

MORE TO THE STORY: The Talentsⁱ Matthew 25:14-30

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, church family. Welcome to those of you that are guests today. Thank you for entrusting us with your Sunday. It is our prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We love with our guests. We would ask you to text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you text that keyword to that number, you'll be sent a link back that will take you to a form to enter basic contact information. It then notifies us, and we have the privilege of following up with you.

Or you can stop by Guest Connect located in the lobby. We have a team that would like to meet you and give you a gift as a way of saying thank you for being with us this morning. I will make my way there as well and I look forward to shaking your hand this morning.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We have been in a teaching series we have called, "More to the Story," where we are working our way through some of the parables of Jesus. So far, we have looked at the Parables of the Sower, the mustard seed, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value, and the unmerciful servant. We've learned that there is more to these powerful stories than just the story itself. Today we are looking at the parable of the Talents. So, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew chapter 25. We are going to be in verses 14-30 today.

Remember the definition we are working from as to what a parable is. It is a teaching aid that teaches something unknown (spiritual) by relating it to something that is known (tangible). To cast a spiritual truth alongside something that people would be familiar with. It's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And these parables were powerful and shared by the Master storyteller, Jesus.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: How we spend our timeⁱⁱ

According to an article published last year on how Americans spend their timeⁱⁱⁱ, we spend on average, 28 years, 2 months, and 5 days sleeping. We spend 15

years, 3 months and 7 days working. 5 years, 7 months and 3 days socializing, and 4 years eating. Do you want me to depress you on how much time you will spend doing housework in your life? 7 years, 7 months and 6 days. Just doing those activities add up to approximately 57 years!

According to another article, we waste 26 days a year looking at social media.^{iv} Nearly a month! And yet another article says that we waste 2.9 hours each day at work surfing the internet, checking social media, and texting non-work-related people.^v That adds up to nearly 13 days a year spent wasting time at work. 1-and-a-half years over a 30-year career!

According to those statistics, we are good at wasting time, aren't we?! Someone once observed that, "A wasted life is really nothing more than a collection of wasted days."^{vi} That is true, isn't it?! God gives us life, and each day is filled with opportunities. James tells us that our life is but a vapor. And we can choose to either use and invest those opportunities in eternal things or allow our life to drift by without taking advantage of the opportunities we have. The unknown author I read went on to say, "The difference between those who succeed and those who fail is not found primarily in talent but in diligence and effort."^{vii} God expects us to leverage the life He has given us. And that's what the parable of the talents in all about.

As we have done with the other parables, we are going to look at the parable itself, the point of the parable, and then the practice, how we apply the truths in this parable. That will be our outline again this morning.

MESSAGE:

So, let's look, first, at...

1) **The Parable.**

Let's read it in its entirety and then begin to look at the components of the parable as we come to terms with how it is challenging us. Matthew 25, verses 14 through 30.

*¹⁴For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his **servants** and **entrusted to them his property**. ¹⁵To one he gave five **talents**, to another two, to another one, to each **according to his ability**. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two*

talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹Now **after a long time** the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And 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.' ²¹His 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.' ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have **made two talents more**.' ²³His 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.' ²⁴He 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**, ²⁵so **I was afraid**, and I went and **hid your talent in the ground**. Here, you have what is yours.' ²⁶But 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? ²⁷Then **you ought to have invested my money** with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the **outer darkness**. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' So much here, so let's begin to pick it apart.

First, a very rich man is setting out on what proves to be a long journey. While he is gone, he put his servants in charge of his property. The word, "servants" here is a general word referring to many different levels of bondservants. This word, in the New Testament, described both common and skilled workers. It included artists and highly trained professionals.^{viii}

More than likely, this man called professional managers to care for his property. This was a common practice in this day, when going away some time, to have these high-level servants act as power of attorney. They were responsible for handling the business operations of their owner and acting in his best interest.^{ix}

So, this man calls three specific servants. And he dished out talents to each one. Like we mentioned last week, a talent is a weight of gold.

Now, what is interesting is that it is from this word, "talent," that we get our English word, talent.^x So, while this is referring to an amount of money, it is appropriate to apply this parable to investing gifts and abilities in addition to money. And we will get to that in a moment.

So, this owner distributes talents. To one he gives 5 talents, to another 2, and then to the third servant, 1 talent. Now, we tend to look at this as unfair. "Poor guy! What's up with only getting 1 talent?!" But a couple of things that I want to make mention of here. First, the guy with 1 talent shouldn't be pitied. According to some scholars, 1 talent of gold would be equal to about 23 years' salary.^{xi} So, we aren't talking about chump change here.

But another thing we have to keep in view here is that the talents were distributed, quote, "according to the servant's ability." Obviously, the owner knew his servants. Because the ones entrusted with more, doubled what they were given, and the one hid it in the ground, he lacked ability to care for more.

The same is true for us. Some people are given great talent, ability and resources while others are given fewer. And we tend to compare what others have to what we have and think it not fair. But God knows us, and He gives according to what is best for us. We are not to be envious of those that have more nor are we to be prideful over those that have less. We are responsible for what God has given us. And that's a different perspective, isn't it?

So, we see the results of the investment. After a long time away, the first two servants were applauded and even rewarded for doubling their investment. The third servant had a misguided view of the master, he was afraid of him. So, he hid the talent in the ground. Now, we may think that odd, but hiding valuables in the ground was a common practice in the ancient world. There were no bank vaults of safe deposit boxes in those days. As a result, it was a way to protect precious jewels and coins.^{xii} But that servant was chided and even punished for wasting his investment. In fact, the master called him wicked and lazy, slothful.

How would you respond to an investor taking your 401k and doing nothing with it so that all you had was what you put into it? You'd fire that manager, wouldn't you? And that's exactly what happened in this parable. He was cast out.

That's the parable. Now, let's look at...

2) The Point.

What is the point in Jesus' parable here? Well, **we have been given gifts by God, and we are to invest those gifts in His Kingdom.** God expects us to be about Kingdom business.

Matthew, chapter 25, is a part of what is known as the Olivet Discourse. It comprises Jesus' teaching His disciples on the Mount of Olives. And the subject of the Olivet Discourse is focused on His second coming, His return, which is yet to occur. So, because this parable is a part of that discourse, the further point Jesus is making is that while we wait for His return, we should be about Kingdom business.

We are also to see Jesus as the master going on a long journey, and though His return is unknown, He is coming. This is to build anticipation but also the understanding that we will be held accountable for what we did in the time in which He is away.

We are to also see Jesus as the one that has gifted us. In fact, the one thing that each of the servants in our parable of study got right was that what was given to them didn't belong to them, it belonged to their master. The first two said, "You delivered to me..." And the only thing the third servant got right was when he said, "I hid YOUR talent. Here is what is YOURS."

The same is true for us. In addition to material resources given to us by God, we are also given spiritual giftings. Through a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually gifted for the purpose of edifying The Church and advancing The Kingdom.

The talents and resources we have, have been given to us by God. And we simply steward, manage, those gifts and abilities. We are to use what God gives us to glorify Him and advance His Kingdom on earth until Jesus returns. We are not to simply wait idly for Jesus to come again, wasting time. We are to be working for Christ and His Kingdom utilizing the resources He's given us.

And serving The Lord and leveraging our resources to do so may become increasingly more difficult as we operate in a world with growing opposition to the truths of the gospel. But this is our task. We are not to hoard what's been given us or bury it for safe keeping. We are to invest it in the eternal.

Another point of the parable is that we will be judged based on how we use what has been given to us. The first two servants were rewarded while the third servant demonstrated that he was not truly a servant of this man, but of himself. Beloved, we will give an account for what we did with the time and resources we've been given.

So, we've looked at the parable and the point. Now, let's turn to...

3) The Practice.

I want to make mention of two main points of application in light of this parable. I am confident that there are way more than that, but two I want to draw attention to this morning.

1) Leverage Opportunities you have.

I know this seems repetitive to what I have been saying. But I want to encourage you to focus your minds each and every day. In Matthew, chapter 9, Jesus was healing people and teaching in the villages. He was extremely busy. And in verse 36, the gospel tells us that Jesus stopped, and He was moved with compassion for people because He saw them as harassed and helpless. Then He points that out to His disciples. Jesus challenges them to see that the fields are ripe for harvest. The problem is that there are too few that take the time and leverage their resources to reap the harvest.

I think if we are honest, we fail to see the opportunities we have each and every day to leverage our gifts and abilities to advance the Kingdom of God. We are, in a way, way too concerned and focused on our little kingdom. That is evidenced in how we spend our time and resources. I'm not saying that we shouldn't do some of that. But I know we are not to do that at the expense of investing in The Kingdom of God.

We all have been given a talent. Most of us more than one. Our giftings, our influence, our money, our knowledge, our health, our strength, our time, our senses, our reason, our intellect, our memory, our affections, our privileges and our possessions. Are you beginning to see that by God's grace, you've been given more than one talent? My question is, for what purpose?

I am confident that this coming week, even today, you and I will be presented opportunities to invest our talents. We can waste the time, or we can leverage the opportunity for impact.

How will we invest our talent this week? You and I are responsible for the talents, the resources and abilities God has given us in this life. We are to use them for His glory and His Kingdom. And the more God gives us, the greater our responsibility.

I want you to see something in this parable. Look at the first two servants. They were both applauded and rewarded. But not for the amount they gained. They were rewarded for the amount they invested. They both invested all of what the master gave them and that resulted in a harvest. That's the point.

But what if the guy with 2 talents said, "Oh, I only have 2 talents. I don't have the ability nor the resources of that guy that has 5 talents. I better play it safer." He would have missed the point of the 2 talents!

You know, I could easily say, "I will never lead as many people to Jesus as Billy Graham. What's the point of me preaching?!" But Jesus isn't judging us on the return on investment, He's judging us on the investment made. But what if we invest in the Kingdom of God and we get nothing in return? I think we are rewarded still. We are to use what's been given us for Kingdom investment. The return is up to The Lord. Because when it came to the third servant, the master wasn't mad because he lost a profit, but because it wasted the opportunity.

You know this becomes very practical when it comes to church ministry, doesn't it? This summer, for example, we spent a crazy amount of money going on mission trips, sending kids to camps, and hosting our version of VBS called Fun Camp. And you know what, we saw The Lord work in and through our investment. Kids came to faith in Jesus. We baptized a couple last week and again one this week, and we have more in the hopper. And that's a result of kingdom investments. That's leveraging opportunity and resources for Kingdom advancement!

So, we practice this parable when we leverage opportunities we have. Secondly,

2) Increase your view of God.

One of the most striking things to me in this parable is what the third servant said to his master. It was completely different than the first two servants and it reveals his errant view of his master.

Look again at verse 24. *24He 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, ²⁵so **I was afraid**, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. To which the Master replied, 'You wicked and slothful servant! **You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'**"* It is very apparent that the third servant did not truly know his master. He accuses the master of being harsh and violent^{xiii}. We know this was not true because the first two servants knew the master to be joyous and they entered into the joy of the master.

The third servant's errant view of the master led to a wrong kind of fear. He was paralyzed by his fear. The first two servants were propelled by their fear. The third servant had a literal fear while the first two had a reverential fear. The third servant didn't know his master while the first two truly knew him. And that lack of knowledge cause the third servant to miss it completely. If he truly knew the master, he would have at least invested in an account that yielded some interest.

I want to mention two practical ways you and I can increase our view of The Master. One might be what you expect me to say while the other might be a surprise to you.

First, spend time with Him. Seems obvious, right? We get to know God when we spend time with Him in His Word, The Bible. It is through the pages of Scripture that God has revealed Himself. When we read it, even the times when we don't fully understand the passage, we get to know more about God, who He is and what He does. Increase your view of God by spending time with Him.

Secondly, risk something for the Kingdom and watch how God works. In other words, step out on faith, and you'll come to know and see how God works. Again, the issue in this parable is not the amount, but the risk. I believe God calls us to risk something for The Kingdom. To step out on faith.

I'm sure to the third servant, investing the talent seemed risky. But the Bible is full of people that risked something for The Kingdom of God. Esther risked being put to shame and kicked out of the palace when she went to the king and pleaded for the lives of her people. She put her own life at great risk.

Paul's entire life was one risk after another. He never knew where the next obstacle would come from, or whether he would live to see another day. But he came to know the power and provision of God because of the great risks he was willing to take for God's Kingdom.

The members of the early church risked for God's Kingdom. They faced persecution in an effort to silence them. But for them, the risk of NOT advancing the Kingdom far outweighed the risk they made.

When you and I step out of our comfort zones and trust God, we get to see Him and know Him in a much greater way. What are the ways in which God is asking you to step out? Is it a new ministry? Sharing Christ with a co-worker? Waiting on God's direction? Operating a business with integrity when shortcuts seem easier? Trusting God with your finances? Remember, God doesn't hold us accountable for the outcome, that's up to Him. But He will hold us accountable for what we did with what He entrusted to us.

CONCLUSION:

I read one commentator this week that said that we can see ourselves in these servants. The first two represents believers who have truly come to understand The Lord and yielded their lives to follow Jesus. The third servant represents the one who has knowledge of Jesus but isn't a true follower. The difference between the two is found in their actions. The first two entered into the joy of The Master. The third was cast out to outer darkness.

I think this parable is a call to reflection. Do you truly know Jesus, or do you know about Him? Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? Have you truly been born again?

The Bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the consequences of our sin has eternal implication. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." What we earn because of our sin is death. And apart from a relationship with Jesus we are still dead in our trespasses and sins, Ephesians says. But when we place our faith and trust in Jesus, that is when we not only acknowledge Him and allow Him to be the master of our lives, we are forgiven of our sin and enjoy a relationship with Jesus forever. The reason trusting Jesus is so vitally important is because He is the only one that atoned, paid for

our sins. Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

See our sin deserves death. And Jesus paid that price. The question is whether or not we have received Him as Lord of our lives. If you would like to trust Jesus as Lord today, or if you have questions about what that means, our elders will be here at the front following the service ready to visit with you about that.

Maybe your response is different. Maybe you have come to the realization that you are investing in the wrong things. Or maybe you haven't been investing what God has given you in His Kingdom. Maybe you need to just share that with God this morning and ask Him where He would have you take a risk for His Kingdom. Maybe there's a venture you feel God calling you to and you need prayer over that. Our elders would love to pray with you and over you this morning.

[PRAY]

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: David Platt, "Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Matthew," Holman: Brentwood, 2013; John MacArthur, "The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28," Moody Publishers: Chicago, 1989; David Guzik, "Enduring Word Commentary: Matthew 25 – Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Part 2)," published by Enduring Word Ministries, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-25/>; Mark A. Copeland, "The Parables of Jesus: The Talents," published by Executable Outlines, accessed online: https://executableoutlines.com/topical_series/parables-of-jesus/pa_17.html; Ray Fowler, "Preparing for Christ's Return," published by Ray Fowler.org, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/matthew/preparing-for-christs-return/>; J.D. Greear, "Staying Faith: Risk," sermon preached at Summit Church, November 24, 2013, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/risk-matthew-2514-30>; Dave Row, "Matthew 25:14-20," message taught at Calvary Albuquerque, June 11, 2003, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/305/sermon/4335>.

ⁱⁱ <https://vision.org.au/faith/elisabeth-elliott-exhibit/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "How Do Americans Spend Their Time?," article published by Deputy, June 28, 2023, accessed online: <https://www.deputy.com/blog/how-americans-spend-their-time>.

^{iv} Josef Kutka, "How Much Time do you Actually Waste in a Day?," article published November 22, 2021, by MeetFox, accessed online: <https://meetfox.com/en/blog/how-much-time-do-you-actually-waste-in-a-day>.

^v "How Much Time do American Workers Waste Each Work Day?," article published by Zippia, June 28, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.zippia.com/answers/how-much-time-do-american-workers-waste-each-day-at-work/>.

^{vi} Quote taken from an illustration published by Illustration Ideas, accessed online: <https://illustrationideas.bible/a-wasted-life/>.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} MacArthur, page 99.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Enduring Word, Matthew 25.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} MacArthur, page 101.

^{xiii} Strong's Concordance, 4642, skléros.