

Session 1:2 – The Gifted Self

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:14-30 (New International Version)

The Parable of the Talents

14"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15To one he gave five talents^[a] of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

21"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. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22"The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

23"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. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

28" 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Footnotes:

A talent was worth more than a thousand dollars.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Each servant was entrusted with different amounts to begin with. Did it matter how much each received? What does this imply about the man who was given but one? Discuss its implications for us.
2. How do you understand the word "entrusted"? What kinds of things have God entrusted to us?
3. What would have happened if one of the servants who invested the money made a loss rather than a gain? The servants were praised for their faithfulness rather than their gain. What does this suggest?
4. Why do people have different abilities in a certain area? What stops people from using their gifts and abilities like the man who buried the treasure?
5. And what does God expect us to increase? How can you bring about 'abundance' through your gifts and talents? How do you increase your ability? How can you help others recognize and use their gifts?

REFLECTION

A talent of gold is not a trivial amount. In today's market it's worth about \$300,000. The master wisely diverged his investments in proportion to the proven ability of his investors. He naturally gave less to the one proven to be less capable. However their capability was no doubt also a function of their diligence and faithfulness to act responsibly.

In the Christian life, ability is developed through application. Even granted that one is given spiritual gifts, the effectiveness of such often grows as one applies them responsibly. The lazy non-application oriented Christians thus tend to not have much ability. Rather they tend to go to church and pay the pastor to do their job for them. They even use their lack of ability as an excuse for not serving.

The lazy servant called his boss "Master", but then insulted him claiming he stole what he didn't produce. In other words, the servant felt that if he invested the talent, he should get the increase and not the Master. But since he figured he wasn't going to get anything out of it, he didn't work to invest it, not even a little. The bankers may be likened to investing your resources in other people's ministry. Often institutional churches give the impression that this is the only option of ministry for the lay-Christian.

There are many Christians with the attitude, "I'll serve Christ, but only if I get something out of it." And many will not do Christian ministry unless they get paid for it. And they treat the resources God has provided them as their own. Many call Jesus Lord, but how many treat him as if He is Lord?

In the end, those who submitted to their master, acting responsibly with the resources he provided, were greatly rewarded, while the lazy one was condemned. Don't be deceived. One cannot be saved by receiving Christ as Savior only, but must also accept him as Lord. And not just in word, but in deed. For our deeds reveal our true convictions.

The resource was also taken from the lazy servant and given to the one who proved most able and responsible. And that's the way it should be - God giving more responsibility to those who prove more responsible.