **unwilling to work or take risks**, unwilling to trust his master's assessment of his abilities, merely dug a hole and buried the money (v. 18). This was safer than the deposit systems of the time.

19-23 The accounting begins "after a long time" (v. 19), the implication being that the consummation of the kingdom will be long delayed (24:48; 25:5). "Settled accounts" (*synairei logon*) is a standard commercial term.

The first servant, who doubled his five talents (v. 20), is praised, especially for his faithfulness, and given two things (vv. 21, 23): increased responsibility and a share in his master's *chara* ("joy," as in John 15:11).

But we should not conclude that the sole reward of fulfilled responsibility is increased responsibility. The eschatological setting, coupled with the promise of joy that bursts the natural limits of the story, guarantees that the consummated kingdom provides glorious new responsibilities and holy delight (cf. Rom 8:17).

Romans 8 SHARING IN THE MASTER'S GLORY

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

JOY

John 15

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

*11 I have told you this so that **my joy** may be in you and that **your joy** may be complete.*

John 16:19-20

19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?"

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

Gal 5

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Hebrews 12

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Hebrew parallelism of vv. 22-23 with vv. 20-21 is not exact but close. The second servant has been faithful with what has been given him (v. 22) and hears the same words as his more able fellow servant (v. 23). Probably the "many things" assigned the two men are not exactly the same. **The point is not egalitarianism**, whether here (cf. 13:23) or in the consummated kingdom, **but increased responsibility and a share in the master's joy** to the limits of each faithful servant's capacity.

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24-25 The third servant accuses his master of being a "hard" (*skleros. sklayros, from skell (to dry); hard, rough:-- difficult(1), hard(2), harsh things(1), strong(1).*) man (v. 24). The word, both in Greek and English, can mean various things (elsewhere in the NT it is found only in

John 6:60;

59 *He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.*

60 *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "**This is a hard teaching.** Who can accept it?"*

61 *Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?"*

Acts 26:14;

14 *We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? **It is hard for you** to kick against the goads.'*

15 *"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.*

James 3:4;

4 *Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by **strong winds**, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.*

Jude 15

15 *to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

The servant is saying that the master is hard, harsh, grasping, exploiting the labor of others ("harvesting where you have not sown"), and putting the servant in an invidious position.

Should he take the risk of trying to increase the one talent entrusted to him, he would see little of the profit. If he failed and lost everything, he would incur the master's wrath.

Perhaps, too, he is piqued at having been given much less than the other two so, in a rather spiteful act, he returns to his master what belongs to him, no more and no less (v. 25).

What this servant overlooks is his responsibility to his master and his obligation to discharge his assigned duties. His failure betrays his lack of love for his master, which he masks by blaming his master and excusing himself. Only the wicked servant blames his master.

The foolish young women failed from thinking their part too easy; the wicked servant fails from thinking his too hard.

Grace never condones irresponsibility; even those given less are obligated to use and develop what they have.

26-27 The master condemns the servant on the basis of the servant's own words, which prove his guilt (v. 26). If the master was so hard and grasping, should not the servant have put the money where it would have been relatively safe, earn interest, and require no work (v. 27)?

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28-30 The talent entrusted to this wicked servant is taken from him (v. 28); the relationship between master and servant is severed. It is given to the man who now has ten talents, following the kingdom rule (v. 29) Jesus had already taught in 13:12.

Moreover, there is Old Testament warrant for this pattern: on this basis the kingdom of Israel was stripped from Saul and given to David (cf. also 21:43). The wicked servant is "worthless" (*achreios*, used only here [v. 30] and in Luke 17:10), for to fail to do good and use what God has entrusted to us to use is grievous sin, which issues not only in the loss of neglected resources but in rejection by the master, banishment from his presence, and tears and gnashing of teeth.

The parable insists that the watchfulness that must mark all Jesus' disciples **does not lead to passivity but to doing one's duty, to growing, to husbanding and developing the resources God entrusts to us**, till "after a long time" (v. 19) the master returns and settles accounts.

The parable applies widely and cannot be restricted to Christian leaders or Jews who fail to recognize their Messiah.

Being prepared for the Lord's coming is being "about your Father's business". Notice the activities of the people who are "taken" in the previous chapter...

Matthew 24

40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

The angel's admonition of the disciples in Acts 1 could well be directed to the church of today some 2000 years later,

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.