

## Kingdom Judgment

Matthew 25:14-30

This parable comes to us in the context of Jesus' teaching on his return, his second coming, in judgment upon the world. The Olivet Discourse of chapter 24 is, as I have stressed, most directly focused upon Jesus' pronouncement of judgment upon Old Testament Israel for their rebellion and unbelief, a judgment that came to pass historically with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Yet that judgment upon the nation of Israel would also serve as a timely and appropriate sign of the final judgment that is yet to come at the end of the age. The breadth of that judgment is most clearly identified in,

Mat. 24:31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Similarly, in the parable of the two servants, we read of the evil servant that,

Mat. 24:50 "...the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Thus last week I also included the first parable in chapter 25, of the wise and foolish virgins, and the judgment upon the foolish virgins is rather plain,

Mat. 25:10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us!" 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

Matthew's gospel then records the parable that is before us this afternoon, another parable which illustrates and helps to define the kingdom of heaven.

v.14-15

It is safe to say that the man traveling to a far country represents God himself in this parable, and the main point of the story of the parable is in the concept of stewardship. Stewardship means managing something of value for the benefit of its owner. A steward, in Jesus' day, would have been a slave. A highly trusted and respectable slave, one who would have much freedom and responsibility in the running of the whole household. Perhaps the closest analogy today would be something along the lines of a chief of staff for someone who is wealthy or powerful. Maybe you could think in terms of a professional financial advisor as well, someone you hire to manage your portfolio, if you have enough money to be able to do that. It is someone who has the right to exercise authority on behalf of the owner, and with that privilege comes responsibility. So with this parable, let's consider,

### I. THE NATURE OF STEWARDSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The concept is broad and comprehensive. In one sense, it is the most comprehensive definition of the whole of our responsibility as Christians. The greatest understanding of our duty as God's people can rightly be understood in this context. We are stewards! Consider Paul's words of himself in,

1 Cor. 4:1 "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the

Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

That's a steward, one who is conscious that "it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." And "He who judges me is the Lord." Similarly, Paul writes,

Col. 1:24 "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints."

And again,

1 Cor. 9:16 "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship."

In refer to all those verses to emphasize just how significant a principle this is. And the concept of stewardship applies to each of us, all of us, not just to the apostle or even to ministers or elders today. This parable has no such limitations. Rather, it refers to the nature of the kingdom of heaven in its broadest sense. And,

**A. Stewardship means that God entrusts us with a measure of what is his.**

The "talents" in the parable likely have reference to a measure of money, a large amount of money but not exorbitant, perhaps something along the lines of an annual salary for an average

worker. We tend to think of it more as some sort of natural gift, and I wouldn't want to put any defining limitation on the meaning of a talent in this parable. It would refer to anything God gives us, anything which he entrusts to us. It could be money, or some measure of value. It could be the exercise of some gift or ability in service to others. And most broadly, it is life itself, the whole of life. Your whole life should be seen as a stewardship. Every breath you breath is given to you by God, entrusted to you, that you might use the whole of your life for his benefit and profit, for his glory.

And the underlying point is that God owns it!

Ps. 50:10 "For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine."

Whatever portion of this world's goods comes to us, we are entrusted with that measure of God's provision. Whatever strength and ability or gift is ours, it is entrusted to us by God. And in the obvious words of this parable, that distribution is unequal, uneven.

v.15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey."

There is not a judgment made about these servants in that distribution, rather the emphasis is upon God's own sovereignty and purpose. The point is not to figure out why which servant received the portion that he did. Rather, with the unequal, the overall point is further emphasized, namely our responsibility.

**B. Stewardship means that we are responsible to be faithful to God with what is his.**

Again, to stress the obvious, the duty of the servants, our duty,

is faithfulness! The measure of success is faithfulness. The measure of obedience is faithfulness. Not any external measure. But the faithfulness of responsibility to manage well what God has given to us.

And we see that faithfulness demonstrated by the first two servants.  
v.16-17

We see the failure in terms of faithfulness of the third servant.  
v.18

And we see the broad principle declared in,  
v.19

The master of the servants “came and settled accounts with them.” That’s what God does. That’s the nature of his judgment, as we see in my third point in a few minutes. That’s a healthy description of what we will encounter at the judgment seat of God! God will settle accounts. He will observe, and judge, according to the measure of our faithfulness.

Luke 12:48 “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

That is a healthy and godly perspective on life, and the right way in which to understand the coming judgment as well. I believe these words in 1 Cor. 3 ought to be understood in the same context,

1 Cor. 3:10 “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this

foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Stewardship means that we are responsible to be faithful to God with what is his. With that awareness, let’s look now a bit more closely into,

## **II. THE NATURE OF GOD.**

Here, with the third servant, we see a wrong view of the nature of God. This needs to be identified, because it so directly affects both the motivation and expression for faithfulness. In the parable, of course, this wrong view of the nature of God resulted in a lack of faithfulness and a rather profound expression of judgment.

So, the third servant.  
v.24-25

He was wrong, of course. That’s the point.

### **A. God is not a harsh taskmaster causing the fear of dread.**

Perhaps this servant resented only receiving the one talent. Perhaps he saw that as a statement of the master’s lack of confidence and trust. But whatever his motive might have been, the meaning of the parable is plain. He misjudged the master, considering him harshly. And in the fear of dread, became lazy and careless. “I knew you to be a hard man.” Such a strange difference in perspective from the other two men. They seemed

grateful and appreciative of what the Lord had “delivered” to them. This third servant saw no such generosity in the master, and felt only the oppression of the burden laid upon him.

He seemed to feel himself slighted, failing to understand any goodness in him, judging the master in light of his own envious and selfish nature. He even sensed an unfairness in the master, accusing the master of something unjust with that reference in verse 24, “I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.”

Satan would love for nothing else than for our perception of God to be thus twisted and perverted, that we would miss the sense of his goodness, his mercy, his kindness. Sadly, there are Christians who struggle with that, and many unbelievers who reject God altogether on that basis. Yet Scripture presents to us such a different understanding of God, for example,

Ps. 103:1 “Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Ps. 34:1 “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.”

We need to nurture this proper view of God, understanding the fullness of what the Bible reveals to us about God. That’s what the third servant missed, to his own harm and spiritual disaster. He missed what must be grasped as we relate to God regarding his goodness. “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good.”

God is not a harsh taskmaster causing the fear of dread. And yet, he is just.

## **B. God is just to hold us accountable for our diligent faithfulness.**

Consider the master’s response to this third servant.  
v.26-27

There is an accountability, clearly expressed in those words, an accountability that is at the heart of our relationship with God. Accountability is at the heart of the responsibility of a steward.

2 Cor. 5:9 “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Rom. 14:10 “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.” 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

That is, I believe, the meaning of the reference to our judgment according to works, as well.

Mat. 16:27 “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

As a steward, having been entrusted with a measure of God’s grace, we are held responsible and ultimately accountable for our faithfulness in that stewardship. And God is just to hold us accountable. Thus the warning,

Gal. 6:7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

Thus, with this parable of the talents, we see very clearly,

### **III. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD ON THE DAY OF RECKONING.**

This is, as I put it in my sermon title, kingdom judgment. There will be a day of reckoning. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” And the judgment upon this third servant is unmistakable. And shown to be just. Read again,  
v.26

In the parable, the master lays bare the sinfulness of the heart. The excuse about God being a hard man is not accepted. Rather, the servant is condemned as wicked and lazy.

The similar parable of the minas is even more explicit,  
Luke 19:20 “Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ 22 And he said to him, Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23 Why then did you

not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ 24 “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ 25 (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) 26 ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’”

We need to be able to hear those warnings, even as God’s people today. We need to be able to hear the threats of judgment pronounced against those who are unfaithful to God, lest we fall into a dangerous complacency and self-satisfaction. These words are pointed, and personal. The rebuke is clear...

v.27

And the judgment,

v.28

Then the broad principle that is based upon this concept of stewardship.

v.29

With the final conclusion the declaration of eternal doom.  
v.30

#### **A. God’s condemnation falls upon the wicked and lazy.**

Do you remember the parable of the wedding banquet?

Mat. 22:11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Those words of warning need to be spoken, especially in a day and age in which so many people take for granted God’s

goodness and mercy.

Mat. 7:17 “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Let me end, however, by looking at the first two servants.

### **B. God richly rewards those who show themselves faithful.**

With the appropriate warnings being given, the emphasis still remains on the faithful servants, those found to be faithful stewards, managing well what was entrusted to them.

v.20-23

Then, as well,

v.29a “For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance.”

The desire for this commendation should be at the heart of all that we do as Christians, the whole purpose of faithfulness in our stewardship. This is a good and godly motivation, that you might hear this commendation, this pleasing and delightedly evaluation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” In many ways, that should be the primary motivation of your whole life, of everything you do, that your master, your father in heaven, might be pleased with you. “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

It’s not a matter of works-righteousness. It is not that you are

seeking to earn anything before God, not that you think you have gained some merit or done anything to atone for your sins, but simply that, that what you have done, how you have lived, brought about the pleasure of God’s approval. “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

That goes along with Paul’s great expression and evaluation of his own life as he approaches his own death,

2 Tim. 4:6 “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

God richly rewards those who show themselves faithful. “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Jesus even specifies that reward, in the words of this parable,

v.23 “...you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”

Again, the context of stewardship. The goal of faithfulness. And the great principle of God’s own reward given to us, “You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.”

So make that your goal. Make that your ambition. Nurture that desire within your own soul as the motivation for your own faithfulness to the God who has so loved you in Jesus his son. Labor well, fight the good fight, run the race.

Rev. 2:10. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

And in that way, “Enter into the joy of your lord.”