

Prophecy Sermon #10

MCBC
Hutchinson, KS
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Matthew 25:14

The Second Warning Parable

These parables are found nowhere else in Scripture.

The parable of the talents further illustrates this same truth that Israel will be judged at the Second Advent to determine who will go into the millennium and who will be excluded.

Though the parable of the talents has relevance to every generation, the Lord was still speaking directly about the generation that will be living just before His return in glory (24:34).

I've entitled this series – The Son of Man is Coming, Part 5

Matthew 25

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

Matthew 25:14-30

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

“For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘What might have been!’ ”
Scripture is full of admonitions to take advantage of opportunity while it is available.

Jesus repeatedly called on men to make the most of spiritual opportunities.

Although believers are to rejoice in the prospect of their Lord’s coming again, they are not to sit back in idleness and do nothing.

Vs. 14

The man in the story obviously represents Christ Himself, and the going on a journey represents the time He is away from earth between His first and His second advents.

The slaves depict professed believers whom he has entrusted with various resources to use in His behalf until He returns.

Jesus was illustrating the outward, those who allege to belong to Him, and not to mankind in general. Many people in the gospels are referred to as Christ’s disciples although some of them proved to be false.

Even those false followers, by virtue of being attached outwardly to Christ, have been entrusted with certain of the Lord’s possessions.

They acted almost in his full authority, having the equivalent of what we now refer to as power of attorney.

Vs. 15

The man in Jesus’ parable had three such trusted slaves to whom he entrusted certain of his possessions while he was away. Satisfied that his money was in capable hands, he then went on his journey.

The numbers of talents given to the slaves have no significance in themselves but simply illustrate a wide range of responsibilities, from the very high and demanding to the relatively low and easy.

It is significant, however, that the responsibilities were given to each according to his own ability. The owner knew his slaves intimately, and he entrusted each one only with the responsibility he reasonably could be expected to handle.

The foolish idea which communists and socialists have, that it is wrong for one man to have more than another, is certainly exploded by the words of Jesus in verses 28 and 29.

Some people have more because they can be trusted with more, because they work harder. For this reason Communism generally ends up in atheism, as has been so terribly the case in many Communist countries.

Talents always referred to money, but the word itself simply represented a measure of weight.

The value of a specific coin depended on its weight and its composition, a talent of gold, for example, was extremely valuable, a talent of silver less valuable, and a talent of copper or bronze much less valuable still.

The number, the metal content, and their worth is irrelevant to Jesus' point. He was emphasizing common accountability for differing levels of responsibility based on individual ability.

In the same way, Christians with different capabilities and opportunities may produce differing results while working with equal faithfulness and devotion. The Lord therefore assures His servants that "each will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1Cor. 3:8).

Vs. 16a

The slave was eager to serve his master, and he therefore went to work immediately. This man represents the genuine believer whose greatest desire is to serve God.

Is your greatest desire today to serve God? Then what is it?

The issue of the parable pertains to what each slave does with the responsibility he has been given. The best motive in the heart of a faithful servant would be to accomplish as much as possible for the sake of his master during the master's absence. That was also the master's desire.

Vs. 16b

“traded” carries the broad connotation of doing business over a period of time. The slave did not simply make one good investment and then sit back, but rather traded and retraded as long as his master was away.

Although the second slave was given less than half as much to work with, he performed just as faithfully and industriously as the first.

Vs.17

Both men demonstrated commitment to their master by making the most of what they had, by maximizing their opportunities.

The behavior of the third slave, however, was radically different.

Vs. 18

Hiding valuables in the ground was a common practice in the ancient world, where there were no bank vaults or safe deposit boxes. It was a simple and sensible way to protect such things as jewels and coins.

The slave had not received the one talent to protect it but to use it wisely for his master's profit. Although he had been given fewer resources than the other two slaves, he had the same obligation to use what he had to his maximum ability.

Vs. 19

The exact length of time the owner was gone is not mentioned, except that it was a long time. The implication is that the master of those slaves came back unexpectedly.

The first order of business upon his return was to determine what the slaves had done with his assets, and he therefore sat down and settled accounts with them.

Every person will settle up accounts with God.

Vs. 20

"The man's eyes are sparkling. He is bubbling over with enthusiasm, is thoroughly thrilled, and, as it were, invites his master to start counting." The man has been waiting for this moment and is pleased at having done so well. The master is equally delighted. "Well done," he says. We might almost translate his reply as, "Excellent!" "Great!" or "Wonderful!"

The man was not boasting but simply relating the truth of the matter. He knew that everything he started with had been entrusted to him by his master, and that he had only done what he should have done.

Vs. 21

Jesus first of all commended the man's excellent character

Because the master represents the Lord Himself, it is remarkable to contemplate that the holy, just, perfect Lord of the universe will praise His true disciples for their

faithfulness, imperfect as it will have been. Yet that is the glorious prospect of every child of God.

The master not only highly praised his servant but highly rewarded him.

Not only will the Lord entrust greater earthly tasks to those who prove themselves faithful, but their heavenly reward will be opportunity for greater service to Him throughout eternity.

Christ's faithful servants living on earth when He returns will enter into the millennial kingdom in their same earthly bodies and will be given responsibilities commensurate, proportionate with their previous faithfulness.

Believers who have died or been raptured will come to earth with the Lord in their glorified bodies, and they, too, will be given rulership in proportion to their faithfulness to God while they lived on earth.

Both in the millennial and the eternal manifestations of the kingdom, those who have been faithful on earth will be **put . . . in charge of many things** much greater in significance than the **few things** over which they previously were faithful stewards.

Every soul in heaven will equally possess eternal life and will be equally righteous, equally Christlike, and equally glorious.

Everyone will be equally perfect, because perfection has no degrees. The difference will be in opportunities and levels of service.

Just as the angels serve God in ranks, so will redeemed men and women, and the degree of their heavenly service will have been determined by the devotedness of their earthly service.

Jesus also mentions a second reward the master gives to the faithful slave: **enter into the joy of your master.** (VS. 21)

Vs. 22

The second slave made the same report as the first . . .

Vs. 23

The master's response to the second slave was also identical . . .

The third slave did not present the master with earnings but with an accusatory and self-serving excuse. Having done nothing with what he had been given, he said . . .

Vs. 24

First of all, he produced absolutely nothing with the talent he had been given and did not even make an attempt to use it for his master's benefit and profit.

Second, this slave demonstrated his counterfeit allegiance by deprecating his master's character, accusing him of being **a hard man, reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he had scattered no seed**. He charged his owner with being unmerciful and dishonest.

That slave represents the professing Christian whose limited knowledge of God leads him to conclude that He is distant, uncaring, unjust, and undependable.

Instead of judging themselves in light of God's inerrant Word, such people judge God in the light of their own perverted perceptions. They not only justify themselves but do so at God's expense.

His erroneous estimation of his master's character was sufficient proof that this slave had no intimate or reliable knowledge of him. That slave portrays the unregenerate person . . . who has no spiritual fruit in his life and no spiritual worship in his heart.

Vs. 25b

We can hear his contempt as he resentfully throws his talent on the table. “Here is what belongs to you,” he says. It was returned exactly as the master had given it, not a bit more and no less.

Implying the master had no right to expect more. . . . He wickedly misjudged and slandered his master, and tried to make that an excuse for his slothful failure to do as he had been commanded.

Vs. 26

In response, the master condemns him both for this wickedness and for being lazy—wicked because he accused his master unjustly, and lazy because he did not faithfully use what he was given.

The slave was **wicked** . . . and he was **lazy** in that he did nothing with the talent entrusted to him.

Vs. 27

The ancient Roman Empire had a banking system that was in many respects like those of modern times. . . . The slave with the one talent therefore could have reaped at least a 6% return by making virtually no effort at all.

The fact that he did not attempt even to earn simple **interest** on the money confirmed his total irresponsibility and his indifference to the master.

“If you thought I demand a return even on that which does not belong to me, did you think I would not require a return on that which *does* belong to me?”

. . . his excuse seems to have been more spur of the moment than planned. He did not expect the master's return and did not expect to be held accountable, and when he was caught by surprise he simply threw out an outrageous charge that made no sense.

The **distinguishing mark of the first two servants** was that they used their opportunity to serve the Lord before His return . . . They were willing to invest everything they had in the service of their Master. The third servant, on the other hand, put aside what God had given him and went about his own selfish business.

The master was angry with the third slave not simply because he lost a profit but because the slave wasted his opportunity. Jesus' point was that having little to work with is no excuse for not using it at all.

Even a person with limited exposure to Scripture and who possesses few talents and has few opportunities for service is fully obligated to use those blessing in God's service.

Two of them built their houses on a foundation of rock, the other built his on sand. Two of them were wheat, the other was a tare.

The third slave was not simply unfaithful but faithless. A true Christian who wastes his abilities, spiritual gifts, and opportunities will have his work "burned up, [and] he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

The person represented by this slave, however, has no faith at all and therefore no saving relationship to God.

Vs. 28-29

It was not the *portion* but the *proportion* that made the difference. They started as servants, but their Lord promoted them to rulers. They were faithful with a few things, so the Lord trusted them with many things. They worked and toiled, and now they

entered into joy. Their faithfulness gave each of them a capacity for greater service and responsibility.

What we do not use for the Lord, we are in danger of losing.

Vs. 30

Outer darkness is a common New Testament description of hell. . . . Light signifies God's presence, and **darkness** signifies his absence. Hell not only is eternal darkness but eternal torment. **In that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth**, signifying the unrelieved agony of being separated from God's presence and goodness.

. . . *Darkness*, it is a life without God, Who is the Creator and center of all things. In that darkness there is no hope, no joy, no love, no laughter. In that outside world there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth forever. Do not go there. Repent of your sin, trust Christ as your Savior, and use your new life in Christ to work for him now.

Talents in the parable represent whatever God gives us to use and improve, and as beyond comparison the most important of such gifts are our mental powers, so it has become common in English to call a man's mental powers his *talents*, and hence to speak of a man of talent, or a talented man. . . . **To every man according to our ability**, his capacity for preserving and increasing that which is intrusted to him.

We learn, in the first place, from this parable, *that all professing Christians have received something from God*. We are all God's "servants." We have all "talents" entrusted to our charge.

We learn in the second place, that *many make a bad use of the privileges and mercies they receive from God*. That third man represents a large class of mankind.

We learn in the third place, *that all professing Christians . . .*

. . . High or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, we shall all have to stand at the bar of God and to receive our eternal sentence. There will be no escape.

We and God must at last meet face to face. We shall have to render an account of every privilege that was granted to us, and of every ray of light that we enjoyed.

The parable of the talents illustrates four basic aspects of spiritual opportunity: the responsibility we receive, the reaction we have, the reckoning we face, and the reward we gain.

To hide our talent is to neglect opportunities of glorifying God, when we have them. The Bible-despiser, the prayer-neglecter, . . . the . . . sensual, and the earthly-minded, . . . the thoughtless, and the pleasure-seeker, the money-lover, the covetous, and the self-indulgent . . . alike burying their Lord's money in the ground. They have all light that they do not use. But they are all daily robbing God. He has lent them much and they make Him no return. . . . "the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

The parable tells us that the servants who had used their Lord's money well, were commended as "good and faithful," and told to "enter into the joy of their Lord."

He will find that every hour spent in Christ's service, and every word spoken on Christ's behalf, has been written in a book of remembrance. . . . "Here some drops of joy enter into us, but there we shall enter into joy."

The reasons with which he now pretends to satisfy himself will prove useless and vain. . . . Those words of our Lord, "thou knewest," are words that ought to ring loudly in many a man's ears, and prick him to the heart. . . . They are not doing what they can.

The amounts were in keeping with the men's abilities.

Readiness for His coming is not evidenced by going apart somewhere to wait idly for Him, but by being about His business with enthusiastic dedication.

The word “talents” is an expression that has been . . . turned aside from its original meaning. It is generally applied to none but people of remarkable ability or gifts. They are called “talented” people. Such an use of the expression is a mere modern invention. . . . our Lord . . . applied [it] to all baptized persons without distinction. We have all talents in God’s sight. We are all talented people.

Saving faith is serving faith. On the other hand, they are not to become so caught up in serving the Lord that they forget to contemplate and rejoice in His return.

. . . we can hardly fail to hear the angry, self-justifying, accusing tone of the servant who hid the master’s talent in the earth. . . . (v. 24-25). This accusation was not true. The master was not a hard man. He had been generous in giving his servants much wealth to work with. But this man hated him.

James 2:14-17

Does that mean we are saved by works after all? . . . No, but these passages do reveal the necessity of works following faith—if we are truly born again. There is an unbreakable connection between what we believe and what we do. . . . The new nature does not manifest itself fully all at once. But if we are justified . . . it will increasingly and inevitably express itself in faithful and loving service to our Master, Jesus Christ.

We are not justified by works.

But these are not for this life or for a few moments or years after death. They are forever. . . . In the next parable, the goats go away “to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (v. 46).

We are God’s stewards. We are God’s debtors.

His reasoning indicated he lacked faith in his master; he proved to be a **worthless servant**. As a result, he lost what he had (v. 29; cf. 13:12), and was cast into judgment. Like the unworthy servant in 24:48-51, he too would be eternally separated from God. On **weeping and gnashing of teeth** see comments on 13:42.