

THE LATTER PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 17

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

INTRO: We have come now to the parable of the talents. As I see it, we have a trilogy, a set of three, parables here. Each of these three parables sets out a danger for the Christian to watch. The first in these three is found in Matthew 24:45-51, the parable of the two servants. In this parable we have the danger of slacking off as Christians. I have watched this in the life of many Christians. The servant that slacked off said, "My Lord is delaying His coming".

The second of these three was the parable of the ten virgins found in 25:1-13. Here we have the danger of professing without possessing. It is a very real danger. Our present parable, the parable of the talents, presents to us the danger of not keeping occupied in what the Lord has given us to do. It is found in Matthew 25:14-30.

We find, in this parable, two servants that were given talents and they kept occupied, and were rewarded. We find a third who had only received one talent, and he did not keep occupied. And we find that in judgment, he is judged to go to hell. And now we must ask, "Does a person go to hell for not staying occupied with the Lord's work? Is a Christian saved by grace but kept saved by works, or keeping occupied?" And so we ask, if he had gained one talent with the one talent he was given, and had kept occupied, would he have been saved by staying occupied? If so, then does he stay saved by works? If we say he represents a Christian, does he get saved by grace but remains saved by works?

Or are we to assume the third slave does not represent a Christian? If he was not a Christian, does a non-Christian receive spiritual gifts and if he works with them, then he too will be saved? In this way, again, have a works salvation.

Look at the first word of our present parable, Matthew 25:31 (read). I recommend that the word 'for' with which this parable begins is crucial to answer such questions. The first of these three parables sets the groundwork and these last two in this trilogy were developed out of that. Jesus gave the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant first in 24:45-51. Now in that parable Jesus said of the servant who failed to remain faithful that he would appointed his portion with the hypocrites. The next parable, 25:1-13, the one of the ten

virgins now starts with the word, 'Then...' In this parable we have the parable of five true Christians and five hypocrites. These are the hypocrites referred to in the previous parable. And that brings us to 25:14-30.

L. The Talents (Matt. 25:14-30)

1. The Parable (25:14-30)

So, let us begin by reading the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-31 (read).

2. The Setting (24:32-15:13)

Well, let us consider the setting of this parable. All of what has gone before in Matthew 24:1-25:13 is the broader setting. But in particular, I believe that the parable of the two servants in 24:45-51 is the setting for both the parable of the ten virgins in 25:1-13 and for this parable. And I propose that the word "For..." which begins our present parable, proceeds from the first parable, not the second. It proceeds from the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant. We are not told in the first parable of what the faithfulness of that servant consisted of, but it tells us in this third parable what this faithfulness consisted of.

On the other hand, in the first of these three parables we are told what the unfaithfulness brought about in the wicked servant, but we are not told in that parable what this servant's unfaithfulness consisted of. However, we are told what the results of that unfaithfulness was. It was that he began to beat the servants and to eat and drink with the drinkers. But in our present parable we will find what led the unfaithful servant to those kinds of actions. It was that he did not remain occupied with what God had given him to do. There is a very huge danger in not keeping occupied with what God has given us to do, and each one of us has been given something to do. Some more than others.

3. Interpretation

So, we want to now interpret the parable of the talents. So, look at verses 14-15 (read). Here we have a landowner who is going into a far country. Once more,

as in earlier parables, the Lord is indicating to His disciples that He is going to go away, and it will be for some time. And it says in verse 14 that He delivered His goods to them. No doubt the Lord is referring to Himself here, and no doubt when it says 'his own servants' it is talking about Christians. And He delivered his goods to them. You see, when we become Christians, the Lord gives us some spiritual work to do. It is 'His' work. These are 'His' goods. It is not the cares of this world. It is not the pleasures of life, such as hockey or skiing or fishing or playing games. It is not the deceitfulness of riches. It is His work. May I ask you what is His work for you? May I ask you, are there other things that take precedence in your life over what the Lord has for you?

Now I want you to notice in our verses that He gave to one five talents, to another two, and to the last one, one. So, let us first consider what is meant by a talent. By a talent is not meant a special ability such as music or painting etc... A talent is a weight of money. One talent, in NT times, according to Robertsons NT Word Pictures was worth 6,000 denarii. Here is how to calculate it in today's value. Go to Matthew 20, the parable of the 12 hour day that we have studied. You will remember this vineyard owner hired people right up to the eleventh hour. Look at verse 2 (read). We can conclude that a denarius was a good day's wage. Now consider that a talent is worth 6,000 denarii. So one talent is about 16 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years wages. We are talking about a lot of money. And so, the first man had five of those. That is about 82 years worth of wages! The second one had 2, and that is about 33 years of wages. And the last one had one talent, about 16 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years wages!

Now, in today's 'fair' world, somebody is going to say, "That's not fair!" Why did He give different amounts to each one? Notice in verse 15, that He gives according to each one's ability. He never requires more than one is capable of. It is according to each one's 'own' ability! God does not expect as much from some as He does from others. He expects more from some than He does from others.

You see, each one of us has different abilities related to the gene pool from which we come. Here is how it

goes. A certain man chooses a certain wife, and the union will bring about abilities according to who the parents were. I think we could liken these talents to spiritual gifts. It is not beyond God to bestow a spiritual gift of any kind on any Christian He chooses for that. But in general, I believe a spiritual gift is a natural gift brought under the control of the Holy Spirit.

It can happen that one can become jealous of someone else's gifts or responsibilities. But we ought to be very thankful that we were not given the responsibility that person has received because they have that gift, when in fact we may not have the gift we think we have. I have seen men who thought they should be in leadership, but everybody else could see they should not be. If we do not have a certain gift, but God had given us the responsibility to do the things required in the gift, now we might legitimately complain. In common life the person who receives a responsibility above their capacity to perform it is generally a disaster. The person who discovers what their capacity and ability is, and does it, is the fulfilled person, no matter how big or how small it might be. But, on the other hand, when a person has God given abilities and he or she squanders them, that meets with a disastrous end. We learn that in this parable.

In the last message we looked carefully at the first word of the parable, "Then...". Now we want to look at the first word of this parable. It is the word, "For..." That is a causal conjunction. It is there because of something that has been given before. And we must ask, "Because of what?" I believe, our present parable connects back to the parable of Matthew 24:45-51, the parable of the two servants. You see, besides having to do with the unexpected return of the Lord, both have to do with service and servants. In the earlier parable we had two servants. In this present parable we have three, and the purpose for the different numbers is the point He is trying to make in each parable.

So, look now at what these servants did in the time the Lord was gone in verses 16-18 (read). Two were productive, but the last one played it safe. May I ask you, do you play it safe? You won't do this and you won't do that. And why not? Could it be because you

might fail? On the other hand, let me caution you to always seek as much as possible what it is the Lord wants you to do.

But look now at verse 19 (read). Note first, it is after a long time. How many say, "Oh, they've been saying the Lord will come soon for a long, long time, and still they say it. But He doesn't come." Well, have they read their Bibles? Did Jesus not say, "After a long time?" But notice it is the lord of those servants, which in the interpretation is our Lord. He does come. But I want you to notice that He settles accounts with these servants.

I want to remind us of something this morning: When we die, as Christians, or if we are raptured, the Lord will settle accounts with us. There is a judgment in Scripture that too many are unaware of. It is the judgment of the believer. And in that judgment every one of us will give account for all of our lives.

Now look at verses 20-23 (read). The two servants that were faithful are now rewarded. The Lord says to the first servant, "I will make you ruler over many things." What does that mean? Well, here is what will happen. When the bride of Christ is taken home, the marriage takes place at the Father's house. This is in the New Jerusalem in heaven. And when that is completed, the tribulation on earth is completed and Christ and the Church come back down to rule on earth. And every faithful believer will have a part in this new kingdom on earth. And it will be in direct proportion to what they have done in their life-time on earth.

Now, go to Luke 19 (read 12-19). Here we get some idea of what this means. The time period that this involves is 1,000 years. Now go to Matthew 19, where we have been before (read 27-29).

So we go back to Matthew 25, and verses 24-25 (read). We had two faithful servants, and now we have one unfaithful servant. And look at what the Lord says in verses 26-27 (read). There you have unconditional love, right? But let me point out something here. In verse 26, it sounds as if the Lord admits to reaping where he did not sow, and gathering that which he had not

scattered. I think Albert Barnes is right that it should read as a question, not a statement. It would go like this: "You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well, then in that case you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest." The Lord is not here admitting what this servant said was true. He is saying, "If that is really what you thought, you should have put my money in the bank and collected interest!"

Well, in verses 28-30, we have the judgment (read). Now notice that the Lord is not a socialist, but a capitalist. He says, "Take the one talent from him and give it to him who has 10." The more you work the more you get.

Let me just add here that we have mentioned before that there are those who believe that this outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth is a place, either in the millennial kingdom or heaven. That, of course, is not true.

But, we now have to answer a serious question here. Do we get saved by grace through faith, but we stay saved by being faithful or by works? If we fail to do certain works, do we then go to hell? Do we have to do what God equipped us to do, in order to stay saved?

Consider with me now that familiar verse of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that whosoever believes in Him..." I am pointing out the word 'believes'. It is the word 'pisteuw'. So look now at verses 21-22 of our passage (read). Now look at the word 'faithful'. Remember, the word 'believe' is pisteuw. This word now is 'pistos'. In the original you immediately know that you have a very closely related word. It could be translated like this in our verse, "Well done, good and believing servant..." The Online Bible says that in the NT it speaks of one who trusts in God's promises; one who is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and has been raised from the dead.

Go to John 20 for a moment. Look at verse 27 (read). The KJV says, "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy

hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Now the word translated 'believing' is our very word, pistos. The word translated 'faithless' is apistos. So the NKJV says, 'do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Now I ask you again, the one who was cast into hell because he did not work with that which the Lord had given him to do, did he become lost because he did not do the right works? No! He was lost because his works showed he had failed to believe. Why did the first two work with that which they had been given? Because they were faithful. They were believing!

Now I want to take time in this message to do something I have been wishing to do for a while now, but my time always seemed to run out too soon. There are numerous passages that I see as speaking of one particular time. (Call on overhead). Some time ago I showed you an overhead like this. I mentioned that the first six parables we covered dealt mostly with the time when Christ was on earth. But I mentioned that the last parables deal with the tribulation time. When it speaks of those who are cast into hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, as I understand the Scriptures, those passages speak of the end of the tribulation where it shows the second coming on the overhead.

FIRST SIX:

LAST SIX

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Second coming Tribulation

Now I want to read for you a number of passages. If you wish, and can keep up, you may turn to them as I give them. We go first to Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus said, "21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

In the next message or two we are going to be looking at this judgment that closes the first age of the two

major ages. These are referred to in the NT as 'this age' and 'the age to come'. These passages all speak of this judgment, and we will prepare for that now. You may wish to study that time period for yourselves before the next message. You see, it says, "Many will say to Me in that day." What is 'that' day? I believe it refers to the judgment at the end of the tribulation. When the Church is raptured, or caught up, there is no time to argue as is done here.

We go not to Luke 13:23-28, "23 Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 24 Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' 27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' 28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out."

After the rapture, those who are left behind do not see Abraham and Isaac and the prophets. This only happens after the second coming. So again we are at this judgment.

Next we have Matthew 13:38-40, "38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age." The judgment we are speaking of happens at the end of the age.

Move on now to 13:45-50, " 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 which,

when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Again we have this same judgment.

Matthew 24:30, " 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

After the rapture the angels do not come and separate the wicked from the just. This only happens after the second coming.

Move on to Matthew 24:48-51, " 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

After the rapture the Lord does not cut the wicked in two and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites. This only happens after the second coming.

Next we have Matthew 25:10, "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'"

We notice here that it says 'Afterward...' Again I view that as referring to the end of the tribulation as what these virgins say only happens after the second coming, and at the end of this present age.

Next we go to Matthew 25:41-46. We come to this parable in the next two messages or so. Jesus said, "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." At the rapture there is no judgment on earth where all the nations are gathered and where the wicked are cast into hell." Again, this only happens after the second coming.

4. The Application

Well, our text of Matthew 25:14-30 does not make an application. Maybe the application is so clear it need not be written down. No doubt we can conclude that if we are truly Christians, we will do what the Lord has for us to do, and if we don't, it shows we are unbelieving. And if we are unbelieving, or unfaithful, we will make excuses for what we have done or left undone.

But I want to make an application from this to our own community with regard to the matter of divorce and remarriage. I don't want to overdo mentioning this sore subject, but we must not get tired of this subject, because when we do, like in all other places, it will overtake us. In our community, we are very late on the scene with allowing divorce and remarriage. We are only now in the process of going the same direction almost all other Evangelical churches have gone a long time ago already.

And why are we so late in being persuaded to accept divorce and remarriage in the cases that most North American churches accept it for? Because in the past we have held a line on the matter. We simply did not allow

it at all. Now that other evangelicals are accepting homosexuality in many of their churches, we are finally battling divorce and remarriage. We have kept it out this far because it had not entered most of our families because of our stand. Now it is in our families. Now, through family pressures we are fast moving in the direction of other evangelical churches. We are no better at standing against this once it enters our families than anybody else ever was.

Here is what I have been told; "Pastor Phil, don't get us wrong. We agree with you and believe divorce and remarriage is wrong too." And I say, "No, my friend, you do not agree with us. You believe divorce is wrong ideally. When it has happened in certain cases you accept it. But we believe it is wrong, really." You see, they say, "We believe it is wrong." But do they truly believe that? Are they faithful, pistos? No.

Here is my point. If the Lord allows for divorce and remarriage in certain cases, then in those cases it is not wrong. How could He allow for something that is wrong? That is not possible. Then He would accept into heaven that which is wrong. So, those who say that in certain cases divorce is allowed, must say that in those cases it is permissible and thus OK. If it is OK it is not wrong. So they should say, "We agree with you that divorce is wrong in most cases. But in certain cases it is right."

Go to 1 Corinthians 5 (read verse 11). Now I have been asked if this list includes divorce and remarriage. Look at chapter 6 (read 9-10). You could add to that Galatians 5 as well. So, if divorce and remarriage is wrong, then to live with another partner while the first partner is alive is adultery. And we, as Christians are to separate ourselves from those who profess to be Christians and live in this sin. And these people say to me, "We believe divorce and remarriage is wrong." But they are unfaithful, apistos. They are unbelieving in this matter. If they were believing, they would do what the Scripture says. And by obeying the Scriptures, would they be earning their salvation? No! It is simply faithfulness. It is believing!

I am watching this sin eating its way into our community churches. You see, it does not say, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, unless it is your son or daughter or brother or sister or relative; neither adulterers, unless it is your son or daughter or brother or sister or relative; neither homosexuals, unless they are your son or daughter or brother or sister or relative..." etc.. It does not say that at all. But it is when these sins happen in our families that we begin to find room for sin. If you observe what is happening in our community, you can see it as plain as day.

So they tell me, "We agree with you. We believe divorce and remarriage is wrong." And I say, "But your actions deny what you say." Let me tell you what I see. The greatest entrance of sin into the church in our community is the family. We can stand against sin until it hits our family, and all of a sudden, like the man in the parable, we find excuses.

I ask you, these two servants who worked with what the Lord had given them, did they go to heaven because they worked with what the Lord had given them? Were they saved by works, or kept saved by works? No! They worked because they continued to believe! This last man, of whom the Lord said, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth", I ask you, did he go to hell because he failed to work? No! He failed to work because he failed to believe!

Did you know that in that list of sins I mentioned was idolatry? May I ask you, does your work, your job come before God? Is that not idolatry? Does your family count above God? Is that not idolatry? May I ask you, does hockey or sports or pleasure come before God? Is that not idolatry? Did you ever consider that Christians who fall into these things are idolaters? Did you know that idolaters are unbelieving? They are unfaithful? I see families toting their children all over the country, leaving early in the morning sometimes, missing church, but hockey or basketball, or volleyball is so important that it comes first. Is that not idolatry? Anything, ever so legitimate, if it keeps us from doing what God wants us to do is sin. It is

easy to allow something to enter our lives, rob our interest from God and cause us to give it to our own personal desires. James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

CONCL: Well, that concludes the second to last parable that we will be looking at, and the second to last parable Jesus ever uttered. Three servants; two were faithful and one unfaithful. Two were believing, the other unbelieving. You see, if you really believe something, you will do something about it. That is clear in life and is clear from this parable.

I spoke with a man about salvation one time. He owned a garage in our hometown many years ago. We were sitting on a tool box on the back of my pick-up truck. And so I tried to explain faith to him, and that faith required action. And so I said, "If I told you that in this tool box there is a stick of dynamite, and in about three minutes it is set to blow, what would you do?" And he said, "I'd get the beep out of here!" You see, true faith brings about action. And inaction shows a lack of true faith.

In our parable, this inaction can be the cause of those who were once Christians ultimately being cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! Let us take fair warning this morning.