

Matthew 25:14-30 – "Faithful Use of Gifts"

Text: Matthew 25:14-30 (CSB)

14 "For it is like a man about to go on a journey. He called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one—to each according to his own ability. Then he went on a journey. 16 The man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more. 17 In the same way the man with two earned two more. 18 But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money. 19 After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five talents approached, brought five more talents, and said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I've earned five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master's joy!' 22 The man with two talents also approached. He said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I've earned two more talents.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master's joy!' 24 The man who had received one talent also approached and said, 'Master, I know you. You're a harsh man, reaping where you haven't sown and gathering where you haven't scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26 His master replied to him, 'You evil and lazy servant! If you knew that I reap where I haven't sown and gather where I haven't scattered, 27 then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and I would have received my money back with interest when I returned. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 30 And throw this worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Key Background:

- **The Talent:** A talent was a large sum of money, representing about 15-20 years' wages for a common laborer. This was an enormous amount of wealth entrusted to each servant.
- **Journey Context:** Wealthy men often took long journeys for business or political reasons, leaving their affairs in the hands of trusted servants who acted with full authority.
- **According to Ability:** The master distributed talents based on each servant's capacity and capability, showing wisdom in his assignments and fairness in his expectations.
- **Investment Practices:** In the ancient world, money could be invested in trade, agriculture, or lending. Banking systems existed where money could earn modest but safe interest.
- **Settling Accounts:** Masters regularly audited their servants' management, expecting detailed reports and accountability for resources entrusted to them.
- **Master's Joy:** The invitation to "share your master's joy" represents participation in the master's success and celebration, indicating elevated status and relationship.

- **Outer Darkness:** This phrase represents exclusion from the kingdom, separation from God's presence, and eternal judgment.

Questions from the Story:

- **What did the master do before going on his journey (vv. 14-15)? What does this tell us about his trust in his servants and his expectations?**
- **How did the master decide how many talents to give each servant (v. 15)? What does this reveal about the master's wisdom and fairness?**
- **What did the servants with five and two talents do with their master's money (vv. 16-17)? What does their action reveal about their character and attitude?**
- **What did the servant with one talent do instead (v. 18)? What does his choice to bury the money show about his heart and priorities?**
- **When did the master return to settle accounts (v. 19)? What does the "long time" suggest about the period of stewardship?**
- **How did the first servant report his stewardship (v. 20)? What does his presentation reveal about his confidence and faithfulness?**
- **What was the master's response to the faithful five-talent servant (v. 21)? What does this commendation teach us about God's evaluation of faithful service?**
- **How did the master respond to the two-talent servant (vv. 22-23)? What does the identical reward reveal about how God values faithfulness over results?**
- **What accusation did the one-talent servant make against his master (vv. 24-25)? What does this reveal about his perception of his master's character?**
- **How did the servant justify his decision to hide the talent (v. 25)? What does his fear-based reasoning show about his relationship with the master?**
- **How did the master respond to the one-talent servant's accusation and excuse (vv. 26-27)? What does the master's logic reveal about the servant's true character?**
- **What minimum action could the fearful servant have taken (v. 27)? What does this show about the inexcusability of his complete inaction?**
- **What happened to the unfaithful servant's talent (v. 28)? What principle does this demonstrate about stewardship and opportunity?**
- **What general principle does Jesus state about having and not having (v. 29)? How does this apply to spiritual gifts and opportunities?**
- **What was the final judgment on the worthless servant (v. 30)? What does this severe consequence teach about the seriousness of unfaithfulness?**

- **What does this parable teach us about how God views our use of the gifts, abilities, and opportunities he gives us?**
- **How does the master's evaluation of faithfulness over absolute results encourage us in our service to God?**
- **What warning does this parable give about allowing fear or wrong perceptions of God to paralyze us from faithful service?**