

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

Intro -

- 1 Let's pray before we open Gods word. *Father we pray that you would allow us to have an open heart to learn from your word. Would you be with us now. Amen*

Imagine you have a bank account, in which every morning £86,400 appears in it. But.. you can only use that amount for that day. By the evening the bank deletes whatever part of balance you failed to spend during the day.

What will you do? Of course, you will use every penny in the account before the day ends. Well, each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME.

Every morning, the day credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off the left over credit as a loss. You've missed the opportunity to invest that time or money well. If you fail to use the day's deposits, you've missed that chance, it's gone. There is no drawing it against tomorrow, rolling it over or having another chance for that day.

As Christians we know God has granted a set time, a certain amount of material possession and given us all individual abilities to use for him. Are we going to use them well?

Context -

So where are we in Matthews Gospel. Well, we are getting toward end of this Gospel, Jesus is about to be betrayed which will lead him to his death on the cross. In chapter 24 and 25 we see a last call from Jesus for the disciples to be prepared, for the coming kingdom and to follow him.

And In chapter 25 we see two parables. Firstly The Parables of the Ten Virgins shows us, What it looks like to be prepared for Christ Return! Then, the Parables of the Talents shows us what it looks like to be active as we wait for Christs return?

So that's the question of this parable - How we should live in our current age with the hope of Christ return?

2 Time, Treasure, Talent-

As we come to this parables we see that a Master has given talents in different quantities to each servant. And what is important here is thinking through the relationships between the master and the servants. The master must know his servants well, otherwise, firstly why would he trust them with his valuable wealth and secondly how would he know each servants different abilities.

The masters wealth is exceptional, we see this in his references later on where he says 'you have been faithful over little'. What he is saying here is 'little', is not a small amount of money. A talent is a weight of currency. There lots of dispute amongst biblical scholar whether the talents is a certain type of money, e.g. silver or gold etc. Whether it's enough to be 20 years worth of wages or one year. But the main point is, that a talent or bag of gold is worth a lot of money. But to the master it is only a little. He is a seriously wealthy man, but he is a master who knows his servants and trust them with his wealth. He trusts them to take on his wealth and be fruitful with it, making the most of the opportunity laid out in front of them. The master's relationship with his servants means he knows them, he knows there abilities and gifts. He knows there work ethic and what they are cable of.

In this parables Jesus is the master, he goes on a long journey and will return to take account of what his servants have done with the talents he left them.

What he is calling his servant to do is to be part of his Mission! For the master in the parable it is his property, wealth and investments. For Jesus it's the spread of

the Gospel. He has prepared and equipped all who follow him to live out the Christian Life. He knows us intimately and has given us the life, circumstances and relationships, according to our ability to be able to serve him faithfully. And as we see in the parable the servants had different amounts given to them. One had five, one had two and one had one. God knows the ability and capacity we can work too and gives in line with that. We may then think, well some of us are more valuable because we have been given greater talents but this idea of a greater value is stopped in the fact the master gives the same response to the first two servants on his return. As he settles the accounts he shows that he isn't concerned about who has more to start with, what he is concerned with is that the servant is faithful and produces with what they have been given.

You see its not about being the most gifted and talent person, its not about having the biggest following. Jesus only had 12 disciples at its core. It's about being faithful with what you do have and using that for the kingdom and to serve well.

A phrase that I have always found helpful to remember when thinking through how we should look to serve God. Is our... Time, Treasure, Talent. We all like a little bit of alliteration. But it's really helpful to think about when we want to serve God and the world. It's often easy to think I'm not gifted, so I can't serve. Or i've got no money or not many possessions, so what could I give or use. Or I'm just so busy, I've got no time to do anything. Those may all be limitations we can get frustrated with when we want to serve with the talents God has given us. Some of us are rich in gifts, some are blessed with time and some can give freely. And when we put those together, we can see all the ways we can serve. Okay, we might not be able to give a huge sum to a missionary. Or we may not be able to give up hours in our week to serve different groups. Or we may not have all the gifts in the world but we are called to faithfully use our Time, Treasure and Talent to serve God, in the capacity that we do have and when we put all those elements together we will see the whole church serving effectively. That should be a real challenge for us all to take away. I'd encourage you this week to make that a priority. How do we use our time to serve God, how do we use our treasure, whether money or possessions, to

help others. How do we use our God given gifts and abilities to further the Kingdom as we serve Christ.

And why would we do that? Well as we see the master returns and comes to settle the accounts. Both the first and second servants have doubled what was given to them. And what is the masters response.

'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

A note we must mention here is to reference the thought that we could be preaching a works based faith. That the master is only saying you may enter my joy if you have proven your work worthy enough. This isn't true. What we are seeing here, and it's why the relationship between the master and servants is so important. The service is a wonderful overflow of faithful servants, because they know there master and can see what he has given to them and entrusted to them. They want to live to please there master. For us we don't work to gain our salvation or our reward. We work as an overflow to the knowledge that faith has bought us

3 life. As it says in James 2:17 - Faith Without Works Is Dead. Faith comes first.

This is what it looks like to know God and to live out his mission, as we wait for Christ return. To be faithful with the time, treasure and talent that we have been given, living with the hope that when Christ returns we will receive that commendation of 'Good and Faithful Servant'.

4 The True Vision of the Master

A really important point for us to draw out of this parable is that we need to have the correct vision of the master. As i've alluded to before the relationship between the master and the servants is the pinnacle of the passage. How does the Master know the servants? How do they relate to him? The thirds servants reaction to the

master coming home shows us that his understanding of the character of the master was flawed. He didn't have the correct and true vision of his master.

Each servant's behaviour, investment and work, is a window into how they know and see the Master. It has to make us ask... How do we see God?

This can be seen on two levels. Firstly do I see God as God. Do I see him for who he claims to be in the Bible? As C.S. Lewis puts it...we all have to decide whether we believe that Jesus is either a Liar, Lunatic or Lord. In three of the Gospels Jesus poses the question that says 'Who do you say I am?'. If you are here listening to this and don't know Jesus. Then that question is pertinent to you. The Gospel clearly explain who Jesus is and we'd be happy to sit down to you and chat about that more.

Secondly do we have a distorted view of God like the third servant's view of his master.

In verse 24-25 it says... 'He also, who had received the one talent came forward, saying, *'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'*

The servant's response to the master's return shows his heart towards him. He is instantly trying to frame his innocence, cover his own laziness with excuses of fear. The master gave him the opportunity of one talent to use, meaning the master must have known he had some capacity to use it. But he doesn't know the master and therefore his behaviour is not honouring to him.

If you have ever been on a stag or hen do they are often a strange place to be. Now bare with me, I'm not going to down a bad path. But often you'll get all the important people from that person's life coming together to celebrate. It can be strange because you get people coming from different parts of that person's life. So for example at one of my friend's stag do at college, he had some friends from

his home church, some from the new church he had joined, some from his family and some from his uni. And what you can get, is all these stories of the other groups, and you build a picture of them before you meet them. Then suddenly you're all thrown together to celebrate. You can build up a picture and idea about your friends other friendship groups without actually knowing them. And your behaviour toward them can change because you have a preconceived idea built up. To put a cliché to it, 'Don't judge a book by its cover'.

The third servant has a view of the master that is totally different from the first and second. This view of the master, with a lack of understanding and relationship, guides the servants behaviour. He is set up to fail because fear and laziness drove his decisions. Now I think that's an important point and a question to challenge us with. What is our view of God? Who do we see him as? Do we see him as a hard ruler or do we see him as a loving father, who has given us the opportunities and talents to serve him.

Our starting point, our view of God will guide our behaviours and decisions. If we place God, his word, his work, his mission at the top of our priority because of who God is to us and what he has done for us. Then our behaviours will be changed and directed to his will. How we view someone can cloud our judgment over the reality of the person.

If we want to think about serving God, as an overflow of his faithfulness to us and our faith in him. If we want to use our Time, Treasure and Talents well. Our vision of God has to be correct, as it will guide our behaviour.

5 Called to Action

One of the songs I have been listening to recently starts with the phrase 'Wakin' up to face the haze of apathy'. It's always stuck out to me. The Haze of Apathy. And I found it really relevant when thinking through what the third servant did. What his reaction was to the master? And ultimately what the masters reaction was to him. I

don't know what everyone's thinks is the reason for a decline in Christianity over the years in the UK but... I think that phrase 'the Haze of Apathy' may sum up some of the main reasons we've seen people leaving the church. We can just become so apathetic with our faith. So lazy with the Gospel and with the Talents that are given to us. The master response to the third servant is 'you wicked and lazy servant'. His reaction to being given a great treasure to use, was to hide it away. To ultimately chose to be lazy with what was given. The Devil is so happy to see inactive Christians being distracted by the world because it means the talents that God has given and the opportunities that are there, are being totally wasted.

One of the biggest differences with this parable compared to many stories we see in the Bible is that the third servant is called wicked through a sin of omission rather than a sin of commission. A sin of omission is a sin committed by willingly not performing a certain action. Whereas a sin of commission is a sin resulting from actions performed. The servant didn't actively do anything wrong, the point is he didn't actively do anything at all. His sin was in his failing to see the master correctly and to think that he could just waste away time until the masters return.

You see doing nothing with what has been given to you is a sin in just the same sense of abusing the gift God has blessed you with. The ramifications on people might be different but the sin is still the same. We are called to steward our talents carefully. And if we aren't using our gifts and talents, we aren't staying still, we are moving backwards. Time doesn't stop, so if we aren't using the talents we have, we are losing ground and in reverse for the Christian life.

Jack London who was American Novelist said *'The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.'*

Using our time wisely with the talents and opportunities that God has given to us is a vital part of living faithfully. We see two things drawn out at the end of the parable that are results, for inactive followers of Jesus. In verse 29-30 it says...

'...even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

We firstly see the fact that the Servant has his talents taken away from him and then he is cast to outer darkness. We see the fact that if we aren't faithful with what God has given, it will be taken away from us. It's like Atrophy in our muscles, if we don't use our muscles they will slowly start to waste away. Over time we will be able to lift less and less and eventually we can't lift anything at all. This is a great reflection of the Christian life, Paul in 1 Timothy 4:8 relates training physically to be trained in Godliness. Training in Godliness is far more valuable than physical training. We will waste away physically if we don't use our muscles. And in the same way we will waste away spiritually if we aren't active in using and growing the gifts and talents that God has given us.

If we remain inactive, we show the true state of our faith. We will succumb to spiritual atrophy and our final point will be the reality of the servant who is cast into outer darkness. A place of separation from God. Faith without works is dead.

Application

So as we think through the Parables of the Talents we are challenged. I would
6 really encourage you to think through what it looks like to use your time, treasure and talent for God. He has blessed you with all three with differing capacities. How are you going to use them well?

And as we think through those three T's well, I'd encourage you to think through...
7 What is my vision of the God? Our view of God will affect our behaviour. Do we see God as a harsh taskmaster or do we see him as a loving father?

8 And lastly, be reminded that we are called to action. We are called by the God of Heaven and Earth, with his authority and power to be part of his mission.

Myself, Roy and Nathan were recently reading through Acts 1 in a devotional time. In chapter 1 we see Jesus Ascension and he leaves the disciples with a call to be active in living out the Christian life. He says...

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

As we read on, after this command to go, we see Jesus ascend to heaven and two angels appear beside the disciples. They say ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?’. I mean picture the scene, the disciples have got there last command to go to the world with the Gospel. Then they have just witnessed Jesus Ascending to heaven. They are in shock. And these two angels are standing there next to them. And they simple say... Why do you stand looking into heaven? Are you not going to get on with the command that God has called you too. The reality of the parable of the talents is God has called us and equipped us, with the abilities to serve faithfully. And he is simply saying Go. Be called to action.

- 9 Just before we pray and worship, I want to encourage the church. Because I’ve been able to see what we have been talking about this morning in action over the last week. During the week there has been around 90 children in this School at Holiday Bible Club. And I’ve been able to see our Time, Treasure and Talents being used, with a correct view of the God shaping our actions, as the team has been active in sharing Gods word. And the beauty of it is the range of everyones talents. Some are in incredibly gifted with specific talents God has given. Others are blessed to be able to use there time to plan and organise. Again other are free to be generous in using there finance or possession to further the Gospel. Beyond the team this week, I know many of you will have spent time in prayer. So many people involved, whether there talents was a 5, a 2 or a 1. All will received that commendation from God, Well done Good a faithful servant.

Let’s Pray as we close... Father we thank you that you have blessed us with talents and the opportunities to use them for your kingdom. Would we think

through our use of your time, treasure and talents that you've given to us. Would we be careful to make sure our view of you remains correct and would we be active in living for you. Amen.