

JESUS REWARDS HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Matthew 25:14-30

Key Verse: 25:21

“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!’”

Jesus is coming again in power and great glory as King of kings. When he comes, he will reward his faithful servants richly. But he will punish lazy servants severely. How can we be faithful servants? That’s a very important question. In today’s parable Jesus tells us how. Let’s learn to be faithful servants whom Jesus rewards.

First, Jesus entrusts talents to his servants (14-18).

Look at verse 14. “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.” The key word here is “entrusted.” The master virtually promoted his servants to be stewards with a trust. He gave them the freedom to manage his property as their own. Look at verse 15. “To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.” The master had a principle in the initial entrusting of his property. He entrusted it according to ability. Not everyone is the same in terms of ability. Some people can do five things at one time—and do them all well. Others must concentrate on one thing. However, ability comes from God (Dt 8:18). Able people should not be proud; they should work hard. And less able people should not be fatalistic; they should work hard. The master was not a humanist who made everyone feel good. He wanted each person to use all of his ability. And each person received at least one talent.

Let’s see how the servants responded. The first one went at once and put his money to work and gained five more (16). This man “went at once.” He was quick to begin his work without hesitation or calculation. He was like a student who finishes his homework right away, before watching TV. He was focused and diligent. His immediate action sprang from sincere faith. He took his master at his word. He trusted his master without a second thought. Then he sensed his great privilege and undeserved opportunity. So he devoted himself fully and joyfully to the task. Verse 16 calls it “his money.” He was prudent, regarding his master’s money like his own. He did not have any relational distance from his master; he and his master were one. His chief desire was to please his master. With this attitude, he did more than keep up with the market interest rate; he doubled his original capital from five to ten.

The second servant also did well. Though less able, he had the same faithfulness and doubled his talents from two to four (17). He also trusted his master fully. He did not get upset for receiving fewer talents than the first man. He did his best with what he was given. Serving the Lord is not a competition. It is a matter of being faithful to his trust. In God’s economy, success comes through faithfulness more than ability.

The third servant makes a great contrast with the first two. He went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money (18). As we will see later, he had a relationship problem with his master. He was full of groundless complaints and fear. So he buried his talent in the ground as though he could forget about it. There are many people like this who have buried their talents in the ground. They live as though they have nothing to do for God and nothing to give account for. It is foolish.

In this parable, Jesus is the man going on a journey. Jesus would soon be arrested, tried and condemned. Jesus would suffer at the hands of evil men and be crucified. It was to save us from our sins. But God raised Jesus from the dead. The Risen Christ appeared to his disciples and convinced them that he was alive. The Risen Christ revealed the Scriptures to them. Then he ascended into heaven to the right hand of God. This same Jesus will come again in power and great glory.

Jesus’ servants are the members of his body, the church. Then what are the talents he has entrusted to us? The English word “talent” originated in this parable. So we can think of talents in a natural sense, to include musical talent, artistic talent, literary talent, social skills, and so on. We should use these talents diligently in serving God. We can also compare talents to spiritual gifts which are given to God’s children to build up the body of Christ (1 Pe 4:10). However, we must watch out for the tendency to focus on ourselves instead of what God wants us to do. We

must use our talents to serve God's work as a whole. Therefore, it is important to think of our talents in a broader sense.

The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes that we have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal 2:7; 1 Th 2:4; 1 Ti 1:11; Tit 1:3). The gospel is most precious and important. When we have the gospel we have everything. Without the gospel we have nothing. When God gave his one and only Son Jesus to us, he gave his heart—his best love. God's love saved us from our sins and made us his children. We who have received this love must share it with others. Whatever our individual talents may be, they must be used to spread the gospel through the body of Christ. The one who faithfully shares the gospel is the one who uses his talent wisely. As we do so, God's great investment of love in mankind will reap eternal benefit for his glory.

Last Friday Sarah Lee shared her personal testimony with us. Her precious sister died at a young age. Sarah struggled hard to believe the love of God. Then she met Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. She found eternal life and that her sister has eternal life. Sarah will meet her sister again in the kingdom of heaven. Her sorrow turned to joy. She became a witness of the resurrection. Though she struggled with English, she spread the gospel and glorified God. Christian Norcross believes that Jesus gives us a living hope in a world that often disappoints us. She believes that Jesus welcomes anyone and everyone. So she shares Jesus with others. Many have heard the gospel through her and have begun to follow Jesus. Whitney is starting a Bible study for Robert Morris College students this Thursday at the new downtown dormitory. Whatever our personal talents may be, sharing the gospel and raising disciples are essential. When we do our best for this, God will double his work among us by 2010. But if we are lazy, we will lose the chance.

Second, the good and faithful servant (19-23).

While the master was away, the servants had the opportunity to work. But when he returned, it was time to settle accounts. They owed their master his original investment and an accounting for how they used it. It was kind of like report card pick-up day. Look at verse 20. "The 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.'" The servant showed his master the money. Perhaps he carried two huge bags, five talents in each. He piled the overflowing money before his master with a sense of accomplishment. He was not scared to stand before his master, but he was joyful and confident. He believed his master would be happy with his 100% profit.

How did the master respond? Look at verse 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.'" This verse tells us about Jesus' reward for his faithful servants. There are essentially three elements. First of all, there is the master's recognition. The master's, "Well done," was a good evaluation of his work. It was like getting an A+ in science, reading and math. Then the master commended his character, calling him, "good and faithful servant." This is how God will recognize his faithful servants. It is everlasting appreciation and praise from the chief Judge. God's recognition is the best reward, which satisfies our souls.

The master also said, "I will put you in charge of many things." The master had a bright future hope for his servant. The master promised to promote him to greater responsibility. His future employment was guaranteed permanently. Many people suffer from anxiety about their job security. Just this week, Tim Fitch watched fellow employees being suddenly dismissed. But God rewards his faithful servants with a guarantee of everlasting job security in his kingdom.

Then the master said, "Come and share your master's happiness." The master did not treat his servants like employees. He welcomed them into fellowship with him. He treated them like his friends and his family members. Then he shared his joy and happiness with them. What all people really want is to be happy. When we pursue happiness itself we always miss the mark. But when we live for the glory of God and do our best to be faithful to him, we will share in God's happiness. This is real happiness that fills our souls with deep delight. It is paradise restored.

Let's think about one more thing the master said. It was, "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." This is the key to being a faithful servant and making a great profit. It is to be faithful with a few things. A few things may not look like much. But when we are faithful with them, God entrusts more and more

to us. Many years ago, Missionary Isaac and Rebecca Choi began CBF ministry through the prayer of Dr. Lee. There were just a few children and no one else really paid attention. Yet year after year the Choi's faithfully cared for all the children as their own and did their best to organize the ministry and serve them. Now we see that the CBF ministry has grown and developed remarkably. There are more than 120 children and 24 teachers; they are the first to have "120 flock of God" under their care. Shepherd Bob Henkins began presiding at the Sunday worship service eleven years ago. He has done so faithfully even when he is sick. Now the time came to have a worship service on the IIT campus. The one who has been faithfully presiding for eleven years will become a Sunday messenger. So he began messenger training. Last week he spoke at DePaul UBF Sunday worship service. Senior missionaries recognized his message because of his reverence for the word of God and his shepherd's heart. Those who are faithful with a few things can be entrusted with many things. This is God's principle.

The man with the two talents also came to settle accounts with the master. He had also doubled his original capital and gave a good report to his master. The master was also pleased with him. In fact, the master's reward for him was exactly the same as it was for the first man. This shows us that God rewards based on faithfulness, not ability. When a person is faithful with what has been given, he receives the full measure of God's reward and blessing.

Third, the wicked and lazy servant (24-30).

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. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (24,25). This man thought critically of his master. He thought his master let others work hard and then came along and took all the benefits of their labor. Because of his crooked thinking, he became wicked and lazy. He did nothing but bring the original capital.

How did the master respond? Look at verses 26-28. "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. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'" This man was wicked because he thought evil of his master. Those who harbor evil thoughts in their hearts all become wicked and lazy. They don't add any value to what God gives them, not any value at all. They are worthless. Look at verse 30. "And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Look at verse 29. "For 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." God gives us talents so we may add value to them through faithful and diligent labor. God rewards our faithfulness in this life and the next. Faithful people can prosper endlessly. But the wicked and lazy will lose everything.

We have been entrusted with the gospel and with the prayer topic to make North America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We have been given a specific prayer topic to double in number by 2010 for the glory of God. We must regard this as the most precious trust from God and devote ourselves to it wholeheartedly. Then Jesus will reward us with recognition, future security and God's happiness.