

WE
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Matthew 25:14-30

"JESUS, MONEY, AND YOU" SERIES
#3, WE'RE NOT ALL THE SAME"
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INTRODUCTION

-- Many people make a clear distinction between secular and spiritual matters, and for them the topic of money belongs to the secular category. They don't think of money matters as being spiritual.

But God takes a very different view. The Bible is filled with teachings about money and possessions. In fact, Jesus talked more about money than about heaven or hell. Many of His parables involve the topic of money. One well-known example is the story generally known as the Parable of the Talents, which is found in Matthew 25.

-- In Matthew 24-26 Jesus is talking about His Second Coming, the time when He returns to earth. He tells us that it will be a time of judgment, a time when all people will be judged and receive their eternal destiny - eternal life or eternal death, heaven or hell. While those who know Christ as Savior are assured of eternal life, they will, nevertheless, still stand before Christ to be held accountable for how well they have lived their lives as disciples. Jesus gives the Parable of the Talents to teach us how to be prepared for that time.

I. THE PARABLE / 3 SCENES

-- The Parable contains three scenes. The first scene is described in verses 14-15.

A. SCENE 1: THE MASTER'S ASSIGNMENT (VV. 14-15)

-- This is called the Parable of the Talents, but don't think of "talents" the way you normally do - as a special aptitude or ability, like an ability to sing or play ball. The term "talent" here refers to a unit of money as measured by weight, possibly as much as 70 pounds. The value of a talent varied depending on what was being weighed - bronze or silver or gold.

-- Some scholars have suggested that a talent of silver could have been worth 20 years of income for an average working man. If that's the case, the man who got 5 talents got over \$3 million dollars; the man who got 2 talents got about \$1 $\frac{1}{2}$ million; and the man who got 1 talent got about \$750,000, still a very significant amount (maybe not for Joe Mauer but certainly for me).

B. SCENE 2: THE SERVANTS' ACTIONS (VV. 16-18)

-- The servants' actions are described in verses 16-18.

1. The Man with 5 Talents (v. 16)

-- Jesus says the man with 5 talents "went at once." He couldn't wait to get started - sort of like my dog when I say "Let's go for a walk" - he jumps up and zips to the door, tail wagging and body wiggling in excited, eager readiness.

-- So this guy went out right away and "put his money to work," possibly by starting up some kind of a business and working hard at it, and he ends up doubling the money that he had received.

2. The Man with 2 Talents (v. 17)

-- The man who got 2 talents responded in a very similar manner and also ended up doubling his money.

3. The Man with 1 Talent (v. 18)

-- But the guy who got 1 talent acted very differently.

Cf., v. 18

-- Hiding money and valuables in a hole in the ground was a common way of trying to keep them safe in Jesus' day. So this guy doesn't try to do anything with the money given to him. He's content to try to keep it as it is by hiding it in the ground.

C. SCENE 3: THE MASTER'S RETURN (VV. 19F)

-- Then starting in verse 19, we find out what happens when the Master finally returns and the day of accounting arrives for the three servants.

1. The Man with 5 Talents (vv. 19-21)

-- The man who received 5 talents excitedly reports that he has doubled what was given to him and hands over 10 talents. The Master is ecstatic and says, "Outstanding! You've done a super job! I have a nice promotion for you. Come on, let's go celebrate."

2. The Man with 2 Talents (vv. 22-23)

-- The man who received 2 talents comes and also reports that he has doubled the Master's money and hands over 4 talents. Again, the Master is ecstatic and says exactly the same thing to this second servant that he had said to the first.

3. The Man with 1 Talent (vv. 24f.)

-- Finally, it's time for the man who received 1 talent to make his report. Instead of coming with an enthusiastic report like the first two, this man comes with a string of excuses. vv. 24-25

-- The Master isn't buying any of this man's lame sob story. vv. 26-27

-- Then the Master proceeds to pronounce severe judgment on the lazy, unreliable excuse-maker. vv. 28-30

II. TWO LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

-- There are 2 main lessons that Jesus wants us to take away from this parable.

A. LESSON #1: ALL THAT WE HAVE COMES FROM GOD.

1. I read the story of an elderly woman who had finished shopping and returned to her car and found four men inside the car. She dropped her shopping bags, drew a handgun, and screamed, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car." Those men didn't wait for a second invitation; they got out and ran like crazy.

The woman, somewhat shaken, loaded her shopping bags and then got into the car. But no matter how she tried, she could not get her key into the ignition. Then it dawned on her: she was in the wrong car - her car was parked four or five spaces away! She got out and loaded her grocery bags into her own car and then drove to the police station to turn herself in. The desk sergeant to whom she told the story nearly fell off his chair laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter, where four men were reporting a carjacking by an old woman with thick glasses and curly white hair, less than five feet tall, and carrying a large handgun. No charges were filed.

You see, she thought it was her car, but it really belonged to someone else. We're a lot like that old woman - we think our lives are our own, but they really belong to someone else, to God.

2. Everything that the servants in the parable had came from their Master. They didn't own any of it - it was just "entrusted" to them (cf., v. 14). That's the way it is with us - everything we have comes ultimately from God and belongs to Him. He just entrusts it to us - we're stewards - managers of what belongs to God and He has entrusted to us.

Psalm 24:1 (NIV) The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

3. I remember one time watching some ants at a picnic scurrying around and looking for food. I tossed a piece of bread near one, and he grabbed on to it and struggled to lift it and carry it away. It was easily 4 or 5 times bigger than the ant, but he kept working to drag it off. As I watched him, I imagined the scene when he got back home with that enormous piece of bread. All the other ants would line the streets, oohing and aahing, and the ant would drop his treasure and start strutting around it saying, "Yeah, I'm da man (ant)" and telling everyone how tough it was to bring in such a huge hunk of food. He'd have his picture on the front page of the paper, and they might even put up a plaque in town, and parents would some day tell their children and grandchildren about the day when this ant brought back the biggest piece of bread ever.

But you know what - that ant would never have got that bread unless I had tossed it to him - and I bet he never told any of the other ants about me! But how did I get the bread? Well, I worked for it - I earned the money and went to the store to buy it. But the truth is that I also was a recipient. I never would have got that bread unless God had first given the seed and the sun and the rain necessary for the wheat and unless God had given me the ability and opportunity to earn the money I used to purchase it.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

B. LESSON #2: WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FOR HOW WE USE HIS GIFTS.

1. How we use the resources and opportunities that God entrusts to us is serious stuff. It really matters to God. When He entrusts something to us, He wants us to do something with it. And this parable warns us that unused gifts and opportunities are in danger of being lost.

-- The guy who didn't use his money to make more for the Master lost it to the guy who made the most.

When I first heard this story as a kid, I thought it was really unfair - to take away the guy's one and only talent and give it to the guy who had 10. But the point is that none of the talents belonged to the servants - all the talents belonged to God, and God entrusted them to the servants with one purpose in mind - for the servants to use them. Whatever God entrusts to us, He wants us to use in ways that will honor Him and grow His Kingdom.

-- If we're not doing anything with what He's already given us, He's not going to give us any more - He's going to give those gifts and opportunities to those who are being the best stewards

2. One last thing about our accountability to God: the 3 servants received different numbers of talents, but they weren't judged on how many talents they received - only on how faithfully they had used and managed what they had received.

The 2 servants who were commended weren't the same in what they had, but they were the same in their commitment and faithfulness to the Master, and they both received the same, identical approval from the Master.

The most important issue isn't how much God has entrusted to us - the important issue is how faithfully we are using it.