

Jesus told the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 to teach us a valuable lesson – not only in work – but in all areas of our life. As with the master and servants, our Heavenly Father has entrusted us with his treasures. These 'talents' can take the form of various resources – our intellect, time, gifts and physical talents (excuse the pun). As the parable shows, God expects us to use these wisely, to multiply them for His Kingdom.

But that's not what I want us to reflect on today. Imagine if we told a modern day parable of workers and their talents - I don't think the only issue would be that of poor stewardship! I believe in this modern parable we'd find the servants posting selfies with 'their talents' on social media. The comments would stream in – some in support of what the servants had 'earned', bolstering their pride; and some from 'the haters' in judgement and jealousy. We'd find the servants *comparing* how much they'd received to how much their colleagues had been given. I believe that this would lead to a spirit of judgement, which could manifest in various ways.

Firstly, the servant who received the least would potentially judge himself and his worth in relation to what he had received. Is there something wrong with him? Are the other servants just better, more deserving, or are they possibly the master's favourites? How often don't we experience these issues of worth in relation to what we have, our job title or our salary? Secondly, there may be a comparison between the servants. Why did the master not divide the talents evenly? It doesn't seem very FAIR does it? And this raises the matter of fairness and a sense of entitlement. How often don't we feel hard done by when we compare ourselves to others? How easy it is to covet what others have when our heart is not one of gratitude and our understanding not one of stewardship. Lastly, the servant that received the most may, in comparing his favour with the others, become proud. How easy it is to 'judge downwards' at those less fortunate or seemingly less favoured. We must be doing something right to have the master's favour! And so, we become puffed up and believe the lie that we have somehow earned our 'talents'. On the flip side of the coin, we begin to judge the servants who received less.

Jesus' parable goes on to explain the principle of sowing and reaping. The servants were rewarded in accordance with **WHAT THEY DID with what they had been given**. I believe that, in our modern context, we too often get stuck at the 'comparing' of what we have been given, instead of focusing on what we can do with what is in our hand!

Father, help us to not be like the "wicked and slothful" (Matthew 25:26) servant who – in fear – hides what you have entrusted to us. But more than that, please give us discernment to see when we are comparing what 'talents' you have given us. Guard our hearts against comparison and instead, empower us to have a heart of contentment and gratitude. Please help us to focus on what **we can do** to multiply that which you have entrusted to us, for your glory! In Jesus' name.