

Matthew 22-08-07b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 25, looking at the parable of the talents. We have come to the third servant's accounting and you can see in verse 24, he who had received the one talent came and said, look at the contrast even just that far. In verse 20, he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents.

Look, I have gained five more. This servant in verse 24 came and said, Lord, I knew you to be a hard man. Skleros, S-K-L-E-R-O-S, from which we get arteriosclerosis, a hard man, a flinty man.

I knew you to be a hard man reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So who is judging who here? Isn't this supposed to be accountability of the servants to the master? But here the servant has mounted the dais. He's sitting in the bema and he says, you're a hard man.

You reap where you haven't sown. You gather where you have not scattered. This is your problem.

You're a hard man, which says a lot right out of the gate. Then in verse 25, and I was afraid. Now this is a head scratcher to me.

So this guy is given a talent. He's given two million dollars of his master's money. He says, I know you're a hard man.

You reap where you haven't sown. You gather where you didn't scatter. And I was afraid.

What is the connection between the master being a hard man and this fear? What is the servant afraid of? I puzzle over this. I read some different people's opinion on this and they say, well, he's talking about that he is gathering what the servants sow and he's gathering what the servants have scattered. That doesn't make sense to me.

And then he's afraid because if he loses the talent by a bad investment or he doesn't do it right, then the master is going to be harsh with him or something. But I think the examples of sowing and scattering would have been different. I knew you were a hard man and you punish slaves who don't perform up to your standards or some such thing.

This sowing and scattering and reaping and gathering and then fear, I was afraid, don't seem to connect in my mind. And so here's my belief. This isn't really true of the master.

Neither the first nor the second servant said anything about the characteristics of the master. They focused on what the master entrusted them with in terms of resources and opportunity. And they are excited to show their performance and their faithfulness and their wisdom.

And they are delighted to be more fully included in the master's business and to enter into his joy. They are of a mind and of a peace with him. You get the idea that the third servant and the order is important.

The third servant contrasts with the first two. We're supposed to think about the first two before we look at the third because of this radical difference. Remember the parable of the workers in the field who all contract for a day's wage of denarius.

There's some that come early and the guy goes back and hires others at the middle of the day and he hires still others when there's only an hour left. And then he's paying all the workers and he pays the ones who only worked one hour first. And the order is important because for Jesus' purpose in the parable, these others that worked all day long are supposed to see the guys that only worked an hour and get the same wage.

The order is important. Why didn't this one show up first? Why isn't he judged first? Because we're supposed to look at the other two and see how it is when it is done right and what the heart of a faithful and wise servant is. This starts with a wrong heart.

I decided not to do what you told me to with what you gave me because I have a bad opinion of you. There are things you do that I don't agree with. There is a recent, I think it's a July blog post by Keith Giles, who is a thought leader in the progressive Christianity movement.

And he lists the 10 top thought leaders of the progressive church movement, other than himself, and why he thinks they are helpful. And if you keep track of the influence and the growing propensity and the larger influence of progressives and the deconstructing progressive Christianity movement, these are those who don't like the God of the full Bible. They don't like the God of the Old Testament.

They don't like the God that Paul preaches or that Peter preaches. One of the links on this article where Keith Giles is touting these 10, and he's got some other honorable mentions down there, about 15 different ones, that he believes are really doing a good job of getting everyone onto the love train and off of shame and blame and any kind of harshness or judgment from God. God is not a God of judgment.

He is not a God of wrath. He is not a God of consequences. He is a God of love.

If you want to see God, you can only look at Jesus in his first advent. And Jesus never judged anyone. He never hurt anyone.

He never, as long as you look at the right sections of the Gospels. But the Jesus that Paul preaches and the God that Peter and Paul present, there's a lot of harshness there. So Keith Giles has another article where he says, I'm sorry to have to tell you, but there's books in your Bible that aren't real.

They're false. And Ephesians isn't real. Colossians isn't from Paul.

First and Second Peter, First and Second Timothy and Titus are right out. They're not Paul. They're not inspired.

They're no more value than the epistle of Barnabas or the epistle to the Hebrews or any of these other books. They got in the Bible by mistake and you can safely discard and ignore them. The servant who thinks his master is harsh and is doing things that he shouldn't do.

Let me ask you a question. Here's a pop quiz. You're going to love this pop quiz question.

Just get ready. Load up all of your Bible knowledge. What is the accusation of this third servant beyond you're a hard man? What is it the hard man does that he doesn't like? And it actually makes him fearful.

You reap where you did not sow. Now here's your pop quiz question. When in the teaching of Jesus have we seen a situation where somebody is reaping what they did not sow? If they didn't sow it, somebody else sowed it.

So where is a situation where someone else has sowed the seed but the owner of the field has to reap it and he's going to and sowed tares, right? Lord, an enemy has come and sowed tares amongst your wheat. Let them both grow until the harvest. Then go in and reap the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them.

Then you can gather the wheat into my barn. You're a hard man. You reap where you have not sowed.

Well, yeah, if you don't understand the necessity for that judgment, you're just going to decide that the Lord is a hard master. And you gather where you did not scatter. This is the idea of scattering seed.

Sowing seed is one thing. It's intentional. You put it in place, often in rows.

Scattering seed, this is broadcasting. This is when you're getting your yard to grow. You're trying to get shade grass under those trees and Bermuda in the sunlight, and you get one of those little flipper deals with the crank on it, or you just put your hand in the bag and broadcast it.

It's broadcasting seed instead of sowing it, specifically planting it in ideal spots for growth, for cultivation like vines, and then for harvest. You gather where you did not scatter. What would this represent in the Jewish mind, hearing this parable? Where has God sowed his seed for 2,000 years? Say, starting with Abraham, and all the way down through Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and Egypt, and the Exodus, and the time of the judges, and the time of the monarchy.

What have they been doing from Abraham to Christ? I didn't go to the rest of the nations. You are my chosen people. You are the smallest.

It wasn't because you were better than the others. God has invested his word, his law, his prophets in Israel. Oh, I see this opening up to Gentiles.

You're starting to gather in an improper place. You haven't been sowing over here in this field, and you're going to reap this harvest of Gentiles. You're scattering the seed out here in places, and then you're going to gather in these Gentiles.

We are Abraham's seed. We are the seed of Abraham. In Isaac thy seed shall be called.

And Paul explains, this is faith. And faith is not limited to where the Jews think, well, it only ought to be us, and it only ought to be the law. You're a hard man.

I'm rejecting your commission. I'm rejecting your provision. I'm rejecting the call because I don't like your policy of gathering where you did not sow, whether it is judgment in the wheat and the tares, whether it is inclusiveness of the Gentiles when, well, they're not the seed of Abraham.

And it's my heritage. It's my tradition. It's my culture.

You're including in these that shouldn't be there. Judging God based on my own standard. I don't think God ought to do that.

And we think, well, that's obvious. Those Jews, shame on them for not smiling on us Gentiles. Shame on them for not recognizing that God is God of justice and judgment.

Shame on those progressives for not realizing that the first advent of Jesus is only the lamb side. It is not the lion side. He is not only the lamb as it had been slain.

He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. By the way, I tried to see if Giles has ever talked about weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and the darkness which is outside. And you Google his name and those terms.

I can't find where he talks about him. He just says, God's not a God of wrath. Look at Jesus.

They keep going to John. If you've seen me, you've seen the father. I and my father are one.

And so all of our understanding of God has to be filtered through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God the father is not incarnate. God the father is not coming to be the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

God in heaven is not only the sacrificial beneficial Jesus. He is a God of judgment and

justice. And to twist and misuse the gospel of John to say anything that you don't see in the earthly ministry of Jesus.

I saw somebody make some kind of a contribution to social awareness the other day saying that you know, Jesus frequented bars and brothels. And this is the kind of inclusiveness. We shouldn't be judging anyone for their chosen lifestyle and what perversions they choose to indulge in.

Because Jesus frequented bars and brothels. And I thought, what? Well, they get this from his being accused of being a winebibber and of a friend of sinners. And from this, they extrapolate, well, he just went down to houses of prostitution and hung out.

And he just went to bars and hoisted a few with the boys. And this deciding what God is like and judging anything that doesn't comport with what I think God ought to be. That's harsh.

I don't think God ought to send the Israelite armies in to slay the Canaanites. Therefore, I don't believe it happened. I don't think there's going to be a retributive judgment on both unbelievers and believers.

We're going to see the unbeliever judgment before this chapter is over. I don't, that's harsh. That's hard.

I don't want to hear that. Danger, Will Robinson, warning, don't start telling God who he ought to be. That the hubris of this servant is called out by the master.

Look at what he says. I was afraid. I went and hid your talent in the ground.

Now, I hid it in the ground. Why didn't he just put it on a shelf? Why didn't he do as the master suggests and take it and put it on account with the bankers to earn interest? Why would he bury it? Why would he bury it? Remember the man who hid a treasure in a field and then he went and bought the field because he knew the treasure was there. He found a treasure, buried it in the field, and then he bought the field.

Who knows the treasure is in the field? Only the guy that buried it. This guy took two million dollars and buried it. Why? Well, you know, if I wait long enough, the Lord may never come back.

And you know what? I can dig that back up and it's mine. I know where it is. Nobody else does.

I'll use it for my own purposes. I just have to wait and be sure this master doesn't come back. Why else would he bury it? Why not put it in the bank? Why not give it to one of the other servants? Why not track down the master and say, as soon as the master hands it to him, oh Lord, I'm afraid.

Please take this. Give it to somebody else. I don't want it.

He accepted it and then he buried it. He hid it. And master delayed his coming.

You think, you know, he's probably just about ready to dig that up for himself. And the master unexpectedly returns. And so he's brushing the dirt off of it and saying, uh, look, have yours.

See all the italics there in verse 25. I was afraid I hid your talent in the ground. Look, you have yours.

You have yours. His Lord answered and said to him, you wicked and lazy servant. There are going to be three adjectives applied to this servant.

The first two of them are here. He is wicked. This is Ponerous.

This is the only place in the gospels where a servant is called evil. There's an evil and adulterous generation. There are other groups.

People can be called evil, but this is the only place you find a servant called evil. And he's the master's servant. He belongs to the master.

Master called his own servants to him. And he is declared at the judgment evil. There is no such thing as the progressive Christianity idea that everybody will be happy over there.

All it is is an awards banquet. And people will just, anybody that's sad will just kind of be kicking themselves because they weren't inclusive enough. And because they don't believe in inclusion and accepting everybody.

And it doesn't matter if they're perverted or have evil incorporated into their life. The only darkness, which is outside is those who tried to create darkness and push people outside in this life. This is what progressive Christianity says.

If you don't actively recruit perverted people and actively evil people into your fellowship, you're excluding them. You're pushing them into the darkness, ignoring the scripture that says men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are what? Ponerous, evil. That's why they're in the darkness.

And well, we've got to include them in. And if you don't, at the judgment, all of these outcasts and pub dwellers and prostitution house frequencers that Jesus supposedly hung out with all the time, they're all going to be in the banquet hall feasting. And they go to the parable of the highways and byways compel them to come in and that all the riffraff and the nerdy wells are going to be in the banquet.

And people who had any kind of standards or any kind of discernment or any sort of

perception are caricatured as exclusive, as arrogant, as legalistic. There are such people, but progressives characterize anyone who is not totally inclusive as bigoted, insensitive, racist, wrong, and that they will be on the outside. If you have any standards at all for fellowship, if you try to touch not the unclean thing, they believe you will be in the darkness, which is outside because you chose to be there.

God's not going to put you there. You don't want to go in with the riffraff that are celebrating with Jesus at the banquet table. So you will voluntarily walk out into the darkness because you've got such a bigoted, racist, anti-fill-in-your-perversion-here soul that you won't be comfortable with inclusive people.

This is their view. You're a hard man. You're a hard believer.

You have standards. You actually pay attention to guidance that the Lord gives. All of it, not just some of it.

I cannot remind us often enough of Malachi, where the Lord came down on those who were partial when it came to God's law. I'm only going to apply the parts that suit me. It is true, perhaps.

But what the Master says is, if this was your understanding of me, He doesn't dispute that He's a hard man or that He reaps where He hasn't sown or gathers where He has not scattered. He doesn't dispute that, although I wonder if that is really true or if that's not a caricature and a misjudgment on the part of His servant who doesn't understand the larger world that His Master works in. People can misunderstand and misjudge many things of which they are unaware.

Have you ever misjudged a thing and then you got a couple of new facts and you thought, oh, wow, that was really unfair of me. I didn't know that the reason this person wouldn't go out to eat with me is because they have a diet problem and they can't go out and eat. I thought they were just defriending me.

I thought they were snubbing me. I thought they didn't want to be seen in public with me. And I drew all of these conclusions.

You get one new fact and suddenly, oh my goodness, I have completely misjudged this person in the absence of a few pertinent facts. This is why we should always be careful to draw hasty conclusions when we recognize that we're not omniscient the way God is. If we want an opinion about a thing, let's go to God who is omniscient.

Let Him tell us what we should think. And we can be careful and we can be moderate and we can be balanced. We're not prone to anger.

We're not prone to bitterness. We're not prone to assigning blame. We don't start inflicting consequences on others when we don't have all the facts.

I suspect this servant believes in his heart that his master is a hard man and reaps where he shouldn't and gathers where he shouldn't, but he doesn't have all the facts. These wiser and more faithful servants seem to have no such objection. And this master seems to be very kind-hearted.

He didn't have to include his servants. He doesn't have to promote them. He doesn't have to include them in his joy.

These are the marks of a beneficent and kind and thoughtful master who is including and promoting and celebrating in and with his servants. This guy seems to just have a rotten view, and he doesn't want to participate. He doesn't say, well, he's the master, I'm the servant.

Even if I disagree, I should do my assigned job. He says, no, I just buried it in the ground. Here, you take it back.

Dirt and all. If you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed, you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. You think about it.

The first two servants worked with what was given to them. There's this Ergodzomai idea. This guy could have just taken it to the bank and dropped it off and let the bankers do the work.

He did more work digging the hole and burying the talent than if he had put it on deposit. If you didn't want to do the work, you could have given it to somebody, pass it on to someone who will do the work. Why did he do the work of burying it? Self-interest.

The only work I'm doing is work that benefits me. I'm afraid of you. I don't like your whole operation.

Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given. Remember, we saw this earlier in Matthew.

To him who has, more will be given. To him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. If you receive a love of the truth, more truth will be given to you.

If the love of truth is on offer and you don't receive it, then even the truth that you get is going to be taken away. Opportunities will be taken away. Here's the third adjective, the unprofitable servant.

Non-productive. Unbeneficial. He is wicked, he is lazy, and he is without profit.

Cast that servant into the outer darkness. It doesn't say let him leave us and depart from the joy and the opportunity and wander on his own into the darkness. Just let him go his own way.

This is the progressive Christianity idea. Grab him and throw him into the outer darkness. Remember 24, 50, and 51, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking, at an hour he is not aware of, and will cut him in two.

The master will come and cut him in two. He's not going to say go cut yourself in two. Appoint him his meros, his portion, his inheritance.

When you start filling out the paperwork for inheritance, assign him the inheritance of the hypocrites, which is nothing. Appoint him his meros, his portion with the hypocrites, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Once again, verse 30, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The peace, love, harmony, light, there is no harshness with God crowd, has to explain this away. They will not balance the God of love with the God of justice. They will not balance the God of righteousness with the God who will remove that which is evil and lazy and profitless.

For the sake of his sanctified creation, God has to eliminate that which is not sanctified. Satan is cast out of heaven. The great white throne will result in those who reject God being cast into the lake of fire.

You can't get around it by appealing to the incarnate Jesus and define the God of the universe and the God of eternity, the God of heaven, with the three-year incarnation of the Lord Jesus who came to die on our behalf, who emptied himself and took on the form of a servant. God in heaven is not empty and he's not in the form of a servant. Well, we're just going to have to get rid of Paul then because he's the one that describes Jesus as emptying himself and coming in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men.

Oh no, I want him to be in the likeness of God and I want to define God by what I decide is in Jesus and anything else is hard and harsh and improper. Danger, danger, danger. It is infecting the world of Christian preaching and teaching, the world of ideas, the world of communication, books and so on.

By the way, Bart Ehrman is on that top 10 list of beneficiaries of the Christian world along with several other hair raising types. You might want to look up that list just so that you know who to watch out for because you will see quotes banding about from these people and shared with approval and approbation. It is worth just having a quick mental list and remember to consider the source when you see some of these aphorisms that substitute for Bible truth.

An aphorism as we've seen in Proverbs, however wonderful it may sound to the human ear, if it doesn't come from the Bible, it is not inspired. All scripture is God breathed. That which is man breathed is not scripture.

And however catchy it may be, the serpent talking from the tree was also saying things that weren't scripture. It seemed to be scriptural, but it wasn't scripture. This is why

we're a Bible church, always have been, always will be, and nothing else.

It is the word of God that is alive and powerful. And if we start deciding what is harsh, where somebody ought to sow, where they ought to gather, where they ought to reap, where they ought to scatter, then we'll be the judge of what constitutes faithfulness and wisdom. Heaven help us.

You're going to be in the listening to grinding molars. Well, this brings us to verse 31 and the sheep and goats judgment. This is not a parable.

This is a metaphorical prophecy and it is fraught with significance for us as well. We'll close for now with a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Thank you for the words and the works, the example and the ongoing mission and ministry of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our savior. We pray that in the light of all of these wonderful provisions from you, that we will be found on that day as good and faithful servants who are qualified for further service and function and can enter into your joy and the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ, the joy that Paul the Apostle spoke of, that we can invest the time and the opportunities that remain to us in this life for maximum profit, maximum benefit, and a positive response and approval at our own coming judgment.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.