

FINANCES: REWARDED WITH JOY



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

Although we can't know exactly how much money a talent was in our story, we know it was a lot of money. And the point we must see here is that God has entrusted every person with something very valuable. Even the one talent man was given a lot of money to handle. Notice that each servant received talents "according to his ability." Your responsibility is tied to your ability. God's kingdom purposes do not operate according to what is "fair" but according to what is best. God entrusts different stuff to different people according to His sovereign purposes. In other words, He knows what we can handle. Our job is to be faithful with whatever amount we have to work with.

Because the master knew His servants, He gave each one what He knew that one could handle, and then He left. That's the way God works. God gives, and then He leaves us alone. He doesn't coerce us. He doesn't look over our shoulders. He gives, and then He leaves it in our hands. He does open doors of opportunity. He gives us visions and dreams. He allows us to see just a little bit of what might be. But then He waits for us to use what He has given, and to see if we will be faithful with it. You have what you have because God gave it to you. And He expects you to manage His gifts within the boundaries of ability that He has wired into you.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10)

What is he saying? He's saying that everything you need is provided to you by Him. You don't need to worry about it, strive for it, preoccupy yourself with it or be anxious about it. You simply need to trust Him and acknowledge Him in your life! You need to surrender control of your stuff to him. Everything we have, our money, every gift, every ability, our health, our days, our resources, our opportunities make up a big package represented by the talents in this parable. We have something to work with. We have been entrusted with something very valuable. God owns everything. He just asks us to manage it. He gives me things and this is where my responsibility comes in - to do the best job of managing that I possibly can.

"After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. (Matthew 25:19)

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This unprofitable servant lost everything by not using his talent, by doing nothing! But he didn't steal it or embezzle it. He just didn't invest it. He buried it, kept it hidden. When the master came back, he asked for an account of how the money had been used, this servant presented it to Him just the way that he had received it. The master had expected his servant to use what he had been trusted with, not just keep it. "You expect too much of me, your demands are too great," was his response.

What held him back? Was he just afraid of his master? Or was it envy and bitterness that directed his actions? Was he jealous and angry? Did he fear being embarrassed, did he think that he was being set up for failure, did he hope the others would fail and he would look good in comparison? Or was it because extra work was involved and he had enough to do? Did he feel insignificant, inferior? After all, he had only received only one little talent. Did he feel slighted at being thought of as a 1 talent servant and that his abilities were not appreciated. The role of the Devil is to make us feel insignificant. (If you feel this way, read Psalm 139!)

Q. Do we trust that God knows more about us than we even know about ourselves?

Q. What is the purpose of God giving us talents?

Q. Is it important to know if we are a 5 or 2 or 1 talent person?

Q. Have you buried a talent that He is expecting you to be using?

Q. What keeps us from using our talents?

"Our obedience is God's pleasure when it proves that God is our treasure. This is good news, because it means very simply that the command to obey is the command to be happy in God."

John Piper – The Pleasures of God

"When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!" (John 15:10-11) NLT

Life is about choice. At a testing place there will not be a dozen possible choices; just one and an alternative, but our whole future will be conditioned by the choice we make. That choice is made up of a lot of decisions, but in the end it all boils down to one choice. We will either respond to the goodness of our master and pursue His will or we will choose our own course and find an excuse for that choice.

God never says, "If you try and fail, I will condemn you." You don't lose talents by investing them. You lose talents by burying them. When you invest them for Him, God will always honor the investment. God's Word commands only faithfulness. Be faithful and God will provide the increase.

And faithful servants are rewarded with the Lord's joy! *"The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together.'" Matthew 25:23*

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In Genesis 1:21 and 26 we read that before God made man He first prepared for him by creating a world of useful and pleasant things to sustain and delight him. In the account of the creation these were called simply "things." They were made for man's uses, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him. But there is within the human heart a desire whose nature is always to possess. It covets "things" with a deep and fierce passion.

The pronouns "my" and "mine" look innocent enough in print, but their use is significant. Things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the substitution. There can be no doubt that this possessive clinging to things is one of the most harmful habits in the life. Because it is so natural it is rarely recognized for the evil that it is; but its results are tragic. But there is a way out.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

He is not talking about denying ourselves luxuries or even necessities, but about "denying self" which is entirely different. Denying self means that we renounce our right to ourselves, the right to rule our own lives. The phrase "deny himself" literally means, "to completely disown, to utterly

separate oneself from someone. " Our gifts and talents and our lives should be turned over to Him. Our money, our families, our time – everything we have is a gift from God. They should be recognized for what they are, God's loan to us. We are often hindered from giving up our treasures to the Lord out of fear for their safety; this is especially true when those treasures are loved relatives and friends, or our earthly comfort.

But we need have no such fears. Our Lord didn't come to destroy but to save. Everything we commit to Him is safe, and nothing is really safe which is not committed. God wants us to be so familiar with His character and live so confidently in our faith that we can say, "I know what God's going to do. I don't know when or how, but He's made me some promises and I can walk by faith until I see it."

Genesis 22:2 *"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."* Abraham had a heart problem – Isaac had become a "thing" to Abraham. He occupied a giant place in Abraham's heart. Abraham didn't look on God's request as a test, but if he had made any other decision than the one he did, the whole history of the Old Testament would have been different. God would have found someone else, no doubt, but the loss to Abraham would have been tragic beyond the telling. In the end He had everything, but he possessed nothing. There is the spiritual secret. Abraham was willing to give all.

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John 6:9 tells of the young boy who gave up his entire lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fishes that ended up feeding 5000 people. Mark 12:41 describes the widow gave two pennies, all she had. It wasn't extra fish, bread or money, it was everything. Nothing hidden, nothing buried, no concern about their ranking on the talent scale. No agonizing over the size of the gift, They invested all of it.

Luke 6:37 - *"If you give, you will receive, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. What measure you use in giving – large or small – it will be used to measure what is given back to you."*

- Q. Do you have talents, things, toys, you haven't given up?
- Q. If the master were to return today and ask you to give an accounting of your life, will your balance show a healthy return on His investment in you?
- Q. What would it take for us to become like the church in Acts 2:43-47?
- Q. Read Nehemiah 6:3 and Jeremiah 20:9 – Nothing will move you from potential to productive until you are moved from passive to passionate.

PRAYER: Father, I want to know Thee. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that you may enter and dwell there without a rival. Amen.