

CORE SEMINAR

Spring 2024

The Parables of Jesus

Course 6: The Parable of the Talents | Matthew 24:45-51 | 25:14-30

ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

INTRODUCTION

We are studying the **Parable of the Talents** *out of context* – I know... that’s against the rules – but let me explain. In **Matthew 21**, we see Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This is the beginning of His march to the Cross – and we all know what happens at the end of that week. But, during the week He is in Jerusalem, He continues to teach His disciples.

In **Matthew 24:3**, we are provided a scene where Jesus teaching is teaching His disciples. In **verse 3**, they ask Him to reveal the **“signs of Your coming and of the end of the age.”** Basically, You are telling us that You’re leaving – SO, let us know when You are coming back. At the end of **Matthew 24**, Jesus basically tells them that, **“no one knows the day or the hour,”** that He is coming back – but they needed to be ready!

He then gives us **Matthew 24:36-44** [**Have someone in your group read Matthew 24:36-44**]. So, yeah, those who call Him Master should be ready for His return. The parable we are studying this week, Parable of the Talents, actually falls in line better [*with our purposes*] with **Matthew 24:36-44** [*the actual context of the two parables*].

The parable we are studying this week is the **Parable of the Talents**. The parable Jesus tells first – **the Parable of the Ten Virgins** – we will discuss next week. Both of these parables are meant to teach us to live out our lives with a sense of **urgency** at His imminent return.

Both parables [*this week’s and next week*] instruct Christian’s to have an **internal** preparedness. Based on this we should ask ourselves two questions:

1. Is our **heart/soul** ready to see Jesus?
2. And, is there any **urgency** and **joy** in the way we live our lives for God?

QUOTE: Whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own; we are but stewards of them, and must give account to our Lord, whose goods they are. – Matthew Henry

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:14-15

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

Ok – remember the context Jesus is about to leave this world and He is teaching His disciples – in **verse 14**, He states there’s a **“man going on a journey,”** and this man, **“called his servants and entrusted to them his property.”**

Context part deux - this was not a strange idea for the disciples to hear. Often times, a man’s servants were left with their master’s possessions and were often given great responsibility. This was often the safest and smartest thing a man could do with his money. ¹

Then Jesus provides a breakdown of how the master divided his property out among three servants. To the first, he gave five talents. To the second, he gave two talents. And to the last servant, he gave one talent.

We won’t do math like we did a few weeks ago in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. But if you remember, a talent was a rough measure of money – roughly weighing 75 lbs or 6000 denarii.

- First servant given 375 lbs of money/ 30,000 denarii
- Second servant given 150 lbs of money/ 12,000 denarii
- And, third servant given 75 lbs of money/ 6,000 denarii

And I believe that it is appropriate to see these **talents** as life resources — such as time, money, abilities, service and leadership – all things we see as needs and parts of the local church.

And, Jesus states that each of these servants were given the stated amounts **“according to his ability.”** We don’t see that there was an argument that one servant received more/ less than the other. It’s almost assumed that each received what they **deserved.**

This section ends simply with the master “went away.”

¹ David Guzik. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/matthew/matthew-25.cfm

QUESTIONS: How does this parable represent the kingdom of heaven?

Why do you think the master left the talents with his servants?

Why did the master in this parable give out different talent “amounts” to his servants? [verse 15]

- **What’s the significance in every servant received something?**

If you have ever struggled with what you have been gifted with compared to others, how can this parable help you gain a better perspective on this issue?

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:16-18

¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

Ok – so the master has “went away.”

Now that he has gone, Jesus tells us what each servant did with what they have been given. And with each servant, we see that each man did with the talents as they saw fit.

The first servant “went at once and traded” his talents and he doubled his money.

- He has gone from 375 lbs of money/ 30,000 denarii
- To, 750 lbs of money/ 60,000 denarii.

By going “at once,” the actions of the first servant show no delay. He knows exactly what he should be doing. He felt the weight of the responsibility given to him and obviously knew where to go. He went and “traded with them.” For this servant, knowing where to go is almost as important as the urgency he left with. By taking this action, he was able to be faithful in what he was given.

With the second servant, Jesus tells us that he “made two talents more.” He doesn’t say how he did it or where he went, only that he was able to double what was given to him. But maybe He didn’t have to provide the details. When Jesus starts **verse 17**, with “So also,” what the Greek reveals is that He can also be saying, “in like manner.” Meaning, the second servant, in like manner to the first, made two talents more.

- He has gone from 150 lbs of money/ 12,000 denarii
- To, 300 lbs of money/ 24,000 denarii

We can say many good things about the work of the first two servants:

- They did their work **promptly**.
- They did their work with **success**.
- They were *ready* to give an **account** to their master.

The third servant also showed action. He took what he was given – “**went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.**”

- He was given 75 lbs of money/ 6,000 denarii
- And he still has 75 lbs of money/ 6,000 denarii

He did not lose his master's money and he did not make profit on his master's money. He did almost nothing with his master's money. Instead of going to “them,” and possibly making more – he simply “went” away from everyone and hid the talent. In fact, there's a good chance, his talent never left the estate. His talent just stayed on site – buried in darkness – and never saw the light of day.

QUESTIONS: What characteristics are revealed about the first 2 servants?

- What about the 3rd servant?

What did the third servant do with their talent?

- What is Jesus trying to teach us about this servant?
- What are some ways that we “hide” our talents today?

In the church today, is the church made up more of the first 2 servants or the 3rd servant? Explain your answer.

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:19-23

¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

The stage is set. We know the actors [*master and 3 servants*]. We know what they were given [*won't go over this again*] and what they did with what they were given [*nor this*]. We know that most of the action of this parable was completed while the master was away.

Jesus tells us in **verse 19** that the master returned after being away for **“a long time.”** Being gone so long, you could also think that there was a possibility that the servants would not be held accountable. But, when he returned, they knew it was time to settle all the accounts.

The **first servant** came forward – giving 10 talents total back to the master. The master was pleased and stated, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”**

The **second servant** came forward – giving 4 talents total back to the master. The master was pleased and again stated, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”**

For both the first and second servant, we read that the reward was the **same** – despite the fact that they were initially given different amounts based on their “ability.” They were asked to “enter into the joy of the master,” and each received the same reward. “Entering the joy of the master” seems to imply that this is a place of high **reward**. Something that only the master can invite them to and a place only the master has **access**.

QUESTIONS: In verse 19, what is the significance about the phrase “Now after a long time...”?

Notice that the first two servants were not rewarded according to who had the largest amount of talents, but according to their faithfulness of what they were given. What does this teach us about how we are created?

- **What does this teach us about how God will judge each person?**
- **How can it speak to a person who is a missionary in an “unreached area” or a person holds babies in a nursery?**

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:24-25

²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’

Now, number 3 steps up to give an account. He doesn't cower or step back – in fact, his actions are very similar to the first 2 servants. Jesus tells us that he “came forward,” and he gave a short speech on what he did with the talent he was given.

In regards to this passage, Charles Spurgeon states this:

Remember, my hearer, that in the day of judgment thy account must be personal; God will not ask you what your church did — he will ask you what you did yourself.²

In his actions and in his speech, the third servant really shows an unawareness or **ignorance** compared to the first 2 servants.

- He didn't seem to really **know** the master. Although the master was initially generous to the servant, the servant called the master a, “**a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed.**” Because he did not know the master, he was more “afraid” of the master than obedient.
- And, he obviously didn't know what to do with the **talent**. So, he simply just gave the talent back to the master.

QUESTIONS: In what way did the third servant attack his master's character?

- **Why would he have done that?**

Why do you think so many waste the “talents” that they have been given?

A.W. Tozer is known for saying “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

- **What comes into your mind when you think about God?**
- **How is this represented in the way you live your life?**

Now let's see the master's response.

Have someone in your group read Matthew 25:26-30

²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But

² David Guzik. Ibid.

from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Yeah, I'm assuming this was probably not what the 3rd guy was expecting. But, if we continue to read the remainder of **Matthew 25 [verses 31-46]**, we will begin to understand what this parable is saying.

Those who obey God – who truly know God – will be invited into the “joy of the master.” They are the master’s sheep. They are about the master’s business and He calls them “righteous.” In our parable, the first and second servants fall into this category. Despite being given different talent based on their abilities, they immediately went and were about the master’s business. As a result of their obedience and faithfulness, they doubled what they were given. For those who are obedient and faithful to God, an invitation is extended of, **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”**

Those who are disobedient – who are wicked and slothful – will not receive the invitation to experience the “joy of the master.” These “goats” will receive the command of **“depart from me you cursed,”** and cast **“into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** Our third servant falls into this category. He did not know the master and his talent did not see the light – but was buried. In the end, he too received what he deserved.

QUESTION: Practically speaking, how does the reality of eternal joy or eternal punishment affect how you live day to day?

CONCLUSION

In the larger context of **Matthew 25**, the main point of this parable is clear: our readiness for Jesus’ return is determined by our stewardship of the resources that He has given us. Some think that readiness for Jesus’ return is a very spiritual and abstract thing. It really isn’t — it is a matter of being about our business for the Lord. In light of this parable, we must ask ourselves: What have we done with

- Our knowledge?
- Our time?
- Our money?
- Our abilities?

The sins of *omission* [what we don’t do] may ultimately be more dangerous than the sins of *commission* [what we do].