

## FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS

### Parable 14: The Talents

Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27

#### I. BACKGROUND—A NOBLEMEN WENT TO A DISTANT COUNTRY

- HEROD DIED—4 BC—making **Archelaus** heir—not Antipas
- ARCHELAUS WAS A TYRANT—**killed 3000**—who had resisted Herod’s authority
- ARCHELAUS WENT—to ‘**distant country**’—Rome—for Augustus to confirm his crown
- ANTIPAS—and delegation of 50 Jews **opposed him**—supported by 8000 Jews in Rome
- AUGUSTUS—confirmed Archelaus—made him only ‘**ethnarch**’ of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea
- ARCHELAUS RETURNED—treated both Jews and Samaritans with **brutality**
- JEWS REBELLED—6 AD—Archelaus **exiled** to Vienna

#### II. TWO PARABLES ON ACCOUNTABILITY

- PARABLE OF THE MINAS—**LK 19:11-27**
- PARABLE OF THE TALENTS—**MT 25:14-30**

#### III. SETTING FOR LUKE

1. AFTER JESUS LEFT JERICHO
  - a. **Zacchaeus’s problem**—with greed and use of money
  - b. Jesus’ last word to Zacchaeus—suggested **immediacy** of kingdom
    - **Today salvation** has come to this house
    - For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.
2. RAISING OF LAZARUS—ADDED TO PEOPLE’S EXCITEMENT
3. JUST *BEFORE* TRIUMPHAL ENTRY—HERE COMES THE RETURNING KING?
  - a. **False expectation** implied in **v11**—Jesus as conquering hero-king
    - Luke alone says people proclaimed Him **king**—**19:38**
  - b. Jesus suggests there will yet be an **interim**
    - *Still* awaiting return of ‘nobleman’

#### IV. BIBLICAL PASSAGE—LUKE

**Lk 19:11-27**—**11** *While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.* **12** *So He said, A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.* **13** *And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’* **14** *But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’* **15** *When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he*

might know what business they had done. 16 The first appeared, saying, ‘Master, your mina has made ten minas more.’ 17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.’ 18 The second came, saying, ‘Your mina, master, has made five minas.’ 19 And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ 20 Another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.’ 22 He said to him, ‘By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?’ 24 Then he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ 25 And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas already.’ 26 I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 27 But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.

## V. SETTING FOR MATTHEW

1. AFTER TRIUMPHAL ENTRY
  - o After **confrontations** in Temple—**Mt 21-22**
  - o After ‘woes’ against Pharisees—and lamenting over Jerusalem—**Mt 23**
  - o After answering disciples’ question about signs of the end times—“**Be Ready**”—**Mt 24**
  - o After parable of **Faithful and Unfaithful** Servants—theme similar to Talents—**Mt 24**
2. THREE PARABLES ABOUT READINESS—FOR SECOND-COMING—**Mt 25**
  - o **Ten Virgins**—ready for His return
  - o **Talents**—ready for accountability
  - o **Sheep and Goats**—ready for judgment
4. JUST BEFORE FINAL EVENTS LEADING TO PASSION

## VI. BIBLICAL PASSAGE—MATTHEW

**Mt 25:14-30**—14 *For it* [the kingdom of heaven] *is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them.* 15 *To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.* 16 *Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them and gained five more talents.* 17 *In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.* 18 *But he who received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.* 19 *Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.* 20 *The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’* 21 *His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’* 22 *Also the one who had*

received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 And I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival, I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ 29 For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 Throw out the worthless servant into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## VII. EXPLANATION

### A. COMPARISON OF PARABLES

1. DISTRIBUTION
  - o **Matthew**—each according to his own ability
  - o **Luke**—everyone given the same amount
2. AMOUNT OF MONEY
  - a. **Matthew**—Talent = 20 years’ wages
    - 5 Talents = 100 years—2 Talents = 40 years
    - 1 Talent—was not a small amount!
  - b. **Luke**—Mina = smaller—but not significant amount = 3 months’ wages
3. INSTRUCTIONS
  - a. **Matthew**—no instructions given—open-ended
    - He ‘entrusted’ *all* his possessions = gave up—handed over
    - Sounds like—**long-term** commitment—a further hint this is eschatological
  - b. **Luke**—‘occupy’—*πραγματευομαι* = make **practical** use of—do **business**
    - He ‘distributed’ a *portion* of his wealth
    - Sounds like—**shorter term** management
4. STORY-LINE
  - a. **Matthew**—singular story
    - A householder—holds servants accountable
    - 3 phases: distribution—servants’ actions—reckoning
  - b. **Luke**—interweaves two stories
    - Nobleman’s journey—people’s resistance—return and punishment of rebels

- 3 phase business story: distribution—servants’ actions—reckoning
5. THE THIRD SLAVE
- a. Matthew and Luke use **same term** to describe him
    - **πνηροσ** = ‘wicked’ or ‘worthless’ = evil—annoying—troublesome
    - *Moral* quality—at core of being—contrasts with two ‘good’ servants—**αγαθοσ**
  - b. **Matthew adds**—‘lazy’
    - **οκνηροσ** = slothful—sluggish—backward
    - The *behavior* produced by his ‘worthless’ character
6. FOCUS
- a. Both parables focus on
    - **Faithfulness**—with what God entrusts to you
    - **Accountability**—will be measured by productivity
  - b. **Luke** deals more with **immediate** issue
    1. Just before Triumphal Entry—people wrongly expecting a worldly hero-king
    2. Instead—Jesus will *inaugurate* the Kingdom
      - But final victory will be delayed
      - He will go away—to a distant country—heaven
      - They must faithfully await His return—Parousia
      - He laments Jerusalem’s *present* disobedience and unpreparedness—**vv42-44**
    3. Stresses **present accountability**—during interim
      - ‘Occupy’ = emphasizing—be at work!—here and now!
  - c. **Matthew** focuses more on **end-time**
    1. Be ready for—consummation of Kingdom of **Heaven**
    2. Jesus’ second-coming—[three parables—**Mt 25**]
      - Will take some by **surprise**—**Ten Virgins**
      - Will require **accounting**—**Talents**
      - Will result in **judgment**—**Sheep and Goats**

## B. MAIN POINTS

1. THE **GIFT**—[3 points]
  - a. **First**—God endows each person **differently**—**Matthew**
    - Some have 5 talents—others 2—some 1
    - Don’t envy others their gifts
    - Know how God has blessed you—and use it wisely
  - b. **Second**—This applies to the **world** as well as the church

1. It is just as important for Christians to do the business of the world well
    - **v13**—‘occupy’ = **πραγματευομαι** = carry on business as banker or tradesman
    - Based on **πραγμα** = work in pragmatic matters, practical business
  2. Sometimes God uses this to measure how He can trust us with church leadership
    - Lk 16:11**—*if you have not been faithful in the use of worldly wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?*
  3. One might have 1 talent in church—but 5 talents in world
    - God holds that person even **more accountable out there** than in here
  - c. **Third**—What we have—is on loan from God
    - We don’t own it—but borrow and use it—for His kingdom/glory
    - We are bought with a price—He owns us—and what He loans us
    - We cannot take pride in how God chooses to ‘gift’ us
    - We should not boast when God enables us to succeed with His gifts
2. THE **EXPECTATION**—[3 points]
- a. **First**, the Father expects us to be **productive**
    1. He *wants* us to succeed—and multiply the use of His gifts
    2. The Father’s principle of growth
      - He wants us not just to produce fruit—but **much fruit**—**Jn 15:8**
      - Jesus says—good soil—will produce 30—60—or 100 times!
  - b. **Second**—Principle of proportionality
    1. “*To each according to his own ability*”—**Mt 25:15**
    2. God expects different levels of output—according to how He has equipped us
      - Rom 12:3**—*think of yourself with regard to the measure of faith God has given you*
    3. God holds persons *more* accountable— if He gives them *more*
      - Lk 12:48**—to whom much has been given, much is required
      - Jas 3:1**—Teachers in the church will be held to stricter accountability
  - c. **Third**—don’t use other persons as our measure of productivity
    1. They may be gifted at different levels
    2. Instead—use God’s expectation as your measure
      - II Cor 10:12-13**—*For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without*

*understanding. But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure. . .*

- d. SUMMARY—How it works
  - God knows our capacity and limitations
  - He doesn't expect same output from everyone
  - He doesn't expect us to deliver what He has not equipped us for
  - He simply wants us to be faithful with what we have—**to do our best**
3. THE **REWARD**—[2 points]
  - a. **First**—God *does* reward for productivity
  - b. **Second**—He gives the *same* reward for faithful obedience
    1. The faithful servants—got the **same reward**
    2. The reward is **twofold**
      - God's **approval**—“*Well done, good and faithful servant*”
      - Participating in the Lord's **joy**—“*Enter into the joy of your master*”
4. GREATER **RESPONSIBILITY**
  - a. Everyone who has—will be given more—**Mt 25:29**
  - b. Those who are productive—will be given even more responsibility
  - c. Due to trustworthiness—they have proven they are reliable
  - d. Due to ability—they stretch their own capability to do more—by *doing* more
    1. When we apply what we learn—we develop greater capacity to learn
      - **Carl Orff**—**Tell me, I forget; show me, I remember; involve me, I understand**
    2. When we do not apply what we learn, when we do not practice a skill—we lose it
  - e. The harder we work—the higher we rise—the heavier the responsibility
    - The **general** gives the hardest tasks to his **best soldiers**
    - If you want something done—give it to a **busy person**
  - f. We are training now for even greater service—**eternal service**

**Rev 22:3**—*There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.*
5. THE **OPPORTUNITY**
  - a. Seize—the **Opportunity**
    1. When God equips us—He gives us an opportunity to do great things
    2. He gives us a choice—to succeed or to fail
    3. Don't be afraid to **take a risk**—like the first two servants

- We're not given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and discipline—**II Tim 1:7**
  - Pray for boldness—like the Apostles in Jerusalem—**Acts 4**
  - Dream big—be sure (pray)—*carpe diem*—and work hard!
4. Where would we be today if **scientists/doctors** had not pushed against the odds?
- God is greater than science and medicine—and can do even greater things
- b. Don't be overcome by—the **Threat**
1. Recognize—three dangers
- a. **Fear** and intimidation
    - ☆ The 'evil' servant—was 'troublesome'—beset with troubles
    - ☆ Paralyzed by fear of punishment
  - b. **Laziness**—in Matthew's account—he was 'slothful'
  - c. **Excuses**—i.e. hedging our bets
    - ☆ Falling prey to self-fulfilling prophecies of failure
    - ☆ A defensive mechanism—used to excuse laziness or incompetence
2. Remedy
- a. Don't let the real '**evil one**' of this world paralyze you with fear
    - I Jn 4:4—Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world**
  - b. Don't be influenced by other's low expectations—or lack of faith in you
  - c. Trust in **God's sovereignty**
    - ☆ If God equips you—He calls you to some task
    - ☆ If God calls you to a task—He will supply the means to finish it
6. THE **LIMITATION**
- a. **Stay in the lane** God assigns you
  - b. God doesn't move us to levels of responsibility for which He doesn't equip us
  - c. The world—and ego—promote people to the level of **incompetency**
    - God does not do this—He does not expect more of us than He gives us
  - d. Live within God's equipping—according to His plan for you
    - Don't try to be what God does not make you to be
    - But—also don't underestimate your equipping and ability
    - Remember—it will grow as you use it!
7. **SMALL THINGS**
- a. Don't be frustrated if you have only **one talent**
  - b. It can be used **mightily** for God
  - c. **Examples** of faithfulness in small things

- **Zachariah Riney**—Knob Hill School—Kentucky frontier—taught Lincoln ABCs
  - **Anne Sullivan**—taught 1 student—**Hellen Keller**—revolutionized deaf/blind world
- d. **Jesus—our Example**—faithful in small things
- **Healing Peter’s mother-in-law** of fever—after exorcism in Nazareth—**Mk 1**
  - **Finding blind man** he healed—after expulsion from synagogue—**Jn 9**
  - **Blessing the children**—His disciples had turned away—**Mk 10**
  - **Blind Bartimaeus**—hushed by everyone else—**Mk 10**
  - **Foot-washing**—**Jn 13**
  - **Caring for His mother**—from the cross—**Jn 19**
  - **Face cloth in tomb**—neatly folded—apart from linen wrappings—**Jn 20**
- e. We must **prove** ourselves in small things—before we are **entrusted** with great things
- **Booker T. Washington**—salt furnaces, coal mines; janitor at Hampton Institute
- f. Even 5 talents—a lifetime of wealth/services—is a small thing to God
- I Cor 2:9**—*Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man all that God has prepared for those who love Him.*

## VIII. INVITATION

### TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE

Take my life and let it be  
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
 Take my moments and my days,  
 Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
 At the impulse of Thy love.  
 Take my feet and let them be  
 Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,  
 Always, only for my King.  
 Take my lips and let them be  
 Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,  
 Not a mite would I withhold.  
 Take my intellect and use  
 Every pow’r as Thou shalt choose.



Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.