

Trust Liberates – Parable of the Talents

Matt. 25:14-30

I have told this story before, but it relates to today's sermon...

The famous tight rope walker, Blondin, made several walks across Niagara Falls and back. One day he made a couple of walks and then pushed a wheel barrow across and back 600 feet above the raging waters. When he came down a young boy was mesmerized at his skill. He saw the boy's face and said, "Do you believe I can carry a person in the wheel barrow back and forth across the falls?" The boy said, "Yes, I believe you can do that without falling." "Good," he said, "Get in!"

Do you trust God? Really trust Him? With everything in your life?

This Parable is going to challenge us to really trust God in the affairs of our daily lives. Let's read the text from Matt. 25:14-30 and take a deeper look at this story...

READ: Matt. 25:14-30

This is quite a story; don't you think? Let's look at this in terms of what it meant then and what it means to us now.

In v. 25:1 it says – The kingdom of heaven will be like...

So it starts off in v. 14 – ***“Again, IT will be like...”*** We're still talking about the kingdom of heaven. And this parable is related to the previous ones from Matt. 24:42-25:13. This is the primary theme of the parables of Jesus – to teach us what heaven is like.

This parable not only has the element of readiness and watchfulness, but adds a new element of improving the current situation while we wait – no matter how long it takes. This parable seems to start off abruptly, but that's because it is so closely tied to the previous one that it is just a continuation of that story to continue the theme. **Again, it is like...**

In these times, servants/slaves were treated well and not abused as we think about slavery in our times. They could enjoy the benefits of having authority and responsibility given by their masters – even being left in charge of the master's affairs and even the money. This is the case in our parable today. The term talents in our parable does not refer to gifting and abilities, but specifically to money of that time. A talent back then referred to an amount of money equal to about 6,000 denarii, or about \$300,000. A denarii was a day's wages. This was equivalent to about 20 years pay for a common worker. The NIV uses the term "bags of gold." Still it was a huge sum of money and a large responsibility.

A main piece of the story is that the master leaves on a journey of unknown duration. He entrusts his money to three servants and departs. No one knows how long he'll be gone, so it is up to the discretion of the servants and their integrity to do what they feel best with the master's money. Will they improve the master's condition before he returns? How long will they have to work with?

The master distributed the money to his servants according to his evaluation of their abilities. The master's expectation would therefore be according to each servant's capabilities. To the one he gave much, much would be expected, etc.

Lk. 12:48 – “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded...”

v. 16-18 - *The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

At once – indicates the good servant's intent to immediately go about his master's desires to improve the existing condition. The same is true of the second good servant. They felt the responsibility of their assignment and put the money to work without delay. The third servant was unwilling to take any risks and played it safe – in his mind. He didn't realize this would backfire on him big time. He dug a hole and buried his master's money so not to lose anything, or create any reason to be chastised by his master upon his return.

v. 19-23 - “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. 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 two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; 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!’

A long time had passed since the master left, but now he has returned and it is reckoning day. This should start to sound familiar to you since we know the parable is about what the kingdom of heaven is like. A time is coming when Jesus will return and all things will be settled. What we have done for the kingdom of God will be judged, and we will receive from God in proportion to what we have produced for Him and His kingdom. The first two servants gained much for the kingdom and are rewarded with more things to be responsible for.

This should indicate to us that there are new responsibilities offered to us in the kingdom of heaven than what we will have here on earth. There is more to be gained, more to do. Both good servants receive the same reward. It is not about the amount of money, but about their attitudes and their relationship with the master. Both were equally diligent; both wanted to please the master; both invested and earned more for the kingdom. Both were rewarded.

v.24-25 - *“Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’”*

The third servant was afraid. FEAR cripples or stifles us. He knew his master was a hard person. He knew what he was given and that he didn't know how long the master would be away, so he played it safe – so he thought. Upon the master's return he gave back exactly what was given to him – no more, no less.

When we were first married we had an apartment upstairs in a private home. Every month we would pay the landlady cash for the month. Every month she would count it out – and say - \$225 no more, no less. It was sufficient for her, but what was the problem with this master in our story today? Why was getting back what he gave not good enough? The servant didn't lose any money. He didn't gain anything for the kingdom though. That seems to be the big deal. God expects us to do something productive for the Kingdom while we're here. What are you doing for the kingdom of God in your personal/spiritual life. Is the kingdom advancing by your efforts and dedication and trust in God? Did this servant know he was given less than the other servants? Did that make a difference in his attitude and motivation? Did it prove to him that his master was a hard man and cause him to play it safe? We don't know. All we know is how the master treated him as a result. We answer to a higher authority! Only what He deems worthy of reward will be rewarded, but we can see from this parable that those who work to advance the kingdom of God are the ones rewarded in heaven. This is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

The third servant shows his lack of love and trust for his master. He blames the master for his actions or hesitancy to act. All three were given the same opportunity with different amounts of money to care for. This servant did nothing to move things in a positive direction. He paid the price for his actions or lack of actions. He tried to make excuses for himself, but that doesn't cut it when we stand before our Holy God. It just makes the situation worse. Grace is God's favor, but it doesn't excuse irresponsibility. The servant is held accountable. We are all expected to develop and use whatever we have available to further the kingdom of heaven – no matter how small. To hide it in fear and do nothing is unacceptable, as is seen in this servant's treatment by the master. This showed a lack of trust on the part of this servant. His relationship with the master was not the same as the relationship of the other two servants.

v. 26-27 - *“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? Well 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.’”*

The master condemns the servant on the basis of his own words – proving his guilt. We might think, what’s the big deal here? The servant didn’t lose anything – he gave back exactly what he was given to hold. The master didn’t direct what to do with the money. It was up to each servant what they would do. So, here again, we are reminded that it’s not about the money. It’s about the heart of each servant and proven by their actions. This servant did not trust the master at all. He even states that in his response. He operated out of fear rather than trust. The parables often use things that don’t make sense or defy our logic to make a bigger point.

The three servants make three points in the story. The first two were trusting and good, while the third was untrusting and bad. He was motivated by fear.

v. 28-30 - *So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The conclusion of our story shows that the lazy servant lost what little was given to him. The master gives his portion to the one who was given most. Because this servant didn’t trust the master whatever relationship could have been was severed. This wicked servant was worthless. To fail to do good with what God has entrusted to us is a serious sin. It not only results in the loss of what was given to us but in rejection by the master. This servant was banished from the master’s presence forever. The same goes for us.

Do you trust God completely? Are you willing to take what He has given you and use it to advance the kingdom of heaven? When I was a kid, I trusted my dad implicitly. If he told me to jump off the roof and he would catch me, I would jump off the roof – knowing he would catch me. OK – I was an idiot, but I trusted him completely. If I can trust my earthly father who is imperfect and makes mistakes and fails sometimes, why can’t I trust my heavenly Father who is perfect and never fails? This is what God expects of us. It’s more than his desire and if we don’t – oh well. This is his insistent command – Trust God Completely. How can we do that?

Everyone is on a different road of development in the faith. Some mature quickly and others are slower and take more time and experience to truly trust God. Where are you? Did this parable challenge you where you are now and where you realize you really should be? The first two servants trusted the master and didn’t hesitate to take risks to invest his money to try to make more. This is the heart of the message... Trust God enough to take a risk for his kingdom.

The reality is that we would expect God to be merciful and extend His grace to us, even if we fail Him along the way, and He does. This story is not in contradiction to God's grace. It is to show us a concept regarding the kingdom of heaven. There will be some who trust and please God – Their reward will be great in heaven. Then there are those who fail to trust God, even if they do religious obligations – Their loss will be even greater – complete separation from God.

Where are you in the process? There's always time to repent and establish your relationship with our heavenly Father. He is waiting to receive you today. You may know the Lord, but have relaxed and drifted off course to some degree. There is room for you at the cross to reestablish that relationship and make it vibrant again.

The starting point, of course, is establishing that relationship in the first place. There is an obligation we, as Christians, have to lead others to Jesus. It is an important part of our responsibility to advance the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes we can get carried away in that regard. We may become overbearing and obnoxious in an attempt to win someone to the Lord. That doesn't do any good.

Let me show you an example of how **not** to try to lead a person to Christ...

Skit Guys video – evangelism fail.

All humor aside, we need to consider what we are doing to advance the kingdom of heaven. There are many ways to evangelize without being obnoxious. We just need to be ourselves, and show compassion to those around us. The world needs to know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the father except through Him. (John 14:6).