

Matthew 22-08-07a

This is the 7th day of August 2022, we're in the book of Matthew, we're in chapter 25, and we are looking at Jesus' parables that illustrate wisdom and faithfulness. We saw the parable of the wise and foolish virgins last time, we're going to look at the parable of the talents beginning in Matthew chapter 25 verse 14 this morning. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study and we'll begin.

Father, it is a privilege for us to gather and to spend time looking at the truth of your word and seeing how it pertains in our own lives. We are in darkness and without guidance and without profit to our lives unless the Holy Spirit has the wherewithal to enter us into the supernatural life that you have called us to. We pray that as we reflect on what we learned this morning, that the Holy Spirit will bless it to our hearts and help us to see its application in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Parable of the Talents.

It's interesting, our word talent in English comes from this parable, it comes from the Greek word *talentos*, and it is some gift that you have, something you've been given. That's how we view it. It begins in verse 14, you'll notice the kingdom of heaven is, is all in italics.

After sharing the wise and foolish virgin's story, which Jesus says, then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to, in verse 1, he just says for, and you have to supply it is at a minimum. So it is like a man traveling. What is like? The situation described with the wise and foolish virgins.

The context here goes all the way back, really, if I were starting chapter 25, I would have begun it in verse 45 of chapter 24, who then is a faithful and wise servant. And now we have these parables dealing with service and with faithfulness and wisdom. All of this in the context of you're being tasked with something that requires you to operate on your own recognizance.

There is no supervising servant over the 10 ladies who are supposed to provide light for the groom's procession. There is no supervising servant for these who are about to be given of the master's resources. There is no supervising servant beginning in verse 45.

He is the supervising servant. He is in charge. What is he going to do while the master is away and delays his return? It goes all the way back to the householder who doesn't know when the thief is coming.

How does he act not knowing when a thief might appear? All of these parables illustrate what is it like when you don't know the timing of a return, and that return is going to involve accountability. Jesus has said he will come like a thief in the night. Well, it will be

like a thief if you're the householder who paid no attention to the fact that a thief could visit at any time and took no precautions.

This is looking ahead in wisdom and fulfilling responsibilities and assigned duties in faithfulness. So who is that faithful and wise servant? We want to be able to answer, as I suggested last time, wouldn't it be great to ask that question, have a blank below, who is that faithful and wise servant? And underneath there you write your name here and believe it to be true. We saw the importance of thinking ahead with these ladies who didn't take seriously their responsibility or their opportunity to serve the groom, to be beneficial, to fulfill a needed role.

If you think about it, only half of the intended light shined on that procession. The procession was supposed to have 10 torchbearers and it only had five. This was a diminishment of the glory and the celebration of the groom's arrival at his new location to celebrate with his bride and to celebrate with his friends who were in this feast.

They not only failed their function, they not only dimmed the glory of the procession, but they themselves did not participate and are not allowed entrance when they finally show up late. So it isn't just lost to themselves. Sometimes we say, well, I don't really care if I have a mansion or a lot of treasure or responsibility or opportunity to reflect God's glory in the future.

I'll just be glad to be there and not be hammered, not go to the lake of fire. It's okay. I don't really have ambitions of greatness and I just want to be a face in the throng.

I just be in the comfortable middle. Remember these virgins, they cost the groom something by their inattention, by their faithlessness and by their foolishness. Five are foolish and they cut the light in half.

It costs the Lord something when we are faithless. It costs the Lord something when we are foolish and it's not just our own fate that is in view. We also have a peripheral effect on those around us.

If we are faithless and if we are foolish, we put stress on the wise virgins. Now they are in an awkward spot. I'd like to help you, but I've got my own responsibility here.

If I help you, I can't fulfill my first and foremost function. I love you in the horizontal, but my vertical love has to come first and my assigned responsibility, I cannot sacrifice that. I can't diminish my function on your behalf.

Under other circumstances, I'm sure these young ladies are friends and they loan each other things. Girls are famous for loaning each other clothing items and such. Guys loan each other tools and equipment.

Women, it's once in a while an appliance, you know, a pressure cooker or something like

that. Clothes, accessories and such. See how politically incorrect you can be these days.

But then we begin with this parable of the talents and talking about wisdom in not thinking ahead and looking ahead. That's the focus of the virgins, wise and foolish. Now it is like a man traveling to a far country who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

One of things that has shifted here as we move from the first parable here to the second in chapter 25, the relationship of these who are going to be called to account and who are expected to function is closer. The virgins, we're not real sure how they connect to the groom. We just know that they have been tasked with providing this light.

We don't know exactly, are they friends? Are they family acquaintances? Are they cousins? We don't know their relationship to the groom. The relationship of these men, these three individuals, are servants to their Lord. This is kurios.

It's the same word that's translated Lord, capital L, with kurios Jesu Christu, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is their Lord, their master, and they are his servants. So right away, believers or unbelievers, who's in view here? Is this going to be salvation or no salvation? Not at all.

Who is the wise and faithful servant related to the master, under his authority, expected to fulfill his wishes? Unlike anybody else in the population, there is a unique and well-defined relationship called his own servants, not somebody else's servants, not somebody else's daughters, his own servants. They're in his employ, so to speak, and delivered his goods to them, his possessions. And to one, he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability, and immediately he went on a journey.

This is the second time the journey is mentioned. We saw it first in verse 14. It's like a man traveling to a far country.

And then in verse 15, immediately he went on a journey. No sooner had he delivered this set of resources and responsibilities to his servants than he immediately is gone. Very quick commission, very quick provision, and he's gone.

Talents. How much is a talent? This is a very common question, and it kind of depends on how you calculate it. A talent was measured in denarius, a day's wage, and it is 6,000 of them.

So if you figure an average daily wage, you could also look at the weight of the silver, a talent of silver, and then calculate the value. But roughly speaking, a talent is two million dollars. In today's money, I worked it out, and operating on a day's wage, not the average income, but the median income in this country is about \$45,000 per individual.

That's a year's wage. And a talent is about 20 years wages. It would take you 20 years earning a denarius six days a week to acquire a talent.

So if you want to just round off and keep the Lord's numbers the same, just figure it as a million dollars a few years ago before 9.1% inflation and so on. It has gone up a half a million dollars since the last time we looked at this parable about eight years ago. It was about a million and a half back in 2013.

Now it's about two million dollars. It's a sizable sum. If you think about the total possessions that he is delivering to his servants, this master has eight talents, which is what? \$16 million worth of assets that he is entrusting to these three servants.

He probably has much more that he has personally invested that he has set aside and so on. But in terms of entrusting it to his servants to do something with, you usually have a corpus like in an endowment or whatever that you don't touch. And then you take proceeds and you invest those, but you try not to touch your savings, so to speak, your core assets.

So this is a very well-off master, but he is giving his servants the opportunity based on their ability to exercise that ability on behalf of the master. This is an opportunity for them. He could probably manage this better himself and just leave his servants to do menial tasks and to kind of while away the time until he returns.

But because he is going to be absent and they're not going to be meeting his daily and weekly needs, he gives them something they can do while he is gone. And this is to be their occupation and their opportunity to be given what does not belong to them to invest and multiply. It is a privilege and it reflects the confidence of the master in their ability.

He knows what they can do. So each according to his own ability. You remember when you go to Romans chapter 12, keep your finger here and turn over to Romans to sort of cut straight to our own application of this.

Verse 3 of chapter 12 of Romans. You remember Romans 12, 1 and 2. We quote this thing every other time we meet practically. I beseech you by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Then in verse 3, I say to you through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. This is not faith as an ability.

This is faith as an opportunity. Some people have opportunities to trust God for big things. Others have opportunities to trust God in mundane things, maybe small things.

God deals to each of us a measure. This is what we know and the opportunity to apply it. And it's different for different ones of us.

It's a huge mistake to think looking at someone else. Well, why didn't give me that circumstance or that opportunity or that understanding or that level of operation? I'm over here in the shadows. I'm in the backwater eddies of spiritual production and so on.

God deals to each of us a measure of faith. And this is not talking about ability to believe. Well, God just didn't give me the ability to trust Him very much.

That is not it at all. It is opportunity. As with these servants, according to our ability, God will give us a measure of faith, an opportunity to be faithful.

And you get this in the context of Romans 12. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. Notice He doesn't say all members don't have the same ability.

My hand can do what my fingers can't do. My elbow can do what my wrist can't do. This is not a matter of measure of strength.

This is assigned function. Not everybody can be an ear. Not everyone can be an eye.

Not everyone can be a mouth. So we are assigned a measure. If I'm an elbow, can I be a faithful elbow? Elizabeth watched a veterinary show where dog elbows in their back legs or bird's legs, sometimes the joint gets all messed up or they even have a congenital deformity where they can't perch.

And that's fatal for a bird to not be able to perch. And this lady, this veterinary can go in and she specializes in the kind of surgery where she can create an artificial fusing of the bone so that the bird can sit on its leg. Its elbow, so to speak, has failed.

And so the vet fuses the bones into a typical angle that the bird can generally walk and perch and stand upright, not be flopping on one side its whole life. The elbow didn't do its job. It's not there.

It got injured, whatever. And there has to be a workaround. But the entire bird's life is messed up because one joint doesn't work right.

The older we get, the more we realize that you've got one bad knee, you got one bad wrist, you got one bad fill in the blank here, and your whole body knows about it. We're a body and we have an assigned function and sometimes it seems insignificant. I was working on the back brakes on a motorcycle and there's a little tiny rod, a little eighth inch rod that goes from the front pedal that you push with your foot all the way to the and operates a lever that makes the brakes happen.

Well, there's a nut that goes on the end of that to hold it in place. It goes through the

lever with this little rotating dowel thing. Well, the nut's gone.

Well, it's some weird metric Honda thread. All of my stuff is mostly SAE and I've got jars and bins and buckets and trays full of nuts and all kinds of stuff. I tried nut after nut after nut.

The back brake will not work without this tiny little nut and it can't just be any nut. It has to fit between the tongs on this lever so that it doesn't come unscrewed. The lever keeps it from unscrewing.

It's got to be just the right nut. You and I need to be just the right nut. For our little assignment, you don't know what big things you're connected to that you can't see.

The little nut doesn't know about the brake lever. It doesn't know about the brake shoes. It doesn't know about the guy on there that needs the brake.

I don't dare ride this bike until I get the brakes going. You know, it's not enough to do everything else and get it all running and have 750 cc's of power and hop on the thing, fire it up, go down the road, hit that pedal. Little nut's not there.

Rod falls out and I'm in the creek or the pond or worse. One little nut makes all the difference. Each one has been given a measure of faith.

Live up to the measure, each according to his ability. The master gives an assignment. Listen, it may look small, it may seem small, but he that is faithful in that which is least, as we see at the conclusion of this parable, is given much greater opportunities because it's not the size of the opportunity, it's the size of the faithfulness.

You're given a measure of faith. How faithful are you to that measure? If you're given two talents, what do you do with it? Given five talents, given one, what do you do? If you're faithful, unlimited future opportunities. Faithless, even that which you have is taken away.

That's the lesson of this parable. So Paul says in 12.5 of Romans, we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. We affect each other.

Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us. The measure of faith is the differing gifts, differing opportunities, differing capabilities. We can't all do what other people do.

We can each do things that only we can do. Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Let us use them.

Of course, that's all in italics. If prophecy in proportion to our faith. One of the problems with prophecy, which was the early manifestation of teaching and communicating the truth of God, Paul says if you are assigned to communicate God's truth, that's what a

prophet was, that's what prophecy was.

In proportion to our faith, don't tell people what you don't really understand or know. Don't meddle in other people's business. We can only communicate in proportion to what we ourselves know, understand, have experienced.

There is a lot of Christianity today that is drawing conclusions and teaching viewpoint that is caustic, it is corrosive, it is poisonous to the body of Christ. They think they're doing good and they are blinding, deafening, and leading into the ditch countless thousands of believers. I was reading some of it this morning, it's just depressing.

If ministry in ministering, he who teaches in teaching, he who exhorts in exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. Notice these are opportunities to express faith. Love without hypocrisy.

Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. It is possible by failing in these areas of faithfulness to end up evil. And we'll see it as we return to our parable here.

He who had received the five talents went and traded with them. This is a word, this trade is sourced in the word that means to work. Guys who row know what an ergometer is, it is a measure of work.

And this is from Ergodzomai. And it means to work using your own gifts and talents. The amai part there is sort of a reflexive idea.

It's middle and passive. The idea is he works, he invests it and watches over it. He's paying attention.

He is involved and he is efforting with what he has been given. He cares about it. And he earns another five talents.

Likewise, he who received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his Lord's money. After a long time, the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

By the way, this should have been a heads up to the early church that the Lord's return would be delayed. He tells several parables. Already we saw the one at the end of chapter 24, my master delays his coming.

This master is away a long time. The groom in the preceding parable delayed and the virgins fell asleep. Delay, delay, delay.

It's not when I expected it. I don't know when it is. So what am I going to do with the lack of accountability? Because the master's not around, because the groom hasn't arrived yet, I'm on my own recognizance.

What do I do when I am unsupervised? I've been given resources. I've been given a responsibility. Early pastor of mine used to say, if you want to know what you're really like, what are you like when you're alone? What are you like when you're unsupervised? That's the measure.

So after a long time, verse 19, Matthew 25, the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. Once again, they are accountable, accountability. He called his own servants.

He entrusted them. And now he, the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. This actually means he lifted up the matter with them.

The word accounts is *lagos*. It's the word. What did you do with the account? What did you do with the word, the *lagos*? It's a sort of a, a sly word play.

So he would receive five talents, came and brought five other talents, five other talents. What he was given, he parlayed, he worked, he invested, he watched over, always keeping in mind the master's charge. Lord, you delivered to me five talents.

Look, I have gained five more talents beside them. You can see that the servant is, is anxious for his Lord's approval. Look, look, Lord, I took what you gave me and look what I did with it.

His mind is in the master's heart. That's what he's looking at. He's not saying, how can I skim off the top? How can I make myself more comfortable? How can I avoid any sort of risk? Or he's, all he's thinking about is look, remember what you gave me? He's, he reminds the Lord.

I'm sure the Lord remembers exactly how much he gave this guy because he measured his ability. But he says, this is what you gave me. He remembers and he knows what he was given.

And he tells the Lord, this is what you gave me. And this is what I did with it. Look, I have gained five more talents beside them.

His Lord said to him, you, it's all he says. E-U. This is the Greek word that means good.

Eureka. It's a good view. You, Angelas, good, good news.

The gospel. E-U is the prefix that means good. If Jesus was, was originally delivering this in Aramaic, he probably said, *Tov*.

Good. Good. Good, then good and faithful servant, and the good the second time there is *Agathos*.

This is good of intrinsic value. You are an intrinsically valuable servant, and you are

faithful. Agathos and Pistis.

Agathos. We initially were introduced to this, who then is a faithful and wise servant. A wise servant who uses his knowledge, who uses his wisdom, who works it, is good.

We lay hold of righteousness by faith. We become righteous in faithfulness. You are Agathos.

Wouldn't you love to hear this at the judgment seat of Christ. The Lord looks at you, your life is under review. Agathos, good, well done, good and faithful servant.

You were faithful over a few things. Now think about this. How much was this guy given? How much is a talent worth? Top quiz.

In modern money, how much is a talent worth? Two million dollars. How many talents was he given? Five. So how much value in today's currency? Ten million dollars.

The Master says you were faithful over Oligos, a little bit, a few. Ten million dollars to this Lord is a little bit. I just gave you a few farthings here to see what you could do.

You were faithful in Oligos. I will make you ruler over many things. I will make you ruler.

Enter into the joy of your Lord. You can already see that the servant is interested in the good opinion and in the heart and in pleasing his Master. And the Master says, you've done it.

Well done, good and faithful. Enter into my joy. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

He's going to be made ruler over many things, but the great reward is to enter into his Master's joy because this servant gets it. He understands his Master's heart and they are going to celebrate together. Enter into joy.

This is like the five wise virgins who entered into the celebration. He also had received two talents, came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents. Notice, it's an accounting.

Here's what we started with. This was the beginning balance. Here's the ending balance.

Everybody who does a checkbook knows how this works. Beginning balance, ending balance, double. I have gained two more talents.

See, he says, look, look, Lord. I've got it right here in front of me. I bring it to you.

You gave me two. I've got two more to put with it. His Lord said to him exactly the same thing he said to the first one.

He gave each according to his ability. He doesn't say, well, you had 40% of what the first

guy had. So enter into 40% of your Lord's joy.

It is all the same. Think about that, Romans 12. Whatever your assignment is in the body, be faithful, the whole body celebrates, the whole body benefits.

And the blessing and the pleasure of the Lord is exactly the same. I'm gonna make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

This is the goal. Two servants represent this outcome. This is what the Lord wants his disciples to remember.

This is what we should remember. Just because the Lord delays his coming, all that means is we've got a little bit more time to do the most, be the most, make the most of what God has entrusted to us, whatever it may be, of whatever size, of whatever nature. There is a certain return of the Lord.

And the more certain it is, the more certainly we need to be like that householder who was ready when the thief came that servant who was ready when the master came, that virgin who was ready when the groom came. These servants who were ready when their master after a long time returned. That's all they thought about while he was gone.

He's gonna be back. How much can I show him? And the joy at the, can you imagine joy at the judgment? This is the reckoning. He is holding up the accounts.

There's Iroh in this word that means the reckoning of accounts. He's lifting it up, they're looking at it. And they say, look, Lord, what a great time to be had at the judgment.

We're gonna pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're gonna look at the sad ending of the third servant and do a little bit of comparison. This is often conflated with the parable of the minas or parable of the pounds over in Luke chapter 19.

It is not the same parable. And we'll note the similarities and differences once we conclude that servant. But let's pause here and take our break.