

Parable of the Talents



Matthew 25:14-30

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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 So 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.’

V14-15 – What aspect of the kingdom of heaven does this parable describe?

The rewards for being a faithful servant and the loss of everything for not bearing fruit for our master.

Why did the man traveling to a far country give different amounts of goods to his servants?

They had different abilities. The ones who had greater abilities received more resources over which to be a steward.

Was it fair that some servants got more than others?

Yes, God determines what is fair, not man.

Isaiah 55:9 – *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways*

What does this passage have to say about socialism?

It has a lot to say against socialism: good servants are rewarded for their diligent work; better servants are rewarded with more (merit-based); lazy servants are punished.

Who does the man going to a far country represent?

It is the Lord who went to heaven to prepare a place for His Bride.

Who are the servants?

Us. Everyone who names Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. (So, it is both true and professing believers.)

V16-18 – What did the servants do with what their Lord gave them to manage?

- The ones with 5 & 2 talents traded (invested) them and doubled their value.
- The one with one talent did nothing but hide his Lord's money so as not to lose it.

How does trading result in a gain?

Some think this has to involve luck... buying low and selling high though there is skill involved in doing that. But there is a more sure way to invest for a gain... buying raw materials and applying labor to add value and sell for a gain. That is how capitalism works... the economic system that has lifted more people out of poverty than any other.

V19 – What happened when the Lord returned?

The Lord returned and settled accounts with His servants. There will be an accounting for how we spent our lives.

V20-23 – What did the 5-talent and 2-talent servants get to report at their performance review?

That they had doubled what the Lord had given them to manage.

What was the Lord's response to these reports?

- Well done, good and faithful servant – the Lord complemented them and acknowledged their goodness and faithfulness
- you were faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things – he announced their reward that they would be getting more responsibility
- Enter into the joy of your lord – their future would share the joy of the Lord for what they accomplished

A similar parable is the Parable of the Minas, Luke 19:11-27 where the servants are each given the same amount to invest. The two faithful servants multiplied the original amount varying degrees and were rewarded with stewardship ruling over cities in the nobleman's realm (greater responsibility).

V24-25 – What did the one-talent servant report?

He reported that he feared he could meet his master's expectations so he buried what the Lord gave him to invest and was happy to return what was His.

What does it mean that the Lord reaps where He had not sown, and gathered where He had not scattered seed?

God is in the miracle business and He receives fruit from the most unlikely places.

Why might the Lord reaping where He had not sown and gather where He had not scattered seed caused the one-talent servant to fear losing what the Lord gave him?

- He could not measure up to the Lord's standards.
- He thought his own ability would fall short.
- He thought just returning what the Lord gave him was enough... but this warning comes to mind:
Luke 17:33 – Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

A salvation-by-works mentality comes to mind here... the one-talent servant thought he was responsible for his own salvation not counting on the Lord's help.

What is more risky, trusting in the Lord for salvation or in yourself?

- Everyone wants to be in control of their own soul so while it appears to be risky to trust in One outside yourself, this is actually the least risky.
- While the one-talent servant appeared to be risk-averse, he was taking the greater risk not trusting in the Lord and acting in obedience to Him.

V26 – What was the Lord's response to the report from the one-talent servant?

The Lord called him wicked and lazy because he didn't obey Him.

How should a correct view of the Lord's reaping and sowing have made a difference here?

- God does all the heavy-lifting. Our role is to simply obey and He will bear the fruit through us. This should take all the pressure off us.
- Thinking it is all on us will keep us from following through on what God has called us to do.

V27 – What did Jesus say the fearful one-talent servant should have done?

- Put the talent in the bank to generate interest. If he wasn't going to use the talent to work for the Master, at least give it to someone else so that they could.
- The act of obedience here would have been doing something to produce a gain.

- It's not about numbers... it doesn't matter how much of a gain you produce; what matters is that you are working toward a gain.

V28-29 – Why did Jesus give his talent to the one with ten talents?

- The one with ten talents had proven his capacity to produce a gain for the Master.
- Everything is God's and He will bless those who are faithful to Him and take away what the unfaithful have.

Is the connection between faithfulness and blessing a prosperity gospel teaching?

- No; prosperity gospel expects the faith and blessing connection in the here and now. The accounts may not be settled until our ultimate performance review in eternity.
- There are however principles in Scripture that if we faithfully apply them to our lives, it does help us have prosperity in the here and now.

V30 – What became of the one-talent servant?

- Jesus called him an unprofitable servant and banished him from His kingdom.
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth is a euphemism for the eternal punishment of hell.

So What? What are the lessons-learned from this parable that we should apply to our own lives?

- God has blessed us; therefore, those who are grateful will do something to bless Him.
- God has given all of us talents, abilities, & spiritual gifts so we should use them (I love the pun with "talents" here)
- Expect God to help us bear fruit even when it looks impossible
- It's not about the numbers, all we will be held accountable for is act in obedience.
- If we faithfully serve God in the here & now, we can look forward to rewards when the Lord returns.
- Our rewards will be greater responsibility (capacity to participate in what the Lord is doing).