

The Parable Of The Talents



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Introduction

A. Jesus (the Master Teacher) often taught in parables. A “parable” is a story with moral/spiritual applications. Jesus used parables in His teaching to reveal, conceal, and fulfill prophecy. Particularly, the parables help people learn about the kingdom of God – including the nature of the kingdom, the nature of the King, and the nature of kingdom citizens.

B. One parable is commonly referred to as “the parable of the talents” (Matthew 25:14-30). Please note the similarities between this parable and the parable of the minas (Luke 19:11-27).

C. While there are many lessons we can learn from this parable, the main point of the parable is to learn to properly manage those things that have been entrusted to our care during our earthly lives, knowing that Jesus will return and judge us for our stewardship.

D. Purpose: To learn from the parable of the talents so as to understand the story and how it applies to our lives.

1. The Context

A. Greater context

1. Jesus has entered Jerusalem prior to His arrest and crucifixion (Matthew 21). While in Jerusalem, He “cleansed” the temple, taught various lessons (including some parables), and rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocrisy.

2. Jesus lamented over the city of Jerusalem due to their refusal to accept Him as the Messiah (Matthew 23:37-39) and foretold its destruction (Matthew 24:1-2).

3. Following this, Jesus answered questions (Matthew 24:3), teaching the signs to watch out for before the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:4-35) and that no one but the Father knows the day and hour He is coming again to end the world (Matthew 24:36-44).

B. Immediate context

1. As Jesus continued teaching about His second coming through the end of Matthew 25, Jesus taught a series of parables: The parable of

the faithful and wicked servants (Matthew 24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), and the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

2. Following the parable of the talents, Jesus gives a picture of the Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46).

- The parable of the talents is clearly surrounded by teaching by Jesus concerning His coming and the Judgment that will take place when He comes.

2. The Parable

A. Talents distributed (25:14-15a)

1. Jesus sets the stage for the parable of the talents as a man of considerable wealth who is about to go on a journey.

2. Before the man left on his journey, he entrusted three servants with his possessions. Particularly, he entrusted his servants with talents.

- These “talents” were weights of gold or silver coins. It is difficult to estimate how much a talent was worth. Some have estimated that a single silver talent was worth approximately 6,000 denarii (equivalent to about 6,000 days’ wages). A gold talent would be worth significantly more. However, the specific amount is not the point.

3. Each of the three servants were entrusted with an appropriate amount of talents, depending on each one’s ability. One servant was entrusted with five talents, another with two talents, and another with one talent.

4. After the master entrusted the servants with his possessions, he went on his journey.

B. Talents used (25:15b-18)

1. Immediately upon the master’s departure, it was time for the servants to get to work.

2. The man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more talents (for a total of ten talents).

3. The man who had received two talents went, put them to work, and earned two more talents (for a total of four talents).

4. The man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money (remaining with one talent).

C. Talents presented (25:19-30)

1. After a long time being on his journey, the master returned. And, at his return, he settled accounts with each of his three servants.

- It was now time for the master to evaluate how his servants had done with what he had entrusted to them. And, notice that he had the authority over them so as to require them to answer him, as well as the authority to reward or punish each one.

2. The "five talent" man presented his master with ten talents in total. His master was pleased with his good and faithful service – and rewarded him.

- It would be a great reward for a servant to have been so pleasing to his master that he is then entrusted with even more in the future. Furthermore, this servant is said to enter his master's joy!

3. Similarly, the "two talent" man presented his master with four talents in total. His master was pleased with his good and faithful service – and rewarded him in the same way he rewarded the "five talent" man.

4. When the "one talent" man presented his talent to the master, he still only had one talent to give. He claimed he had believed the master to be a harsh man and he was afraid. Consequently, the master punished this servant – leaving the reward for those who had properly served him.

- Evidently, this man had an improper view of his master – only seeing him as a harsh man. And, this view of the master led him to bury the talent in the ground to ensure it would not be lost rather than putting it to good use.
- The master suggested that he had not even done a minimal amount of work to make gains on what he had been entrusted with. For, if he had even put the talent in the bank, there would have been interest gained!
- In contrast with the other servants being called "good" and "faithful," this one was identified as "evil," "lazy," and "good-for-nothing."
- Not only was this lazy servant not rewarded, but he was severely punished for his actions (even though He had not lost anything the master had given him).

3. Applications

A. Jesus has ascended to Heaven and is coming again

1. Jesus was on earth for a time. During this time, He proved Himself to be the Son of God, showed God to us, and provided Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

- When we read the Biblical record of this time Jesus was on the earth, we should learn valuable lessons about how He expects us to manage what He has entrusted to us.

2. Jesus is no longer living on earth in the flesh. For, He has ascended to Heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God (Acts 1:9-11; Acts 2:32-33).

3. Jesus will come again. Although Jesus has left for this period of time, He will return just as the master of the parable returned.

- This has been the main point of the context. Jesus is coming again – and His servants must be ready for His coming. However, we do not know the day or hour of His return.

B. Jesus has entrusted people with many things

1. Just as the master of the parable entrusted His own possessions to His servants, Jesus has entrusted us with all things in our lives. And, He can entrust them to us because they rightfully belong to Him!

- Remember that Jesus is the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17). There is nothing that can exist in the universe that does not rightfully belong to Him!

2. Although the parable focuses on “talents,” we need to consider what things have been entrusted to our care today. This is crucial to knowing what we must manage properly in Christ’s service!

- We must each view ourselves as managers over *everything* that has been entrusted to us: Our bodies, health, energy, time, money, possessions, knowledge, abilities, relationships, opportunities, and everything that makes up our lives!
- Serving God, then, does not just mean that God gets the biggest part of our lives or that He comes before others. Instead,

everything about our lives must be viewed as being God's, to use in His service!

3. Just as the master gave each servant a different number of talents according to each one's ability, God knows what is reasonable to expect from us!

C. We must work while the Master is away

1. Jesus has left all these things entrusted to our care – and expects us to manage them well in His service while He is away.

- Just as knowing the master's character and instructions should have helped the servants in the parable know how to manage the master's possessions, Jesus's character and teachings instruct us about how we ought to manage what He has given to us. Therefore, we need to develop a proper understanding of these things by studying the Bible so we do not develop a wrong impression of the Master (like the "one talent" man).

2. It is up to each person to choose how to manage what has been entrusted to our care. Just as the master in the parable did not force the servants to do particular things, Jesus has given us free will to decide what we should do with those things entrusted to us.

D. Jesus will judge us all for our service

1. Just as the master in the parable had authority over his servants to judge them, Jesus has the authority to judge us all for how we manage what He has entrusted to us.

- We must consider, then, the awesome responsibility that has been entrusted to us. We have the opportunity to manage what belongs to Jesus! As the Creator of the world, all things are His. Yet, a small piece of this creation has been entrusted to our care – for us to either use in a way that will honor and glorify Him or that will displease Him!

2. Jesus will judge each one fairly, according to the ability of each one. Notice carefully that each servant in the parable was *not* judged according to the abilities of the other; but only according to his own ability (i.e. the one talent man was not condemned because he did not gain two or five talents as the others; but because he did not properly manage the one talent he was given).

- Jesus knows what you can do. He knows how you've been blessed. And He knows your limitations and challenges. He will be a fair Judge who will evaluate you based on how you have put what He has entrusted you to work in His service (Romans 2:6-11).

E. Each person will either be determined to have been a faithful or unfaithful manager

1. There are only two possible outcomes for your judgment. You will either be judged to have been a faithful manager (steward) or an unfaithful one. And, it is required of managers that they be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)!

2. We learn that a "good and faithful" manager is one who puts those things entrusted to his/her care to good use in ways that please the Master (Jesus Christ).

- If you want Jesus to consider you a good and faithful manager, you must actively consider all those things identified earlier that Jesus has entrusted to you and how well you are putting each one to proper use in the Master's service.

3. We learn that an "evil, lazy," and "good-for-nothing" manager is one who wastes what has been entrusted to him/her by not putting it to the proper use to please the Master.

- Being an unfaithful manager is not just reserved for those who actively misuse what they have been entrusted with. Remember, the one talent man did not lose the talent he was given. Rather, it is simply failing to put it to the proper use the Master expects!

F. Faithful managers will be rewarded

1. Those who have been diligent to be faithful managers will hear Jesus's approval on the Judgment Day (25:21, 23).

- There are no more precious words you should desire to hear in your life than these! There is nobody's approval you should long to hear more than Jesus's on this Day!

2. Faithful managers will be rewarded for their diligence on this earth with sharing in the Master's joy – eternal life in Heaven!

- In the next section of Matthew 25, Jesus pictures those who are welcomed into eternal life being those who have faithfully served

Him by using what they had been blessed with in serving others (25:34-40). This is certainly one way God wants us to use what has been entrusted to our care.

G. Unfaithful managers will be punished

1. Those who have been evil and lazy so as to be unfaithful managers will hear Jesus's condemnation on the Judgment Day (25:26-27).

- There are no words you should fear hearing in your life than these! There is nobody's disapproval you should want to avoid more than to hear this from Jesus on this Day!

2. Unfaithful managers will be punished for their lack of diligence on this earth in a place that is depicted as outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth – eternal punishment in Hell!

- In the next section of Matthew 25, Jesus pictures those who are sentenced into eternal punishment being those who have not faithfully served Him by selfishly using what they had been blessed with and not serving others (25:41-46). This is certainly one way God forbids us from using what has been entrusted to our care.

Conclusion

A. You must learn from Jesus's parable of the talents. This parable teaches you about the kingdom of Heaven.

B. If you want to be ready to stand before the King in Judgment, you must make the appropriate applications from this parable to your life! Namely, you must view yourself as a manager of all that Jesus has entrusted to you and put those things to their proper use in His service!

Study Questions

Where can you read this parable? What is the main point of this parable?

1. The Context

What is the greater context of this parable?

What is the immediate context of this parable?

2. The Parable

How did the master distribute his talents (Matthew 25:14-15a)?

How did the servants put the talents to use (Matthew 25:15b-18)?

What happened when the servants presented the talents to the master (Matthew 25:19-30)?

3. Applications

What do you learn about where Jesus is and His second coming?

How should you view the things you have? What all should you view in this way?

What must you do while the Master is away?

What will Jesus do when He returns?

What are the two possible outcomes of your service? Explain each one.

What will happen to faithful managers?

What will happen to unfaithful managers?

