

**Matthew 25:14-30**  
**By Grace I'm Saved:**  
**Stewardship**

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<sup>14</sup> “Again, [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

<sup>28</sup> “ ‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

There is an early-American poet named John Greenleaf Whittier, who is perhaps best remembered for one single line that he wrote during his career: “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: It might have been.” We may not know exactly what he had in mind when he first wrote those words, but we all understand his point—what a sad thing to see potential whether that’s with abilities, resources, time, or opportunities go to waste.

In our Gospel lesson this morning, Jesus was speaking to his disciples on Tuesday of Holy Week, just three days before He died. He was telling them how He would soon be leaving them and wanted them to be ready for the days to come. But, He wasn’t leaving them unprepared. Jesus had entrusted His disciples with gifts that he expected were going to be used.

The same is true for us. Jesus has given us gifts that he expects will be used to carry out the work He calls us to do.

To relay that truth, Jesus told His disciples, and us, this parable that we heard in Matthew 25. There was a man who was going on an extended journey. This man was rich—very rich. While he was gone, he wanted to give his servants an opportunity so he **entrusted his wealth to them**. He knows them. He has seen them at work. He trusts them.

Not only is this man rich, he is also generous. The amounts he entrusts to his servants are not small, a talent of gold was worth thousands of dollars. Yet despite all his generosity, he also shows a good amount of wisdom and shrewdness. He gives to **each of his servants according to their own ability**. He gives something to all of them, but he is only going to give each servant what they are able to handle. Really what he's doing is his very best to set them up for success.

The parable shows us two very different responses to the master's generosity. The first two servants' reactions are quite similar. **The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.** These two sprang into action at once. They were faithful. They made the most of their gifts, both their abilities and the money entrusted to them. When the master returned, they considered it a privilege to return the profit they had earned to him.

And he's generous again with his response: **Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.** He commends them; "You did well! You did the best with what you I gave you! You were faithful, and now I will give you even greater things. You thought I was generous before! My joy is yours; your place is at my side. **Come and share you master's happiness!**

But the third servant, well, he's a different story, isn't he? He was unfaithful in every respect. He **went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.** He earned nothing because he did nothing with his abilities or with his master's generous gift.

So what is Jesus' point in giving us this parable? His intent is to teach us about Christian stewardship. He wants each one of us to ask ourselves, "What kind of steward am I? What do I do with the gifts that have been entrusted to me? Am I like the faithful servant, the one who receives what the Lord has given me and willingly goes and put it to work for the Master? Or, maybe, am I like the lazy servant and just take what I have been given and bury it in the ground where it does no good for anybody?"

Maybe the first question we need to ask ourselves is, "What do I have? What gifts have I been given?" Over the last four months we've seen a number of answers to that question. He has given us the generous gift of calling us to be His children. In Holy Baptism, God adopted you into His family. In His Word and at His table, He continues to assure us He has taken all of our sins away. He gives us called workers and a Christian family to remind us of the saving work of Jesus Christ who lived and died and rose for you so that you can be with Him forever.

And that's not all He's done for us, we can also think of all the abilities and talents He gives us. Each one of you has a unique set of gifts that God has entrusted to you. Skills in working with your hands, athletic abilities, ability in math or science or language, skill in music or drawing or design. We see his gifts in other ways too. There are those with the gift of

encouraging, there are those who are good listeners, gifted leaders, willing volunteers, and we could go on and on.

Then there are the material blessings which He also pours out on us so generously. Think of your homes, cars, food, and even the time and money you can spend on just having fun! Our Master is so generous! We have been so richly blessed in so many ways! In your calling as children of God, you have the privilege to use the generous gifts of your Master that you have been entrusted with as you live as His servant.

Think about what a privilege that really is! What would it take to become a trusted servant or steward of a powerful person? What if you wanted to be the personal assistant for Bill Gates or Elon Musk? Can you imagine what the interview would be like? You'd probably be thinking, "How's my résumé? How do I look? What should I say?" You know they will only take the perfect candidate: one who has the right skills, a compatible personality, just the right amount of experience, and ultimately someone who can get things done. What a privilege it would be to be chosen, but how many of us would really have a shot? Now, what if we were applying for that same position before the Master of heaven and earth, the Creator of the universe, the Lord God Almighty?

We certainly aren't the perfect candidates. Our résumés are filled with sin. Our past is filled with the stain of failures and baggage. So often, our lips are used for evil, for lies and cursing and gossip and grumbling. By nature, we are enemies of the one who is hiring for the position because our **sinful mind is hostile to God**. (Romans 8:7).

So how could we expect Jesus, the perfect Master, to welcome us and make us His servant? Well, let's consider the greatest of His generous blessings! He says, "I choose you. In spite of you and your sin, I choose you. It will take an extreme makeover of sorts, but it is all at my expense." How did he do it? Jesus, the Master of all, **made himself nothing** (Philippians 2:7). He put Himself in our place. He replaces our résumé of sin with His perfect life. He replaces our failures with His triumph. He places His words on our lips and in our hearts. He washes our stains away with His blood. And because of this saving grace, you and I are able to enter the Master's service. And all we are left to do is simply ask, "How? How can I use the gifts I have been entrusted with to thank you and serve you, Lord?"

If we want a sober and honest evaluation of our lives we can ask ourselves, "Am I living like I know what Christ has done for me? Am I living like I have been called into the service of the Lord God Almighty? How am I using the gifts my Master has entrusted to me? How faithful have I been in using those gifts?" Most of us don't see ourselves as the five-talent-guy in the parable, do we? We're just regular people. We have our gifts, but they probably amount to one or maybe two talents. Our gifts are small compared to others. That may be true. Most of us are not making millions. Most of us will not become TV celebrities or fill concert halls with our talents or abilities.

But isn't it interesting Jesus told the parable the way He did? Why wasn't the five-talent-guy the unfaithful one? He had all the gifts! If he didn't use them, wouldn't that be the greater crime? Wouldn't that have a bigger impact? Maybe, but then each of us could easily say, "What a shame, but I am not a five-talent-person! So, I'm sure the Lord is not expecting quite so much of me. It's no real tragedy if I don't use my gifts." But Jesus pictures the least-gifted servant as

the unfaithful one. Why? Was it because he had fewer gifts to begin with? Was it because he used his gifts for some evil purpose? No, he was unfaithful because he didn't use his gifts at all.

Jesus is reminding us, "No matter what your gifts may be, I want you to use them faithfully. Your gifts may be different than someone else's. Your gifts may be less than someone else's. But each one of you has gifts—gifts especially entrusted to you by Me! Be faithful with what you do have."

What Jesus wants to remind you of in this parable is that He has a plan for you. It's a plan that began before you were ever even born. It's a plan in which He played a tremendous part by through the gifts of His saving grace. It's a plan that ends with you at His side, sharing in His happiness. And it's a plan which, right now, involves you—His own dear child, whom He has saved with His very life—using all the gifts and abilities and opportunities that He has given you faithfully for His service and for the service of those around you.

Is that plan what motivates you? Do we, as gifted servants, have the same priorities as our Lord? How will the Master respond when He returns? We see our failings as His servants, here and in other places. How could he miss them? We bow our heads. We plead for His mercy. We repent. And, we can be assured of our gracious and generous Master's response!

Jesus, our Lord and Master, has taken away all of our sins. His blood covers our unfaithfulness, along with our excuses and our lack of gratitude and generosity. And Jesus has made us more than His servants, by His grace and only by His grace, He has made us heirs of eternal life. For His forgiveness and His promise of eternal life, we simply respond, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee." And He accepts our lives of service as a thank offering, an offering of ourselves and our time, our abilities, and our material wealth, that we can offer in joy and praise.

What kind of a servant are you? You truly are a gifted servant. And motivated by the Gospel to use these gifts we have been entrusted with, you can be a faithful servant as well. By using our gifts faithfully, we can bring our God praise and glory. And instead of the words of Whittier, "what might have been" to wasted talents, resources and opportunities, you too will hear those words, **Well done, good and faithful servant. Come share in your master's happiness.**

Amen.