

ACCOUNTABLE

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 15-11-2020

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last – dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

“The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

“After a long time, their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

“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!’

“The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

“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!’

“Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

“But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

“Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Will you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, these are the words of Your Son while He sojourned here on earth. We ask that, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, You would let these words come alive for each one of us.

Show us what it means for us today, in our lives, in our situations, in our circumstances and what we need to understand of what You expect from us today. So, inspire our thoughts, we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Let’s look at this passage through multiple lenses and probe a little deeper and deeper, so that at the end of our time together, we would have something that could be a takeaway for us, something that

we can say: I'm going to move myself from what happened with those three servants and the master, and instead apply the points that I have gleaned from this passage to my own life. so, at a casual reading what we see is this:

1. God gives to us according to our abilities.

In other words, what you have or I have, is given to us because of what God has seen innately in us with our capabilities and all the things that He knows much more about than we do. So we don't look at another person and say: Oh my gosh! I wish I had their abilities, their talents or their gifts. Then I would be able to do what they are doing. God has looked at you, God has looked at me and He said, "These things that I am giving to you are in direct proportion to what you already have and what I expect of you to do with them. God gives according to our abilities.

2. We are expected to invest and multiply what God has invested in our lives.

That is the understanding as we read this. Because the master came down very harshly on the servant who had done nothing but commended the ones who had done something with it.

3. Good investments and returns receive commendations from God while non-investments receive punishment.

The servants who used what was given to them were commended for what they had done while the one who hadn't, received a punishment. The non-investment happened because the person didn't really know the master. He went to the master at the end and said, "I know you are a harsh man, harvesting crops you don't plant, gathering crops you don't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money." All of that showed that he had no idea who His master was. He didn't invest. He thought he'd play it safe and he kept it hidden away – because he really didn't know his master.

4. If we do nothing with what we have, even that will be taken away from us.

If the things that are given to us just lie dormant with us, one day even that will be taken away from us.

5. If we do well with what we have, even more will be given to us.

That's what we can glean at a very casual reading of these verses. But let's now put them into context because all of this actually sits together as Jesus is telling His disciples to watch and wait for His return.

In Mark's account of the same parable (Mark 13:32-27), the Lord says, "What I say to you, that is to you disciples, I say to all – watch, watch, watch! What are the three parables that He has just looked at?"

- Matthew 24:42 where He talks about a faithful sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. The first parable was how we ought to be faithful with the responsibilities given to us by God.
- Matthew 25:1-13 we learn that we have to be prepared for His return; we need to do what it takes to be prepared that, when He comes, and we don't know the hour when He will return, we need to be prepared. We don't need to find ourselves missing something because we saw clearly that at that point, at that hour, we cannot get anything that is inadequate in and of ourselves. Nothing can be borrowed or bought at that time because that door will close (pun intended).
- Matthew 25:14-30 says that we need to be ready to give an account of the things that God has given us.

So Jesus is saying, “Watch, be aware that I’m coming and that you don’t know when. But there are three things that you need to be very aware of”

- Be faithful with your responsibilities,
- Be prepared for My return,
- Be ready to give an account.

What now can we glean from this parable if we mine a little deeper? What are things that I can begin to pull out that will help me understand in my own life, in my own situation, in my own circumstance, what is expected of me? If this is what Jesus is saying that I need to be very, very careful because I will have to give an account of the things that that I’ve been given, then what do I need to understand very clearly from this parable so that I’m not caught short when He comes to receive us?

1. He entrusted his money to them (vs. 14)

In other words, he didn’t give a gift; he gave a loan. He gave something to them that they had to work with and then return back to him. We need to see that what has been given to us is not given as a gift that we say, “Okay, I’ve got it now. I’ll just keep it aside.” It’s been given to us with the understanding that we do something with it. Then one day, show what we have done back to the Lord.

2. He divided in proportion to their abilities (vs. 15)

God gives to us things that He knows we can do something about because He understands our abilities. He understands our situation – your situation, your circumstance, where you have been born, within which family, within which location geographically, in which era, under which people – all of this He knows. And taking all of that into consideration He says, “I’m giving you this with the foreknowledge that I know exactly who you are and what you can do with it.” So, in proportion to what He already knows about me, He gives me.

3. We are called to give an account (vs. 19)

In other words, what God has given to me, one day I will stand before Him and He will say, “What did you do with the things that I gave you?” and we have to come up with an answer. We need to have a good answer, one I think that needs to satisfy the first and second servants’ response.

4. Investment, gain and profit was expected, commended, celebrated and rewarded.

What we are expected to do with the things that we have been given is expected by God. God expects us to do something, and when we do that, He commends us and He says, “We’ll celebrate what you have done.” Then we are rewarded. Wow! Imagine being told by God – Let’s celebrate together. Or hearing the words “Well done! Good and faithful servant.” Or being told, “You’ve done well. Now here’s the reward. Here’s more that I’m giving to give to you.”

5. Handing back the money unused is unacceptable and we will be chastised, the money taken back and punished with eternal separation. (vvs. 26-32)

Giving back the money unused was unacceptable, and we will face chastisement from the Lord, and what we have will be taken away and we will face judgment at that time, a judgment that Jesus says will be in a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Four points that are sprinkled with good news, and then the fifth which is very sobering when He says, “Be careful of not using what has been given to you.”

What are these “talents or bags of money/silver or gifts, things that God has given to you and me that He is expecting a return from?”

One of the things that we need to look at is the word 'talent'. This word is used elsewhere, and in other translations it means a weight. The New Living Translation talks about a bag of silver, and that is the weight that was given. It was quite an amount. Or it could be our spiritual gifts. The reason I'm throwing all this to you is that when you read commentaries, there is nothing definite about this. Some say it could be gifts and talents that we have; others say it couldn't be because it is given by the master and then he goes away. They liken it to Jesus giving it to us and then his return.

But I think that we can just look at a couple of options and move on because I don't think that is definitive of what we need to understand from this passage today. It could be the innate gifts and talents that you have; it could be spiritual gifts which are given to us when we come into a relationship with Jesus, when we accept Him as Savior and Lord in our lives. Paul says, concerning spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians: "I don't want you to be ignorant." So be aware of the spiritual gifts. He also says in Philippians 2:12 "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," or as the New living Translation puts it, "Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear." The Message version reads: "Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God." In other words, you've received salvation, but now begin to live a life that showcases that the eternal God has saved you and now lives within you. Therefore, there should be a marked change in the way that you and I live our lives.

It could be the access that you've given to the Holy Spirit, because we also read in Ephesians 1, that when we receive Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit enters us. The Holy Spirit is in us, but we need to give access. Have we given that access so that the things that God has given in this situation, the Holy Spirit can begin to change and multiply and enhance all the things that God has endowed you and me with?

So, talents – we just look at it broadly and say: Anything that God has given to us, is placed in us, must be something that we utilize and use for His glory, to invest, to bring gain, or to enhance.

What would be our conclusion as we look at this passage?

1. God has endowed us with 'talents' that he expects us to hone, use, develop and enhance.

I'm going to just let you deal with what it is you think God has given you. Then you ask the question of yourself: This thing that God has given to me, am I honing it? Am I making it better? Am I developing it? Am I using this thing or is it in cold storage? Is it better than when I received it from God, when I first got it? When I look at it now, is it worth much more? Or is it just where it was?

2. One day we will give an account of how we have used the things that God has given us.

Beloved, it's not enough that we just look at things and say, "Okay, I'm going to use it, I'm not going to use it. Anyway, this life is over, it's done and this will be done." No. The things that God has given to you, one day we will have to reply when He says, "What did you do with it?" He will call us o account. That is what scripture tells us. We cannot live thinking that when I am done with this earth, then this is over. No! These things that God has given to you and to me, we take what we have done with it when we stand before our Heavenly Father and we answer and say, "This is what we have done with the things that You have given to us." He will hold us accountable, you and me, for the things He has invested in us.

3. It would be better for us to hear the words "Well done, My good and faithful servant!" than to hear Him say, "You wicked and lazy servant!"

So true! it would be so much better to hear Him say, "Well done," than to call us lazy and to then make us leave His presence.

So, I offer this passage to you and say this: Wherever we are in life and whatever we have been given, we have no excuse to be unprofitable. No matter what opportunities we have, we are called to be responsible with them. We're either trading them, making them better, enhancing them, honing them, developing them, but we dare not dig a hole and put it in and cover it. Don't let your light be hidden under a bushel.

Our thought for us, beloved, is to just look introspectively at our lives and say: What is it that you have given me, God? Have I been using it? Have I been honing it, developing it, enhancing it? Or have I just kept it hidden away? Because the truth is, we'd rather ask the question now and be able to do something about it than find out that we didn't do anything and it is too late.

Let's pray together, and I'm going to ask God, in His mercy, to show us. If you open your heart to Him and say, "Yes, Lord. show me," then I believe that through His Spirit, He will show you those areas, those endowments that He has made into your life, investments that He expects a return for.

Shall we pray together?

Our Heavenly Father, on the one hand this is so celebratory, Lord, that one day we will be able to stand before you and show you the things we have done, and hope Lord, that we will hear "Well done!" We all want to hear that 'Well done' from You. On the other hand, we also have been reminded that we need to do something about the things that You have given to us, that we ought not to take it lightly or hide it away or not use it. If anyone listening to this message is opening their heart to you and saying, "Lord, show me what You have given me and how I need to use it," Lord, would You do that? Would You, through the beautiful power and presence of Your Holy Spirit, touch their hearts and minds. Show us those things that You have placed within us that You are expecting an investment and a return when we meet You. And Lord, even beyond that, undergird us with Your Spirit that we can do everything that we need to do in being obedient to You. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.