

## Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents

Today we are in Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 through 30, The Parable of the Talents. Verse 14 starts off, **For just as a man leaving the country**, that is the opening line of Matthew 25 verse 14. Now notice, there is no subject or verb there. It is, **Just as a man leaving the country**. In the King James translation - if you are following in the King James text, it uses italics that the subject it is making reference to. So the kingdom of Heaven is likened or compared. The New American Standard Bible and the ESV use the word *it* in place of *the kingdom of Heaven*. It is making reference back because the very first word in the verse is the word *for*, it is a conjunction of explanation. It is explaining the parable of the Ten Virgins that we took last time together. In fact, back at verse 1 is the subject of the sentence: **Then the kingdom of heaven will be likened to ten virgins**. So this is explaining the kingdom of Heaven is like *just as a man leaving the country*.

And because it is making reference to the verses 1 through 13, we will read through that. Matthew 25 verse 1, **Then the kingdom of Heaven will be likened to ten virgins who having taken their lamps, went out for a meeting of the bridegroom**. You remember we studied about the wedding, the steps of wedding feast and celebrations. **And five of these virgins from them were wise and five were foolish. The ones who were foolish having taking their lamps did not take oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delaying, all became drowsy and were sleeping**. So there were on the parade route waiting for the bridegroom to come, blow the shofar, and make the announcement that he is coming for his bride.

But he delayed his coming, as we studied last time. The father of the groom is the one who declared how long it would take for him to go get his bride. Once the engagement was set the bridegroom would go back and build an apartment on the side of the family home. And it was up to the father of the groom to determine whether the apartment was finished and whether the groom was ready to go get his bride. So, there was a delay. Obviously, the father said, "Not yet." **So all became drowsy and were sleeping**, all 10 of them.

**And in the middle of night a cry had happened**. This is the crier who comes out and makes the announcement. **Behold, the bridegroom comes! Go out to meet him**. This is in the middle of the night, so it is going to require lamps. **Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps**, that is, they prepared them. **And the foolish said to the wise, Give to us from your oil, because our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, No, there should not be enough for us and for you. But rather, go to the ones selling and purchase for yourselves. But while they were going away to purchase, the bridegroom came. And the ones ready, they had oil in their lamps and were waiting for him, entered with him into the wedding feast, and the door was shut**. As we studied last time, the wedding feast is not a public meeting. It is by invitation only. And you were required to be in the parade route in order to attend. And you had to actually attend the feast itself to be part of the wedding celebrations.

**The door was shut**, after everybody entered. **And afterward, the rest of the virgins also came, saying, Lord, lord, open to us. But having answered, he said, Truly I say to you,**

**I do not know you.** And as we studied last time, the text in Matthew chapter 7 where Jesus said, *Many in that last day shall say to me Lord, Lord, have we not done many things in Your name? And the Lord is going to say, Depart from me for I never knew you.* It is whether the Lord knows us, not whether we know Him, but whether He knows us. **Truly I say to you, I do not know you. Therefore, watch, because you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes.** That is the theme that is found in these two parables, the parable of the parable of the Ten Virgins and the parable of The Talents. It is *Watch, be on guard. You don't know when the Lord comes.*

So he says in verse 14, for today, **For just as a man**, so he is explaining the Ten Virgins with another parable, the parable of The Talents. **For just as a man leaving the country called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them.** The man in the parable is the Lord. He is the master of the house. The servants are the Jews in this context, because it is in the Gospel of Matthew, and it is not found anywhere else. It is written to the Jews. They are an example of Jewish believers. His trip - he is leaving on a trip, that is Him leaving at the ascension after His crucifixion and coming back at His second coming. He is leaving. He is entrusting his possessions to his servants.

**And to one indeed, verse 15, to one indeed he gave five talents, and to another, two talents, and to another, one talent, to each according to his own ability. And left the country immediately.** Interesting text. He gave them talents, some five, one two, one one talent. A talent is a measurement of money.

I can remember when I gave this teaching on this text to a group of Maranatha music groups down in Huntington Beach. We would go down there once a month and give a Bible study on a Saturday night, have dinner together and a Bible study. And I gave them The Ministry of the ~~Ten~~ Talents. Now in those days just like today people misunderstood talent. They thought *talent* was a human ability. But a *talent* is just a literal translation pronunciation of the Greek word **τάλαντον** (talanton). A *talent* is a measurement of money, not a human ability. And so when we ministered to them and that the talent is an amount of money some were very, very discouraged. Because a lot of musicians go by this parable for their justification for what they do. Is that you are supposed to serve the Lord with your talents. There is nowhere in the Bible that says you are supposed to serve the Lord with your human talents, nowhere in the Bible.

This is money, using money as an example. One talent equals six thousand denarii. A denarius is a day's wages. So one talent is six thousand days' wages. So the one who received one talent received six thousand days' wages in the value of money, that is six thousand days wages. To another he gave two, two talents. It is twelve thousand days wages. And then to the first one he gave five talents that is thirty thousand days wages in value of money that he gave to these servants. They were his. They belonged to the man, but he gave it to them to work for him.

The talents represent what we call the oracles of the law. Jesus entrusted the Jews, entrusted to them the oracles of the law. It says in Romans chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, **What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much in every way:**

**chiefly, because that unto them were entrusted the oracles of God.** So that is what this is depicting. It is not talking about trusting them with money, even though that is used in the parable. The money represents the oracles of God. The Word of God that He entrusted the Jews with, for them to preach and publish throughout the world, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But as we see, they rejected it, one rejected it. So they have different values.

Notice for each of the servants one received five talents, one two talents, and one one talent, and **to each according to his own ability.** The word *ability* (**δύναμις**, *dunamis*) is the word *capacity*. It is interesting that the Lord chose out different measurements for people to be entrusted with based on their capacity, their capacity for the responsibility to handle. And the lord, the master of these servants and slaves knew his servants. And based on their abilities and capacities he gave to them.

The Lord always entrusts us with what our capacity is. We should not compare ourselves to other people. The one with one talent was not better off than the one with five talents. Both are entrusted with the master's possessions.

In Romans chapter 12 verses 3 to 5 Paul says, **For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to each one the measure of faith. For we are all many members in one body, and all members have not the same function: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.** So everybody ought to think soberly, not to think high-minded but to think according to God has measured to each one the measure of faith. Whatever God wants us to do He will do so according to our capacity, and He will lead us according to the faith that He gives us. He measures faith to people to do what He would have them to do. He does not measure the same measure of faith to each person, but rather by capacity.

Even with temptation and trials. Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13, **No temptation has taken you, but which is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to suffer above what you are able to bear.** There is your word *able, capacity*. **Will not allow you to be tempted above your capacity to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that you may be able** - there is our word again - **you may be able to bear up under it.** So he is saying, first of all, everything that you suffer through is common to human beings. Somebody somewhere has suffered the same thing or is suffering the same thing. It is not uncommon. Sometimes we feel sorry for ourselves and want to think that nobody knows the trouble I have seen. But it is common. But the Lord is faithful. He will give a means of escape to those who come to Him that we may be able to bear up under it, be able to bear up under it. He gives the faith. He ministers and leads according to capacity. He does not expect us to live up to what somebody else is doing. It is our own capacity and ability. **So unto one indeed he gave the five talents, to another one two, and to another one, one, to each according to his own ability, own capacity. And he left the country immediately.** So he left his possession in the hands of these servants.

The Commerce, or business, in verses 16 through 18. **And having gone, the one who received the five talents did business with them and made another five talents.** So now he

has got ten talents. **In like manner the one with the two talents did also; he himself also gained another two.** So he doubled his. **But having gone away, the one having received the one talent dug in the ground and hid the money of his lord.** It was common in those days to dig a hole and bury valuables. They did not have vaults. They did not have deposit boxes. So it was common to dig a hole and bury your valuables. So the one that received the one, he dug a hole in the ground, and hid the money of his lord.

Then The Collection in verses 19 through 27. **And after much time,** notice the emphasis there. **After a long time, the lord of those servants comes and takes account with them.** Obviously, a surprise. Here is the theme of the two parables. Watch, for you do not know when the Son of Man is coming. So he comes and he takes account, he calls the three servants to give an account of what they did with what he entrusted them with. **And having come, the one having received the five talents brought another five talents, saying, Lord, you entrusted five talents to me. Behold I gained another five talents over them. And his lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You are faithful over a few things; I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.** His reward was for his faithfulness, not for doubling the money. He was faithful over a few things. His reward was, **I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.** Just like this festive wedding ceremony feast. **Enter into the joy of your Lord.**

**The one having received two talents also coming, said, Lord you entrusted two talents to me. Behold, I have gained two other talents over them. His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You are faithful over a few things; I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.** Again, their reward is for faithfulness. And he gives him the same reward as he did the first one. So it is not based on the amount of talents they had, and how much money they made, even doubling their money. Same reward, different results, because it is all based on faithfulness. These two servants exhibit the attitude of a good servant.

In Luke chapter 17 verse 10 it tells us when you do all these things which are commanded you, say we are unworthy slaves, we have done only that which we ought to have done. So the Lord in in Luke chapter 17 verse 10 commands the slave, say we were unworthy, because we have only done that we were supposed to do. They did not get rewarded for doing what they are supposed to do. They were rewarded for their faithfulness in obedience to the Lord.

**And the one who had received the one talent also having come, said, Lord, I knew you, that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter.** Basically, you are talking to him about stealing. You are a harsh man. The word *hard* is the Greek word **σκληρός** (sklēros) it means *harsh, rough*. You are a harsh man, and you reap where you do not sow, and you harvest where you do not scatter. So he is saying you take somebody else's crops. You did not sow the seed there, but you are harvesting it anyway. So he is accusing him of being a cheater. He said, I know you. But notice the motive in verse 25. **And having been afraid, having gone away, I hid your talent in the ground. Behold, you have yours.** And he is holding out his hand and giving the one talent back to the master.

Now it is interesting that he did not steal it. He did not spend any of it. He did not make an excuse, like, "I lost it," so that he can have it himself. He was actually afraid to do anything with it. No faithfulness at all. Not just unfaithful but no faith at all. The key here is that he did not know his master. What he imagined in his mind and heart is what he thought about his master. That he was a hard man. Well, he was not a hard man. That he expected to reap where he did not plant seed. No, he was not like that at all. He was a very kind man, a very fair man, only giving out the responsibilities to the people who had the capacity.

Verse 26, **And having answered, his lord said to him, Evil and lazy servant! You had known that I reap where I did not sow, and I gather from where I did not scatter.** So he says, "I am repeating back you what your philosophy is, what your view of me is." Interesting he did not repeat, you said, "I am a hard man." He did not repeat that at all. But rather, **You had known that I reap from where I did not sow, and I gather from where I did not scatter. Therefore it was necessary for you to put my money to the bankers and having come I myself would have received mine with interest.** So he says, "Your philosophy does not make sense. Your philosophy does not match your actions. If you were afraid and did not want to do anything with it because you did not want to be judged, you could have taken it down to the bankers and it could have earned interest while I was away, and I would have had interest with my possessions. But you did not do that. You hid it in the ground."

The Conclusion, **Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one having the ten talents.** So step number one is remove that one talent from the one with one talent and give it to the one with ten. The reason? **For everyone having, it will be given, and will abound. But from the one not having, even that which he has will be taken from him.** So he is saying that the servant that had the one talent, did not even have the one talent, he had no faithfulness. He did not belong to the Lord, basically is what it boiled down to.

And secondly, step number two - step number one is remove the talent and give it to the one with ten talents. But step number two, **And cast the useless servant,** the word *unprofitable* in the King James text means *useless*, **cast the useless servant out into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** So cast him into hell.

There are two kinds of people mentioned in this parable. Both of them Jews. One is a faithful Jew, who took that which is entrusted to him and went out with a commission from the Lord to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ; but they did it. But then the one who had the one talent - no faithfulness at all. He took it and hid it. That is the Jewish person, or the Jewish people, or the Jewish nation that rejected their Messiah and they will not be saved. Faithfulness in this parable equals salvation. Unfaithfulness equals that person that is not saved.

See when a Christian, a believer, is not faithful because we all are not faithful in many ways. But even in our unfaithfulness we are told in I Corinthians chapter 3 verses 14 and 15, **If any man's work abides, which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.** Every believer is going to pass through the fire. I always picture this in my mind - I am a conceptual learner so I had to put in a concept form to understand it - of a carwash. Where they hook the car to the pulley and it pulls the car through the carwash, except instead of

water it is fire. Every believer is going to pass through the fire. Not the fires of hell, it is the fires to burn off that which is not of the Lord according to I Corinthians 3:14 and 15. So those things will be burned but that person will be saved such as through fire. But not a person that is not saved.

That is why the parable is applicable to faithful and unfaithful Jewish people. To be faithful to that which the Lord commissioned them to do. So the message is still there for all people. Watch and take heed, be watchful, because you do know what hour your Lord is coming. Be busy about the Lord's work, in the capacity that He has given, with the faith that He has given. Not comparing yourself to other people but being faithful to do that which the Lord is leading us to do. That is what He wants.

Let's close with prayer.