

Matthew 25:14-30 ¹⁴ " For *the kingdom of heaven* is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ "And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. ¹⁸ "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' ²¹ "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' ²² "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' ²³ "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' ²⁴ "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.' ²⁶ "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. ²⁹ 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Lord has given to all of us talents. You know that the word "talent" was originally a form of money. Actually it was originally a measure of weight, which then becomes the word for a certain coin, which then because of this parable came to mean a skill.

But the point is that when Jesus uses it in the parable it meant a coin, and yet we almost never think of money in connection with this parable. When we think of talents we think of singing, or teaching, or science, or math.

Money, however, is one of the things the Lord gives to us and expects us to use wisely in His service. Paul actually lists wealth as one of the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12:8.

"he who gives, with liberality;"

Think about what that means. Paul is saying, some have been given for example the gift to teach and they should use that gift to teach the word of God. While some have been given wealth, and that is from the Lord. And it isn't because he favors this person or disdains that one. It's because this man can serve

the church with his teaching or singing, and this one can support the church with his wealth. All serve according to the gifts that are given to them.

But the bigger point is that the Lord gives gifts and abilities to each of us, as he gave to these three men. And the Lord knows what He is doing. He gives to one much and another little because he knows who is capable of what, after all He is the one who created us.

And here is an important point, a little bit of a tangent but something we all need to hear. The Lord gives to each of us different talents so that we might work together and where one is lacking we might help. But instead we more often use our talents to belittle and antagonize one another. One is neat and orderly and likes things organized this is a talent from the Lord. Another is focused on this or that task and tends to leave a mess. One of these is not better than the other. One of these is not sinful and the other good. But each has a different focus and talent and if they serve one another in love they compliment and accomplish far more. Or one is good at sports and one is good at math, both are gifts from the Lord, but we always have to try and prove that our gift is the better gift.

This is especially true in a marriage, which is the one place where people should be the best at learning to complement one another, but is often the place where the competition is the fiercest.

How sad it is that the Lord gives us these gifts in Love to share with one another, but we use them in sinful selfishness to promote ourselves over one another.

The Single Talent is Buried

So the Lord gives, to some much and to some little. And some delight in their gifts and use them to server others and the gifts they are given increase and double in amount. But one does not use his gift but instead buries it in the sand.

What are we to think when it is the single talent man who buries his gift?

Well most likely the Lord is trying to make sure we apply the lesson to ourselves. Just as last week it's not us versus them, but a warning for me.

This parable isn't for those with great and many talents. It's not for Martin Luther or Paul Gerhardt. If it were the one with many talents, we would be tempted to think, oh yeah they were given much but did little. But I have very little I can't be held to that same standard. And yet that is exactly the attitude that Jesus is trying to warn us against.

Most of us would put ourselves in that category of those who have been given smaller responsibilities. None of us are Bach or Pathagoras.

But listen to the excuse of the one with one talent, "I was afraid . . . Look here you have what is yours"

What he is really saying is exactly what we would be tempted to say if the parable were about the ones with many talents. "I was afraid because I don't know how to make more money with this one coin. I was afraid because I don't have the many talents of the other two."

To say such a thing to the Lord is to tell Him that He doesn't know what He is doing. "You were wrong to give me this talent. You were wrong to put me in charge of this. I can't handle it. So I'm just going to hide in the sand."

But the Lord who created us all, does know what He is doing. He gave you what He knew you could handle. To say that you can't handle the tasks God has set in front of you is to say that you don't trust him to know what He is doing. It is to live your life in fear instead of faith.

The Sunday school kids next week are going to have the story of David and Goliath. There we have the perfect example of this. God had made Saul king over his people, and had given him the task to keep his people safe. So when Goliath came forth and challenged the people of God, a faith-filled king would have gone in confidence to meet him. But Saul hid in fear, certainly that he was unable to accomplish the task God had given him.

"God does not give us more than we can handle." You yes even you, the Lord has given a talent and a purpose, and He calls you to leave the excuses behind, and go forward in faith not in fear.

A Salvation of Faith, not works

This is why the one with one talent is condemned. Not because he doesn't produce enough. The Lord doesn't have a quota board and you have to produce this much or you don't make the cut.

But as the Lord says in the parable, he is condemned by his own words, for he knew that the fruit was of his master. Knowing that His master never wasted money, he should have realized that it wasn't a waste for his master to give him a talent. But he didn't have enough faith to trust the Lord.

Many people might see in this parable an example of salvation by works. But as we have seen it is really still all about faith. Yes the Lord points to the works but only as an evidence of faith, but it's the faith that makes the difference not the works.

Again notice what He says about the one talent servant. "You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed." Notice it's all about Jesus, "you knew that I . . ."

This man is confronted with the law. He knows that he has done wrong and he is afraid. He tries to make an excuse for his sin. We are also confronted by the law and our sin. We are the man with the one

talent. We are confronted by the Law and our sin. Unlike him we don't have to make excuses. We know that we have sinned but we don't have to fear because we know that He died for our sins.

We know that Jesus will give the increase. Therefore we go forth in faith and not fear.

We know that the Lord will give us salvation. Therefore we don't make excuses for our sin, as this man did, but we acknowledge our sin and live in repentance.

We might not produce 10 or 5 more talents, but we do have what the Lord has given to us , and if we trust Him we can move mountains, what is more we will enter into His rest.