

# Defending the Faith

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February 2019

## The Parable of the Talents

Jesus told a story reminding his followers that the wise should always remain ready for the Kingdom of Heaven because they will never know when the Groom (Christ) will come for his Bride (the Church). To those who are foolishly unprepared, Christ declared, *“Truly I tell you, I do not know you”* (Matthew 25:12). He followed that story with this Sunday’s Bible passage, the Parable of the Talents.

Jesus tells us of a man who planned to take a long journey. He gathered His slaves and entrusted his property to them while he was gone. To one slave he gave five talents, to another he gave two and to the third he gave one talent. A talent is a sum of money, which some calculate to be equivalent to 20 years’ worth of wages. The servant with the five talents immediately went and used the money in trade earning an additional five talents. The one with the two talents did the same and earned two additional talents. The servant with one talent feared his master, so he dug a hole in the ground and buried the money.

When the property owner returned from his journey, he summoned them to settle his accounts. The first two slaves, who were given five and two talents, respectively, proudly offered their master his property doubled. *“His master said to (them) him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master’”* (Matthew 25:21). To the third slave, who buried the one talent, *“his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave...you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest. So, take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents’”* (Matthew 25:27-28).



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## The Parable of the Talents (cont'd)

It is ironic that today the word talent refers to one's abilities and special gifts, since Christ was teaching us about stewardship in this parable. Everything in this life and on this earth belongs to our Master, God. We speak of "my house" and "my car" and "my money," but it all belongs to God. When we depart from this life, none of our possessions go with us. While we are alive, we are simply stewards, those responsible for God's possessions.

Just as the master in the parable put his slaves in charge of his property, God puts us in charge of the gifts He has bestowed upon us, whether they are possessions or abilities or talents. He expects us to use our gifts wisely to bring light into this world by glorifying Him. He does not want us to bury our gifts.



Another story, which illustrates this concept, is the fig tree. Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree in the distance. He approached it and found nothing but leaves. He cursed the tree, saying, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again" (Mark 11:14). Christ cursed the fig tree because it was not bearing fruit. Later, as they passed the tree, once again, the disciples noticed that it was withered. God expects us to bear fruit, to be a light in the world. He expects us to

live our lives revealing the image of Christ, being witnesses of our faith by sharing God's love to all. We are living icons, images of Christ.

Whatever gifts and talents we have received from God, we are to share them with others in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we do, God bestows greater gifts on our lives. When the disciples noticed the withered fig tree, Christ responded, "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11: 22-24). When we do anything and everything to please God, He will reward us beyond what we can imagine. When we go to work and give it all we can, we will experience joy and contentment. Work will not be a drudgery. Even one who does the most menial type of work will experience joy in being able to reveal Christ to others.

St. Nektarios of Aegina worked for a cruel master when he was but a young boy. His master beat him and berated him. There was nothing St. Nektarios could do to please his master. Nevertheless, the young boy would copy passages of scripture and hide them in the packages he delivered for his master. With joy, he would painstakingly copy scripture and spread God's word to all of his master's patrons. His joy in Christ could not be quenched. Today, he is a saint of the church who is called upon to intercede on behalf of multitudes of believers, especially cancer patients. Countless miracles are attributed to his intercessions. I, too, prayed to St. Nektarios to intercede on my behalf when I had cancer six years ago.

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## The Parable of the Talents (cont'd)

It is our responsibility, as Christians, to be ambassadors for Christ. We do not have to knock on doors or take to the streets to spread the word of God. We utilize the gifts God has granted us in our everyday lives. According to Paul (1 Corinthians 12:28), *“God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues,”* but the greatest gifts are *“faith, hope, and love...and the greatest of these is love”* (1 Corinthians 13:13). Those three are gifts we all possess!

We, as Christians are to be known by our fruits, the effects our faith, hope and love have on others and on ourselves. These are *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23). These bring great joy to Christ and glorify Him! Not only are we to share our gifts with the world around us, but more importantly, these are necessities to the flourishing of our Church. They are intended to strengthen us and our faith. They are to supply the needs of all the members of the Church, the body of Christ. We possess the Holy Spirit within us which unites us. We utilize our gifts to build each other up, to deepen our relationship with Christ, to raise our spirits and to support one another in suffering. *“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:26).



If we are suffering in any way, we seek comfort in one another. We empathize with one another because we have all suffered in one way or another. We forgive one another, knowing that God will forgive us, as well. This is the way of the Church. *“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). Do not

withhold the gifts you have to offer the church by burying them. Become an active part of your church. Let us become a blessing to one another. I have found that every single time I have asked God to allow me to be a blessing to others, I have received blessings in greater measure. We cannot out-give God.

**God bless you!**

Helen Kamenos  
Readers' Favorite Author

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## Sunday of the Canaanite Woman



*“At that time, Jesus went to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly” (Matthew 15:21-28).*

The Canaanite woman was not a Jew. She was a Gentile and prefigures the Gentiles, who would soon come to learn of Jesus Christ and become the church. In this passage, Christ explains that He came to the Jews first, His chosen people. Having been incarnated as a descendant of Abraham, Christ came among His human family members. Although Christ's disciples and first followers were primarily Jews, eventually it will be the Gentiles who accept Christ in great numbers. This story shows Christ came for the whole world, for everyone past, present and future. Although it may have begun by eating the crumbs that fell from our master's table, our great faith has spread across the world with millions of people converting to Christianity.

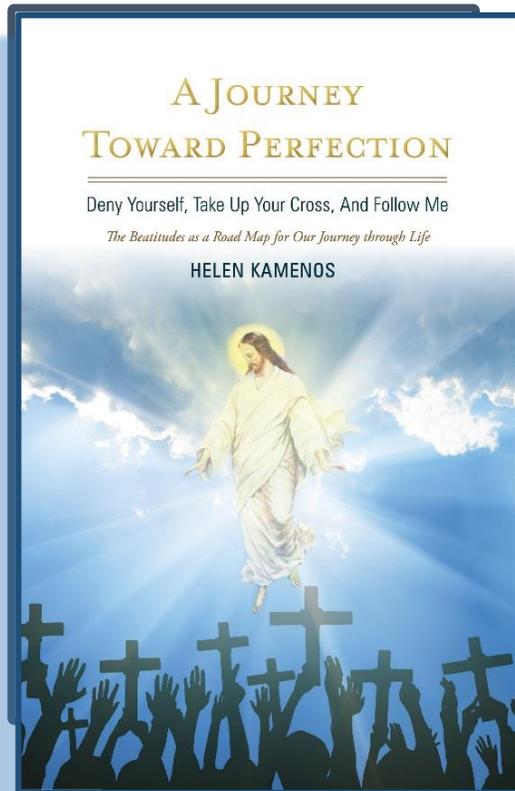
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## Reviews

**By Lisa Dobson posted on Facebook – “A must read.”**

“This book is a must read! I have been reading and discussing it with my WSC, Patrice Wheeler. Every chapter is like a gourmet meal, meant to be taken slowly, the words savored. Each chapter keeps coming back in Full Circle with scripture. It's amazing, the deeper understanding of the Word, discussing how it applies with today's circumstances! My spiritual growth can't be measured. I greatly appreciate this book and look forward to additional growth in my walk with my Lord. Thank you for writing this. Really, there are not words to describe how amazing it is.”

**By Mamta Madhavan for Readers' Favorite**

“A Journey Toward Perfection: Deny Yourself, Take Up Your Cross, And Follow Me: The Beatitudes as a Road Map for Our Journey through Life by Helen Kamenos is an uplifting book for all those who seek the love of Christ. The book leads readers into a deeper relationship with God and reiterates the power of God's love. The author exalts the virtues of Jesus Christ and makes Him the role model

of divine love. Every Christian's journey should be toward Christ and also toward an intimate relationship with Him and His divine love. Readers are encouraged and motivated through this book to follow in Christ's footsteps to see their lives transformed and becoming more perfect in Christ.”

**By Jaime Contreras on Amazon – “One of the Best Christian Teaching Books”**

“This world is full of evil and the believer must be able to stand up against evil and be a minister of love, hope, peace, and charity. This book serves as a handbook for believers because it encompasses the essential lessons for living a Christian life and battling evil. The reader of this enlightened book has a valuable tool. Like any stellar teaching, one must take the concepts taught in this book and wield them in righteousness. A firm foundation in the lessons taught on the mount and throughout Jesus' ministry will gird one for life and bring one into an intimate relationship with Jesus, the Savior. Finally, this book was written with love and faith. I praise the work of the Holy Spirit leading Ms. Helen Kamenos in this work. I rate this one of the best Christian teaching books I have ever read.”

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