

Matthew 25:14-21

14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15 to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17 In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18 But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Jesus provides some very serious lessons on the responsibility of believers. In Matthew chapter 25 there are three very powerful lessons. Each one demonstrates the necessity of actively doing the Lord's ministry. In the parable of the ten bridesmaids is a lesson on shining the light for the Lord. In the parable of the talents there is the due diligence of doing the Lord's ministry in his absence. In the story about the separation of the sheep and the goats there is a lesson on actively caring out specific action of the Lord's mission. Jesus answers the issue that is raised in chapter 24 about the coming of the Son of Man. He teaches the necessity of being a faithful servant.

Today we will address a lesson on complacency as it is revealed through the parable of the talents. The bad servant simply does not produce. This is the same problem as the parable of the ten bridesmaids. The Lord expects you to be ready when the time comes. Everyone is given an opportunity to serve. Everyone is called. We are called but we are each called for different aspects of ministry according to our ability.

A man goes on a journey and he trusts his business to three servants, each according to their ability. Two servants worked diligently and devoted their talents to the best interest of the master. The master's response is "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (NIV). I don't know about you but for me these words are the best words I could possibly imagine hearing. "You have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (NRSV). You are called with an invitation to perform the ministry of the Master in a manner to where you hear the Lord's pleasure with your performance.

The Scripture reveals the Lord's problem is not a problem with evil demons. The Lord easily defeated temptation and evil demons. The problem the Lord has is with his followers. The Master expects productivity and one talent is not good enough. The person that under utilizes the one talent fails the Master. We need to learn from his mistake. He knew what the Master wanted. He knew better! His problem was that he had the wrong perception. He viewed the Master as hard. This incorrect perception caused the failure. The mistake was the wrong attitude that focused on the self instead of being focused on pleasing the Master. The Master's response is very harsh "You wicked, lazy servant!" (NIV).

Imagine the dialogue when you are face to face with the Lord. There are three basic scenarios; the bad performer, the good performer, and the best performer. The one that did not

produce was afraid and not prepared. The average produced some but not a lot and the Lord is pleased with the performance. The Lord does not demand that you be the best performer. The Lord only expects an honest effort on your part. The best performance is not perfect. This is person that has made mistakes but is in tune with the wishes of the Master and has corrected those mistakes. This person is looking forward to meeting the Master.

When I was in the Marine Corps I had made a mistake and got into trouble. I learned from that mistake and changed my attitude and devoted myself to the best performance I could muster at the time. Several months later I was up for a meritorious promotion. I came in second in the company. This was a good thing because it forced me to study harder and apply myself and I ended up first in the battalion. I passed the guy that beat me and got the promotion. I encourage you to adopt the same type of discipline. When it comes to your performance for the Lord, imagine that you need to up your game and devote yourself to winning. Faith requires faithfulness, due diligence, and loyalty. Jesus hands the ministry over to his followers to continue his mission which is far too important to be taken for granted. This is the Master's business. The church is the body of Christ. The responsibility for the Lord's ministry is in all of our hands: finances, outreach, mission, teaching, fellowship, etc. Take the talents that the Master has given to you. Adopt the attitude that the talents are not just given to you but entrusted into your care.

Let's take a few moments and follow the one talent. It is in the hands of the Master. It is handed over and entrusted to the servant. The one talent is hidden and not used. It is a dead talent. So, the master takes it back. It is now back in the Master's hands. This is very serious, it means you lose it. Jesus is teaching us that if you are not productive, you will lose what was given to you. Then it is handed over to a most faithful servant. The good and faithful servant gets an extra bonus. He started with five talents, was given five more, and then gets awarded the one from the unfaithful servant. It is when the Master returns that the accounts are settled. This is a lesson for us on our performance in the absence of the Master. It is a parallel lesson of the ten bridesmaids because it is about performance when the Master is away. The responsibility of the Lord's mission is delegated as duty and talents to be used for the Master during the absence of the Master. Good servants increase the value of Master's business. The heavenly realm is our lifelong goal. The number one goal in your life is to hear specific words from the Lord. "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter the joy of your master."

What are we to do? Be ready for the return of the Master. Apply your talents now for the glory of the Master during the absence of the Master. Never say "no" to the Lord's mission. Assume you need to up your game in order to be in 1st place. We are called by God. We are responsible to God. The bad servant was focused on his own emotion and was not devoted to the Master. Since he was focused on the self, he was unable to understand what the Master wanted. He was crippled by fear instead of having the joy of serving and this made him a bad servant. It is a valuable lesson for us in being prepared. Know the Lord and know what the Lord expects. Use your talent for the Lord's glory so that you hear the words "well done" from the creator of the heavens and the earth.