

November 15 Matthew 25:14-30

When you think about the promise that Jesus will one day return how does that make you feel? Does it instill within you hope or fear? Is there a part of you that wants to jump up in pure joy and say, "YES LORD JESUS COME?" Is there another part of you that is a little fearful? Fearful that Jesus will be less than impressed with how much you did to serve Him while you were here?

We have been brought to a saving faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We were adopted and sealed as God's children. We were also given spiritual gifts or talents to enable us to carry out His work here on earth of making disciples of all nations How often when Jesus came knocking on the doors of your heart did you refuse to serve Him? How often did you refuse His request on the grounds that the service was too menial, or too unimportant? Beneath your dignity. Not worth spending the time for someone with your talents or abilities? How many times did you say no because you felt like the task was beyond your ability? Would take too much time? Would require too great a commitment? Result in an emotional investment?

John MacArthur wrote: **"Godly, Biblical church growth results from every member of the body fully using his spiritual gift, in submission to the Holy Spirit and in cooperation with other believers**

We were bought at a price. The innocent suffering and death of Jesus. We have received every perfect gift and spiritual blessing. How can we see serving God- no matter what the capacity-as anything other than an honor? Today's gospel is meant to spur us on to use our talents so that one day we might hear Jesus say to us: **"well done thou good and faithful servant!"**

I am going to make six points today based on our Gospel lesson.

NUMBER ONE: EVERYONE IS GIVEN A TALENT OR SPIRITUAL GIFT.

Each of the servants were given talents according to their abilities. God gives each of us at least one spiritual gift that is to be used to accomplish His work here on earth. It is the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. That being the case we can never covet the gifts or service of another. The only thing required of us is to be faithfully obedient in using the talents we have been given to His glory. The outcome of our service is Holy Spirit determined. The outcome is not up to us, but the service is.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”** Matthew 5:16

We do not see the service we are called to do as being too great for us to carry out. Why? Because it is being carried out by the power of God’s Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who can accomplish the miraculous through us.

Likewise, we do not see our service as being too small. For it is in the “little spheres of service” and in our weakness that God’s glory most often shines the brightest.

It is through the diversity of gifts, talents, and abilities in the church that unity occurs! God’s expectation for those who were purchased by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

St. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:19-20, **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.”**

We are to serve Him with all that we are and have. So that we might glorify His name not just with words but also with deeds in keeping with His will.

NUMBER TWO: THE TALENTS GIVEN TO US ARE OF ENORMOUS VALUE.

In the parable one servant was given five talents, another 2 and another 1. The first two servants took this enormous amount of money and worked hard to earn more money. In the same way we have been given talents in the form of spiritual gifting for us to use in serving our master.

Do you realize that whoever believes and asks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will do miracles greater than what Jesus did while on this earth?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. John 14:12-14

We are given the opportunity- indeed the privilege- to serve in a greater capacity in His kingdom work.

NUMBER THREE: SERVING IS NOT AN OPTION BUT A DAILY REQUIREMENT.

In the parable the master went on his journey. He gave them no idea when he would return. He merely told them that upon his arrival, he expected to receive a return on the monies he had entrusted to them. Likewise, Jesus, who has gone to prepare a place for us will one day return.

John 14 reads, **"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

What will He find that we have done with the spiritual gifts He has given to us? It is not enough for us to merely "hang in there" and idly wait for His return. What would it say about us if we have done little, or even nothing, to build His kingdom! Waiting for Jesus to return is never merely passive. We will be called upon at that time to give an account of our service. What did we do out of genuine love? How did we use our influence, knowledge, strength, time, reason, intellect, and spiritual gifts to serve Him?

Salvation is not the end goal of a person's life. It is the steppingstone to being empowered and invited to serve in God's kingdom in this life!

Since we do not know the day or hour when the Master we must know in our hearts: that today could very well be the day of the Lord's coming.

NUMBER FOUR: WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN SOME WILL BE FOUND FAITHFUL. The identical words of praise and commendation of both the servants who received five and two talents accentuates an important truth. It is not the total amount earned that matters. What matters is the faithful obedience in "living up to one's potential and giftedness" that our Master seeks and rewards us for.

S. D. Gordon said, **"We have nothing to do with how much ability we've got, or how little, but with what we do with what we have. The man with great talent is apt to be puffed up, and the man with little ability to belittle the little. Poor fools! God gives it, much or little. Our part is to be faithful, doing the level best with every bit and scrap."**

We cannot choose our gifts and abilities. God gives them to us as He wills. You have been blessed with special abilities that are yours alone. Use them, whatever they may be, and forget about wearing another person's hat.

We all have roles to perform in God's kingdom! It is the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. It is through His power that we serve. Therefore, hearing the words "well done thou good and faithful servant" is not the result of the "greatness of the gifts with which we have been entrusted. Rather, it has to do with our obedience and faith that through God all things are possible!

When God asks us to serve, no matter how small or big the matter, we are to receive the request with pure joy. To our God, who controls and sustains all things seen and unseen, there is no such thing as a too "small" service. Why? Because He rewards based on obedience and faith. Not on the size of the divine assignment.

Likewise, we should not see any service as being "too big" for us to accomplish. Why? Because in seeing it this way we can come to falsely assume that it is through our own might and power that success in service happens.

Our service is not based on the "law of works but according to the law of grace." With thanksgiving in our hearts and overwhelming enthusiasm we are to approach our loving Master with confidence. Confidence that our service when presented with obedience and faith will be rewarded in the same manner as bigger acts of service!

NUMBER FIVE: WE ARE TO SEE OUR SERVICE THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS. The master in this parable did not say "well done brilliant or distinguished servant." He said well-done thou faithful servant. It is God who enables us to accomplish great things in His kingdom. That's why we dare not allow the praise from others to inflate our ego. If we do, we can fall into the trap of pride in which ministry success becomes a product of our own effort. No matter how successful we must never forget "we are His workmanship, created by Him, for the good works He has prepared for us."

Neither did the master say to the servant with two talents "well done with what little I gave you." When God asks us to do what we consider "minor" things sometimes out of pride we refuse to do such "menial" tasks. Foolishly we say that with our extensive abilities we can be the "public figure" in our church and community!

What we often forget is that those "with little influence and a narrow sphere" are often the ones called to do great things in His kingdom. Also, it will not be until the Master returns that we find out the true effect of our faithful service. Our labor when in Christ is never in vain.

As St. Paul says, **'Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.'** 1 Corinthians 15:58

NUMBER SIX: SOME WILL BE FOUND TO BE WICKED. Using our spiritual gifts leads to ministry development and growth. Refusing to do so shows a lack of faith. Fearing that his failure would incur his master's wrath, the servant who received only one talent, chose to overlook his responsibility to his master. He did so by burying his talent in the earth where it would be unproductive but safe.

The master called him wicked because of his laziness and lack of desire to serve. From this wicked servant we learn that "receiving God-given abilities is a responsibility that accompanies a right relationship with God."

Contained in this parable is a dire warning that half-hearted, double minded attempts to appear to love and serve God will lead to many on the day of the Lord to hearing the phrase "go away I never knew you."

"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" Matthew 7:22-23

I am not saying that salvation is not by grace. I am saying that works are the evidence that one has been saved! So, if you are wondering if you are the wicked servant in this parable then ask the Holy Spirit and review the evidence. Are you faithfully using your God-given gifts to build up the body of Christ and advance His kingdom? If you are then you are one of the good and faithful servants in this parable.

Our hearts should leap in pure joy that our Lord is going to return to judge us for the way in which we served Him while on this earth. We have all been given at least one spiritual gift so that we might be able through the power of the Spirit- to accomplish our assigned kingdom goals and tasks.

To reject service on the grounds that it is too easy and without public glory or too difficult and seemingly impossible is a sin. Why? Because God sees all service as equally valuable.

This parable finished with a dire warning: refusing to use the talent one has received is evidence that one is not saved and therefore will spend an eternity in hell weeping and gnashing one's teeth! We take this warning to hear. We serve our God with thanksgiving in our hearts that He has found us to be worthy to serve. We long to hear His words to us: "Well done thou good and faithful servant!"