

“Investing in the Kingdom” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 25 November 19, 2023

- I. **Matthew 25:14-30** – The Parable of the Talents previously read
- II. **Today we are given a parable about how we respond to God.**
 - a. I've heard many different interpretations of this parable.
 - i. Some use it to preach about the prosperity we can have by doing the right things, along with taking risks for God if we have enough faith.
 - ii. Others claim it has nothing to do with money and worldly goods and everything to do with spiritual things that God provides.
 - iii. Still others see the talents as our abilities and skills to carry out God's mission in the world.
 - iv. As we read the parable closely, we might see more to the story than we understand.
 - b. What we have are two different responses to the gifts entrusted to us by the Master.
 - i. Either we use them for His glory and benefit, or...
 - ii. In fear, we misjudge the Master's character and do nothing.
 - c. The focus today is on the end times... or waiting for the return of our Savior on the Last Day.
 - i. Last week we heard about the ten bridesmaids waiting for the Bridegroom, and they weren't ready with enough oil to honor Him and light the way for His arrival.
 - ii. This week, we have the Master leaving for an undetermined amount of time and returning to take an account.
 - d. The parable starts with the Master giving talents to three different servants... and a talent weighs roughly 75 pounds.
 - i. If it was gold, the amount entrusted to them is hard to imagine... but I've heard that each talent is worth between 20 to 25 years of salary.
 - ii. Even the smallest amount given was significant by anyone's standards.
 - e. Because the servants each had a variety of abilities to manage the Master's abundance, they were not given equal amounts.
 - f. Then, at a given time, the Master came back and called each servant to report on what he did with the Master's talents.
 - i. First of all, notice that I'm not saying the servants own these gifts, they are managing the property of the Master – which means all we have is God's and we just manage it for Him.
 - ii. Secondly, keep in mind that it's not about quantity – please get the investment banking out of your head – the amount is not the point here... it's about what was done with whatever was given.

- g. So, the first two are the same – they honored their Master by doing something with the talents and were rewarded with joy and connection with the Master.
- h. The third servant had other ideas... and instead of a simple response, he tries to explain that he was afraid because the Master was greedy and difficult... so he did nothing.
 - i. The Master is rightly offended that His servant would see Him in that light, but also offended that he did nothing to honor his Master at all.
 - 1. His punishment was to have everything taken from him – even his future joy and connection with the Master.

III. **This parable not about how much... it's about what.**

- a. Again, we have two responses to the love of our Savior, Jesus.
 - i. We can love Him back, along with our neighbor, using all the gifts He's provided us, or...
 - ii. We can do nothing and reject Him and His gifts.
- b. Every person who has the gift of faith – who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives – has been given “talents” by Him.
 - i. These blessings are His, but He entrusts them to us so that we might use them in response to His love and care in our lives.
 - ii. What do these talents represent?
 - 1. The list is as long as you want to make it, because God gives us all we could ever need for body and soul, along with much more in the extras of life.
 - 2. Certainly we can point to our faith and the Good News of our salvation – as we read in 2 Corinthians 4 that we have this “treasure” in our bodies which are jars of clay.
 - 3. When we go to the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed, Luther explains that God's creative gifts come to us in the form of everything that sustains us.
 - 4. In addition, all of us are blessed with specific spiritual gifts and abilities that help the work of the Church.
 - 5. Although not everyone considers having lots of time on their hands a good thing, but it can certainly be used for God.
 - 6. Others are blessed financially and have more resources to support God's work in the world.
 - 7. Still others are placed in vocations of every type – from shoemakers to teachers, and plumbers to realtors... along with parents, grandparents, sons and daughters, and many more.
 - iii. Each of these things in our lives are talents that can be used to bless the kingdom of God, and “do something” with what God has entrusted to us.
- c. The warning comes for the person who decides to reject God and His lovingkindness, assuming that He's only out to get us.

- i. No one knows if the rejected servant had thoughts about using his talent in some way before he got scared and buried it.
- ii. Somehow, the result was viewing the Master in a negative light – which turned into doing nothing.
- iii. The world around us constantly tries to break God down and portray Him as evil or uncaring.
 - 1. In under a minute, I can pull up video clips of protestors, college students on campuses, and people out in public showing their hatred toward God and anyone who follows Him.
 - 2. It is particularly difficult to go to college today with many professors arguing that faith in God is more harmful than good.
 - 3. In addition, the Bible is constantly under attack for what it means and how to interpret God’s will – especially with people who want to point out the parts they see as evil and unloving.
- iv. So, with all these influences going on around us, some might begin to agree that God is unscrupulous or doesn’t have our best interest in mind – and maybe it’s best to distance ourselves from Church and His Word in our lives.
- v. In the end, some might even walk away altogether and do nothing – which means faith and the gifts entrusted to them are buried in death.

IV. **What a strange thing to bury in death the gifts of God...**

- a. When we consider the unbelievable love and mercy God has shown to each of us personally, it’s hard to imagine seeing Him as harsh and unfair – as the very life of His own Son was traded for our freedom.
 - i. Without God’s intervention, no one has anything to look forward to except the “outer darkness,” and the “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (vs 30)
 - ii. Instead of leaving us to die without hope, God chose the most loving thing He could do – show us sacrificial love.
- b. Jesus died for all the times we doubt God’s love...
 - i. He paid the price for all the times we use the blessings God has provided in ways that do not bring Him glory.
 - ii. He shed His blood to wash away our sins of laziness and doubt in sharing His gifts with others.
 - iii. He laid down His life so that we are forgiven when we don’t always take up our cross and follow Him.
- c. God is not seeking a great amount of return on His kingdom investment... because you are His investment – and He already has you in the bank.
 - i. What God wants is your response in love.
 - ii. I can envision any one of us standing before Jesus on the Last Day, and as He asks for an account of what we’ve done – it will all be different.

1. One person might show a small return, another a great return, but in the end they did something.
 2. God will always encourage us to invest His gifts into the kingdom, because He can make it work no matter how small it is...
- d. And on that fateful day, we can be sure that our Lord and Savior will look us in the eye and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Amen.