

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

Matthew 25: 14-30 *Settling Accounts*

If you were to ask, "What is the most practical parable Jesus ever told? What parable applies more to how we live our lives today, and how God acts and reacts to us, and how we act and react to Him?" I think it would probably be the parable that we read today. It's a very familiar parable. Jesus said that a master was getting ready to take a long journey. So, he called in his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. Then he left. And then, after a long period of time, he returned. And when he came back from his journey he called for an accounting, and the servants who had invested wisely, he rewarded. And the one who did not invest is condemned. That's the parable.

So, it is practical. It applies to our lives because it shows how God treats us, how He reacts to us, and how we oftentimes treat His blessings.

It starts with the master calling in his servants. He says to them, "I am going to entrust you with my wealth." So, he gives five talents to one, two talents to another, and one talent to another. Now if you are trying to figure out how much wealth he entrusted to them, you need to realize that a "talent" represented 75 lbs. of whatever type of precious metal was being distributed. He is the master. They are his servants. He owns everything. They own nothing. They depend upon him. Now he has called them in and said, "I have been watching you. I have studied you. I have decided to trust you in this matter. Now I don't know how many servants he had. Maybe he had dozens. But out of all of them he selected these three. He said, "I am going away, and I entrust you with my wealth. You take care of it."

I think we can draw some parallels. You see, the master represents God, who has everything. God, who is the giver of life. God, who gives us air to breathe. God, who gives us the ability to see and think and plan and make decisions. And we are the servants. Every day we depend upon His blessings. We are the servants, and God distributes His wealth among us.

Now it might seem a wee bit odd that He didn't give the servants the same amount. He gave 5 to one and 2 to another and 1 to another. We may think that is not fair. But then we realize that this master knows His servants. So, He gives to each of them, vs. 15 tells us, "according to his ability."

If He had given only 1-talent to the 5-talent man, it would not have been good use of his abilities. If He had given 5 talents to the 1-talent man, the 1-talent man would never have been able to handle them. But because the master knew His servants, He gave each one what He knew that one could handle, and then He left.

That's the way God works, isn't it? God gives, and then He leaves us alone. He doesn't coerce us. He gives, and then He leaves it in our hands.

He does open doors of opportunity. He gives us visions and dreams. He allows us to see just a little bit of what might be. But then He waits for us to use what He has given, and to see if we will be faithful with it.

The master returns. When He came back, the 5-talent man came in and said, "Master, you entrusted me with 5 talents. See, I have gained 5 more." 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."

Then the two-talent man came in and said, "Master, you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more." 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." (Matthew 25:22-23) Then the 1-talent man came in. He said, "Master, I knew that you are a hard man... So, I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

The master called him a "wicked, lazy servant," and in vs. 30 says, "Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It's a tough parable, isn't it? It bothers us, because I think that more of us would identify with this 1-talent man than with the 5-talent or 2-talent men.

The 1-talent man was just an ordinary person, a lot like us.

He did something that wasn't all that smart. But he didn't steal it or embezzle it. He just didn't invest it. Then when the master returned, he presented it back to Him just the way that he had received it.

Let's concentrate on this 1-talent man for a few moments. Why did he do what he did? I think he may have done what he did because he felt inferior.

When you're rubbing shoulders with 5-talent and 2-talent people, and you watch them rubbing shoulders with other 5-talent and 2-talent people, and then you look at yourself, it is easy to begin to feel inferior. When you see people doing things with grace and ease, and you have to struggle just to do those things, it's easy to identify yourself as a 1-talent person.

Perhaps there was nothing really special about him. He didn't stand out in the crowd. He was an average person, just like us. So, he felt inferior.

Secondly, Jesus tells us the man was afraid. He was afraid because he had analysed the master as being a hard master. You see, he didn't understand the master. God has expectations, no question about that. But God is not hard. He is gentle and understanding and forgiving and merciful. The man didn't understand the master. Therefore, he was afraid, and buried his talent in the ground.

Here's some hypothetical questions. "What if the 5-talent man had buried his 5 talents in the ground?" You know the answer. They would have all been taken away from him, and he would have been considered "wicked, lazy, worthless," just like the 1-talent man.

Or what if the 1-talent man had invested his 1 talent? You know the answer.

When the master returned, he would have been given more talents. He would have been considered a faithful servant, too.

Let me ask another hypothetical question. "What if the 1-talent man had invested his talent and lost it?" But that idea isn't even suggested. Why? Because God's Word, never commands us to be successful.

You won't find a place in the Bible where God says, "If you try and fail, I will condemn you." God's Word commands only faithfulness. "Be faithful" and God will provide the increase.

What do you do when God has entrusted you with 5 talents? You invest it in His Kingdom.

If you are faithful in investing the talents that He has given you, He will entrust you with more. If you bury them, you will lose even that which you once had.

You don't lose talents by investing them. You lose talents by burying them. When you invest them for Him, God will always honour the investment.

There are thousands of churches across our land that at one time were 5 talent churches. But they buried their talents and now they are empty shells.

There are thousands of Christians who reached a level of maturity in their Christian faith and then became self-satisfied and complacent.

They decided they didn't need to grow anymore, or pray anymore, or study anymore. And they started dying spiritually because they buried their talents.

The principle never changes. The message of the parable has not changed. God is still the master. Where do our talents come from? They came from God. They are His. So, He says, "Invest what I have given you and see what will happen."

So, each of us listening to this today, have decisions to make. If you are already a Christian, maybe you have levelled off in your Christian life. Your prayer life has dwindled. You aren't as committed as you once were. Perhaps for good reason such as health etc. That's not what I'm talking about here. It's if you can do something and aren't - hoping that someone else will step in instead of you, when you're perfectly able to and in truth, have the time to do it. Perhaps you aren't sharing your faith with others. You are burying your talent. You've taken your foot off the gas a wee bit.

For those who are not yet Christians, please realize that you have been given talents, too. God doesn't leave anybody out. Everybody gets something, and He waits to see what you will do.

What are you good at? You won't know until you try. If you are listening today and Jesus Christ is not your Saviour, then He waits to see what you will do with the little seeds of faith that have been planted in your life.

Will you invest them so that more faith might come? Or will you keep them in a box or sack? The principles have never changed. They are always the same. God waits to see what we will do with what He has given us.

Amen.