

Valley Bible Church – Parables of Jesus

What is God Like? He expects fruitful service.

The Entrusted Talents and Pounds

(Talents: Matthew 25:14-31; Pounds: Luke 19:11-27)

Introduction:

We have been studying the "Stories that Jesus Told" for six weeks. Hopefully we have put into practice Edmond Floods "Purpose Statement" for the Parables:

"The purpose of a Parable is not to entertain or inform but to change a person's attitude: the way he sees things, and particularly, the way he sees himself."

We have, I think, seen some things differently.

We have, I hope, seen ourselves differently, and

We have, I am sure, seen God in a more complete way and that knowledge should lead us to certain responses:

God is a:

Therefore we should:

Seeker

Return/Seek

Forgiver

Forgive

Forgetter

Forget/Rejoice

Restorer

Restore

Provider

Pray

Owner

Bear Fruit

Patient One

Thankfully Respond

Now we see God as the giver. We need to be good stewards.

The Parables of the talents and the Pounds have many similarities and the main point is the same so we will consider them together:

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Talents:

Who: Jesus to disciples

What: Answering questions and

Where: The Mount of Olives (C 34)

When: Just prophesied Temple's

Why: We know not the hour of the Lord's return and so we must be faithful stewards

Pounds:

Who: Jesus to Zaccheus (others listen)

What: Answering questions and describing the Kingdom describing the Kingdom

Where: Zaccheus' house for dinner

When: Traveling through Jerico, He destruction and His death; picked Zaccheus out of a tree

Why: We know not the hour of the Lord's return and so we must be faithful stewards

Similarities:

1. A rich man went into a far country.
2. He gave his servants money to manage while he was gone.
3. On returning he ask for an accounting of their stewardship.
4. He expected dividends from his investment.
5. He commends the faithful servants and rewards them.
6. He condemns the unfaithful and punishes him.

The Story of the Talents: (Read Matthew 25:4-31)

The Characters

A. Superior

An obviously rich man is about to go on a trip (Luke V 12—"looking for a Kingdom) and has two choices:

He can put his money in the bank.

Rome had a substantial banking system that they borrowed from the Phoenicians. It was similar to our banks today and paid a very modest interest on savings accounts.

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He can give some of his money and a limited power of attorney to some of his slaves. There is a certain risk involved since they might lose it or steal it and run away.

B. Slaves

Slavery was common in the Roman Empire.

Slavery was wide spread in the Roman Empire with one third to one half of its 120 million people in a slave or servant relationship. It was so prevalent that it became the normal way of life, especially in the major cities. It totally eclipsed free (or paid) labor, becoming the primary "energy source" in the Greco-Roman world and a vital part of its economy.

Aside on slavery in the Roman Empire:

Slavery was totally unrelated to race and the supply of slaves came from a number of sources:

- 1) People captured by the Roman army were either "settled" or sold.
- 2) Abandoned children were "rescued," raised, and sold by professional slave-owner/sellers.
- 3) Children born into slave families belonged to their parent's owners.
- 4) People were sometimes sold by the courts, or sold themselves into slavery to settle debts that could not be paid.
- 5) Some actually bonded themselves to masters to get a specific job.

All these factors meant that being a slave could be very bad or very good.

The bad was very bad:

- 1) Slaves were not legally considered persons, but were, as Aristotle put it, "human tools" to be owned and used much as animals were.
- 2) Since they were "property" rather than "people" they could be bought, sold, traded, exchanged, inherited, and seized for payment of debts.
- 3) Under Roman law, masters had the ultimate right of punishment, including the power of life and death, over their slaves. This meant abuse and brutality were common and death was frequent.
- 4) Run-away slaves were subject to arrest, torture, and death.

The good distinguished it from much ancient and modern slavery:

- 1) Slaves were valuable property. A productive slave could bring a price that was equal to nine times a years wage of a freeman laborer.
- 2) Slaves were employed in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining, entertainment, clerical, government, and household jobs.

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Many were trained in the trade or profession of their master, and so they often became: teachers, librarians, musicians, artists, accountants, cooks, and even doctors or stewards who controlled all of their masters business and personal wealth. (Parables)

3) Many owners realized that contented and educated slaves were more valuable and productive so they had them educated, allowed them to marry and have families, meet in social groups, and even allowed some to have personal money and their own property.

Since slaves had their food and housing supplied, they were often better off than free men who were uneducated, lived in poverty, paid exorbitant taxes, and had to serve in the military.

4) Slaves were often given or able to buy freedom after a prescribed period of service and most were free upon the death of their masters.

These then, were probably bond slaves.

Trusted and loyal stewards who had done other business for the master from time to time. If they are faithful they will be rewarded.

C. Stewardship

The concept of stewardship was well known.

The master owned everything and anything he gave to the slave was for him to faithfully use with the well being of his master in mind.

The master knew his slaves very well.

Each is given an amount of money according to their ability (V 15) perhaps referring to their training, natural talents, vision, length of service, etc.

The Charge

A. Responsibility

The NASV translates the Greek words in Luke 19:13 very well when it renders them "*do business with this.*" They are not to sit and guard it; they are to use it to benefit their master.

Even a weak administrator gets his chance. I remember someone saying, "God gives every man the capital to do the work he wants done by him." Another famous saying is, "God does not attempt to put a lake in a bucket."

B. Response

In the Luke passage each slave received one mina, over three month wages, probable about twenty dollars, but the principles of stewardship are the same.

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Let's look at the response of each man to the challenge:

The five "talent" man.

This man received possibly as much as 5000 dollars to steward. He looked the market, checked the weather, investigated the price of gold, silver, commodities, observed caravans from Damascus, troop movements, and world events.

Then he invests carefully with some risks and profits 100%.

He's the one I'd make my permanent broker.

The two "talent" man.

He received his 2000 dollars and perhaps with less natural ability, less education, training, and finesse he poured his money and efforts into the master's farms and shops. He pushed the workers and animals to work longer hours while improving the irrigation system. He stocked less slow moving items and more items in demand and creates an advertising campaign.

Through hard word, long hours, perseverance, and street smarts he also increases his investments by 100%

The one "talent" man.

He is totally different. Perhaps he is timid, or lazy, or as the text seems to indicate afraid to risk his master's money.

He buries his 1000 dollars, breaks even, no loss but no gain

C. Reckoning

The first man is praised and given even more responsibility with his master's possessions as a reward and A BONUS,

"enter into the joy of your master." It seems to indicate that he became a free member of the master's household.

The second man received the same response.

The third man not only was rebuked but any position of trust was taken away and he was punished. It was, according to his master, bad that he lacked faith in himself and his ability to "do business" but worse that he lacked faith in the justice and mercy of his master. In fact, he blamed his master. *"I knew you were a hard man and I was afraid so I hid the money."*

Fear had caused him to bury the money and kept him from doing even the basic business thing he how to do, namely, put the money in the bank for minimal interest.

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The Challenge

The basic lesson is not hard to grasp: God has given every man gifts to use as a stewards of His treasure, use them or lose them.

A. Responsibility

What do the talents and pounds represent?

It is interesting to note that our English word "talents" which means natural, God given endowments comes from the same root word.

Biblically it represents whatever God has entrusted to us, abilities, possessions, training, opportunities, etc. God does not give us good things on loan to hoard but as a stewardship to invest in His kingdom.

Talent then is not something we possess, but something God possesses and allows us to use as faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

Stewardship indicates responsibility.

In his book, _____, _____ said,

Every man is a servant, a steward of God, holding in trust His treasures. Everything is His (God's)—and we are to use what He gives us to spread his kingdom, and advance His interests. He has given strength, or beauty, or artistic ability, or business acumen. Some sow, some labor, some dream, some build. The gifts of the Spirit are even more varied, far richer. And there is no one who has not received from the wealth of God."

This is why gifted people in ministry often lose their effectiveness, why pastors become insurance salesmen. If we allow sin, our thought lives, personal interests, laziness or pride to keep us from our stewardship, we end up doing "busy work" as opposed to "doing business."

It's also a little like taxes: The more you make, the more you owe: More talent, more responsibility; More light, more responsibility; More maturity, more responsibility.

Luke 16:10-12, *"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous in much. If therefore you have been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"*

B. Risk

"Doing business involves risks.

The master knew the risks involved in "doing business" and expected his slaves to take them and invest anyway.

The advantage of investing our talents for God's kingdom is that we are even allowed to fail, just as long as we are faithfully working.

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God said, "You admire the Pharisees as models of religious people, look again, they hoard, you need to invest."

What is success anyway? Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs in his career and that record was broken. What Ruth record has not been broken? He struck out 1330 times. Which do we remember?

Risk can be painful. We seem to lose so often and it hurts.

A sick old missionary returned from years of service on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt. There was, of course, a big brass band and a crowd of cheering people to greet the President, but not one to greet the missionary. He turned to his wife and said, "It's not fair, I give my life to serve God and that tin horn politician gets all the glory." His wise wife replied, "I'm going to go out, you better talk to God about that." When he bowed before his Lord, God spoke quietly to his heart, "You're not home yet."

C. Results

Risk brings rewards

God wants us to be AMBITIOUS. That word comes from a Latin verb that means get around or be very active. Our rewards are not for our success, our rewards are for our faithfulness. A crown (2 Tim. 4:7-8); a throne (Rev. 3:21); a kingdom (Matt. 25:31); all for faithful persevering service.

The rewards are vast.

There are not only great rewards as seen above, but there is also the increased responsibility for the servant which only lead to more rewards, but above all, there is great gain for the Lord and His kingdom.

Quote from a college diary of Jim Elliot, martyred by the Auca Indians in South America,

*"None is so wise as he who gives up what he cannot keep
to gain what he cannot lose."*