

“Work as Worship”

Matthew 25

March 6, 2005 by C.W. Powell

A few moments ago, I read the entire 25th chapter of Matthew. Although it is a long passage, I thought I needed to read it, because all of it is relevant to the message today.

Jesus Christ is coming again to judge the world. What am I supposed to be doing during the time that we are waiting for him to return? This is what this chapter is all about. This chapter and these teachings of Christ give us clear teaching as to what our duty is. The Lord has saved us; He has given us of His Spirit and now we await His return. What are we supposed to be doing. There are three parables in this chapter, and they will serve to teach us three important things about how we are to be serving the Lord.

- I. We are to let our light shine and we are to be prepared to persevere and be patient.
 - A. This is the meaning of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. They arrived for the wedding and had to wait out the evening until the coming of the bride and groom.
 - B. Jesus indicates that it may be necessary for us to labor long and it might not seem that our work is profitable.
 - C. The lamps were oil lamps. The vessels were separate pots that were used to keep an additional supply of oil, so that the lamps could be refreshed with oil. The foolish girls were not prepared for the long wait. They all slumbered and slept during the long wait, but the wise girls had an additional supply and thus were prepared for a long wait. Don't get bogged down in the details, but see what the central teaching is.
 - D. It is not how you start out that matters; it is how you end up. Is your faith sufficient for the long journey? If it is of Christ it is sufficient. If it is in something else, then it will not last. You will be disillusioned and give up. You will be offended by men. You will regret the loss of the pleasures of the world and you will be filled with misery and emptiness.
 - E. What are you to do until the hour of your death or the coming of the Lord Jesus? You are to let your light shine.
 - F. You must have a plentiful supply of oil: Last week we spoke of the private nature of worship and the entering into your closet. You must do this. You not only must keep your hearts, but your hearts must be filled with good things. Lay up the word of God in your hearts. Build the treasure of your heart. When you pray in your closet, take the Scriptures with you and lay up treasures in your heart. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart speaks good things. A fool just rattles along in his foolishness. His tongue reveals the foolishness of his heart.
 - G. You have to have a light to let it shine; and you have to have enough light to last the distance. Lots of people start well. The seed was received with joy in the shallow soil and began to grow, but when the sun came up it withered and died. No strength for the end of the journey, just the start. The seed was received with joy in the thorny ground, but the result was the same, when the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word and it became unfruitful.
 - H. This also shows us that the church will always be a mixed group. Some will have enough oil and others will not have enough.

- II. We are to use the gifts that God has given us and be content to do this work. Some are able to more than others, but all have immense gifts from God. The one talent was no inconsiderable sum of money but a rather handsome inheritance. No one is poor in the kingdom of God. One talent of Gold would be worth well over a million dollars in today's values, weighing between 160 to 200 pounds.
- A. This parable has to do with what you are to do while awaiting the Lord's return. You use the gifts that God has given you.
 - B. It was a wicked and lazy servant who found excuses not to use his gifts.
 - C. The church and the world needs you gifts, whatever they might be.
 - D. Either of these two parables are worthy of more than one sermon, but I just want to mention these things in order to prepare for my central theme today, which is the third act in this great twenty-fifth chapter:

III. The last judgment.

- A. We believe that there will be just one last judgment, and that it will be a general one, with everyone there. At that day all men will stand before the Lord, the secret things of the heart will be revealed before the judge of all the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Every man will either be vindicated as a child of God or will be condemned with the devil and his angels. We are not playing games. Life is desperately serious, and everyone of us must give an account to the Lord for the deeds that are done in the body.
- C. The Wise and Foolish Virgins warn us that we must have sufficient grace to finish the course, until the time of our death or the coming of the Lord; the Talents warn us we are to be faithful in the ability and the opportunity that we have, for these are from the decree of God; this account of the Last Judgment tells us that what we do is to be done for men.
- D. We cannot do anything for God.
 - 1. Galatians 6:7-10
 - 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
 - 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
 - 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
 - 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.</
 - 2. We are to rest in Christ [sow to the Spirit], and do good to all men. Work for men, knowing that our works cannot reach to heaven.
- E. What we do, we must do for men. For all men, but especially the household of faith.
- F. The fundamental needs of men are set here before our eyes: The minimum is described here, but if the minimum is required, how much more is implied.
 - 1. "Depart ye, be ye warmed and fed...." To provide the abundance from which the goods can be dispensed.

2. Friendship and companionship. We are to reach out to strangers and pilgrims and receive them. “You took me in...” Jesus ate with publicans and sinners and was the companion of all men.
3. Respectability: clothed the naked, so that they are not exposed to the elements, cold and wet, filled with shame. It is a shame to be naked. The giving of respectability and honor.
4. Sick: Illness. What if your talent is the ability and genius to find a cure for some dread disease, and you spend your life in drunkenness and vanity and the cure is not found. Do you think that God will not hold you accountable for what you could have, but did not, do? This is a sobering thought.
5. Prison: We cannot be deadened to the effects of men’s justice upon men. The fight for justice and good laws to govern. We are to visit those who are justly punished by the law; how much more are we to care for those who are unjustly punished.
6. The righteous were actuated by real love, unassuming love, love that didn’t think of the merit of what they did—“When saw we...” They didn’t know what they did. It was not done for merit, but from true compassion and mercy.

IV. Conclusion and application.

- A. You serve God by serving men, especially those of the household of faith. This is where the rubber hits the road and our faith is truly tested.
- B. Please note these:
 1. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. Psalm 16:2,3 God’s goodness reaches to us, but ours cannot reach to Him; but our goodness reach to men of the earth.
 2. I was created by God, and belong to the created world. God is invisible above the reach of my senses. But I can truly serve Him; but I must serve Him in serving the image of God, the men and women that He has put in my life, especially the children of God. This means my family—my closest neighbors, my fellow church members, etc.
 3. Each of these parables show that there will be both those who have true faith and those who do not have true faith in the church. This world is the proper place for faith to be revealed and unbelief to be exposed, but it will be declared at the final judgment.
 4. We are to be good stewards of the gift of life that the Lord.
 - a. Good stewards of the souls that God has given to us: Let us keep our souls with all diligence—rather, let us give our soul up to God to keep it, believing and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our righteousness. Let the peace of God rule our hearts and minds, that the secret place of our heart my truly be the altar of the most High God in Jesus Christ. Let us seek God in our private worship, reading the Scriptures, praying in secret in spirit and in truth, that our souls may truly be strong in Christ.
 - b. Good stewards of our time; Let us live in the peace of God, not frantically running about, abusing our time, always a day late, rushing frantically from place to place. If our souls are at peace with God, we can use our time wisely

and profitably. We will have time for church and prayer and family Bible reading.

- c. Good stewards of our wealth and fortune. This will flow out of the keeping of our hearts and the good stewardship of our time. God will bless our work, and without His blessing, we will labor as in the fire, with nothing to show for our zeal and our effort.

May God bless you.