

One Talent August 13, 2017

Matthew 25:24-30

24 Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Between the last argument Jesus had with the religious leaders and the time they had him arrested he spent time teaching his disciples in the Olive Garden. Matthew chapter 25 is a beautiful chapter loaded with valuable insight. There are three major lessons, parables of Jesus: the Ten bridesmaids, the Talents, and the Judgment of the Nations. Last week we covered the bridesmaids. Today we will cover the parable of the talents.

To understand today's message it needs to be framed within the rest of the Scripture. The parable of the Talents is covered in verses 14 to 30. I will give you a brief summary of the content of versus 14 to 23. A man who is obviously well to do goes on a journey and trusts the care of his property to his three servants. The New International Version and the King James Version classifies them as servants. The New Revised Standard Version has them listed as slaves. The Greek word is *doulos* (which is pronounced doo-lahs) means slave. However, a more contemporary meaning is servant or in this case the role is one of a caretaker or steward. The man divides up his talents according to the ability of each servant. The first servant gets 5 talents, the second servant gets 2 talents, and the last servant gets 1 talent. The man leaves and while he is gone the servants go to work according to their skill and ability. The 5 talented servant is diligent and doubles up on the talents. The 2 talented servant is also diligent and he also doubles up on the talents. The 1 talented servant he is different he buried his talent leaving gaining absolutely nothing for the master. The man returns from his trip, settles the accounts with his stewards and rewards them for being good guardians of his property. He praises them with one of the most famous words of praise extolled upon a human "well done good and trustworthy slave." I personally prefer the NIV translation "well done, good and faithful servant." The issue is not the position of whether it is a slave or servant. The issue is the action of the person in the position. It is not an issue of who they are but of what they do.

The man is faced with a problem which brings us to our Scripture today. The 1 talented servant buried his talent. When it came time to settle with the master there was no gain. Man's response seems very harsh, some of the harshest words in the Bible "you wicked and lazy servant. The master physically takes the talent away from him and gives it to the 5 talented servant who doubled up the talents to 10 and with this extra talent he now has 11 talents.

The lessons today are of stewardship and diligence. For those who have even more will be given and they will have an abundance! How this lesson works is in the realm of the theology of abundance which is a multiplication process. It's not a matter of addition; it is a matter of multiplication, a compounding return, with blessings that multiply. This works like compounding

interest. You get a return based upon your investment plus the return it has earned. This works because God never stops blessing the faithful. The goal is to be diligent; to be a good and faithful servant and focus on pleasing the Lord.

The harsh words are reserved for those that do not exercise their talent. This is because they do not do what he they are expected to do. If you the servants do not put their talents to work then there is no reason for the master to assign talents in first place. The master assigned the talents so that they could be used to gain a return on his investment. Those who have nothing what little bit they have will be taken away. This is because they burry their talent. They do not use their skill and ability productively. I am reminded of the phrase “if you don't work you don't eat.” There are those who have nothing due to situations beyond their control. People on disability, people with health problems, people facing a disaster, etc. But for those who have little because they hide their talents, they will end up with nothing. They play the role of a victim instead of being productive. They blame politics, economics, and others for their position when they live in a world that rewards productivity. God is just. The non productive servant is a failure. He failed to use his talent for the benefit of the master, The Scripture tells us why he was afraid. It is more than a fear of loss. He is afraid of consequence of losing it. He is afraid of what the master would do to him. His motive is selfishness. He is focused on the self. He is not focused on pleasing the master. He is focused on what might happen to him. Being afraid of possible punishment he hides his talent. That's a key point that is often overlooked. The inherent nature of the man who hid talent is selfishness. In my opinion that's why the master used such harsh words “you wicked and lazy servant.”

Where would we be if the disciples hid their talents? Where would we be if the Apostle Paul hid his talents? Where would we be is the gospel writers hid their talents? Where would we be if Martin Luther or any of the other reformers hid their talents? How about the people who sacrificed to build this building? If people hid their talents we would have nothing here today - no gain.

In the Gospel one servant ends up with 11 talents. That's 5 times 2 plus 1. One servant has 4 talents. That's 2 times 2. One servant has none. That's 1 minus 1. That which he had was taken away from him because he failed to use it. If you don't use it you lose it. You only need one talent, that's all, just don't hide it. In the Scripture hiding your talent is forbidden.

An example of a one talent ministry is both contemporary and relevant to your ministry. In the book “An Invisible Thread” which is currently being studied by your Friends fellowship group there is an ideal example of someone who has been thrown away; cast out by our society. He is an 11 year old boy that is begging on streets and is ignored by most everyone. His life is doomed. All he has to live on is what he can beg for and scavenge for food out of the trash. The author Laura Schroff is a busy advertisement executive in New York City. She encounters the beggar on the street. She has three choices. She can ignore him which is what most people do. She can give him some money which is what a very small percentage of the people do. She can take the beggar to get something to eat. Originally she did what most people do. She walked on by. She got to the corner and started across the street when something hit her. Not a car. Something inside of her clicked and she turned back to the beggar and invited him to go with her to get something to eat. He accepted her invitation and they went to McDonald's where he got a Big Mack, fries, and a chocolate milk shake. She didn't stop there. She took it to the next level and made it a weekly habit. She ended up mentoring him, teaching him, caring for him and they ended up becoming friends. His family life was terrible, his mother was a drug addict that could

hardly stand or talk from the effects of substance abuse and his father was absent. He was ignored, neglected, and uncared for both physically and emotionally.

People cautioned her. Her coworkers advised against developing the relationship due to the stigma. What would people say, think, or do? They asked. She ignored the caution because she knew her mission was for the greater good. If she were selfish she would have hidden her talent. But instead, her mission changed the life of a helpless, hungry child. He said “she saved my life.” The experience also changed her life. At one point she took him to a professional ball game. He had never experienced anything like that. The only thing he knew about baseball was from a small black and white TV. He was in total awe the whole time. She said that she didn’t know if it was the happiest moment of his life but it was hers.

God's blessings multiply when the faithful use their talents for God's glory here on earth. God's blessings multiply and benefit both the recipient and the servant. God is calling you to use just one talent to be a good and faithful servant.