

Using the Gifts you've been Entrusted with

Matthew 25:14-30

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"He's here! The Bridegroom's here!" The end. Judgement day! *THE* Day to fear! Yet in the previous parable, Jesus spoke of the end in terms of *JOY*. The joy of a wedding celebration! Will you be *ready* in faith, looking to Jesus, trusting in Him, expecting Him? Or by then, will your flame of faith have died out, starved for lack of the daily fuel of the cross - snuffed out by all the distractions of life ... family and friends, work and play, daily living - left outside the kingdom of heaven, unrecognized by the Bridegroom?

The best way to be ready for Jesus' *second* coming? Keeping your eyes fixed on His *first* coming - the cross for you *today*, and every day. But Christianity is more than just "getting into heaven." It's about life now, too. How do we live out our faith as we await the arrival of the Bridegroom? Jesus continues.

A man goes away from home and remains away for a considerable amount of time. Before he leaves, he entrusts his property to his servants in the form of talents, a large sum of money. To one he gives five talents (*bags of gold*), to another two (*bags of gold*), and to another one (*bag of gold*). And then the man goes away, without so much as a word of instruction as to what to do. The first two double their investment. But the third one takes a different approach. He digs a hole in the ground and buries it. (Cwirila)

The servants mentioned here are stewards, someone who's been *entrusted* with someone else's things. They're *not* the *owner* and therefore not free to do whatever they like with what's entrusted to them! A steward acts as an agent on behalf of the owner.

One steward is given five talents. Another two. And another only one. See any problem with that? What's our initial reaction to that? Doesn't seem very fair, does it? Why does one get more than the other? What's the deal with that? But that's not up to us, is it? That's not our worry. The Eternal Master knows what He's doing. Can we trust Him in that? Can we be content in what He's entrusted us with? Even *happy* in what He graciously gives us, no matter the amount?

Why are some people so gifted it seems? They can do anything! And then there's me and you. You may not be the greatest evangelist in the world. God knows that. He didn't entrust that gift to you. But what gifts *has* He entrusted you with? Has He entrusted you with the gift of speech? Can you talk with others about spiritual things, no matter how imperfectly? Can you be a witness to what the Scriptures say? Has God entrusted you with two ears? Can you listen? Do you know how *rare* that is? Do you know how much that's needed in our world? Do you know how much people appreciate that; how it can open up conversation about the Lord?

You might not be the smartest person that's ever been born. That's okay, God didn't entrust you with that gift. But what smarts *has* He entrusted to you? How are you putting them to use? Are you a student? Are you at the top of your class? Yes? No? Either way, how are you using the gifts God's entrusted to your care? Are you putting them to go use or letting them go to waste? Are you just getting by or doing the most with what you've been given? We're not all at the top of the class. That's not the question. The question is, "What are you *doing* with the gifts God *has* entrusted to you, whatever they may be?"

What does God say to the one He's entrusted the most talents to? The *same* thing you says to the one with only two talents. The *same* thing He *would* have said to the one with only one talent, had he put it to good use. "*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master!*"

Stop thinking of the *other* servants and *comparing* yourself to what *they've* been entrusted with, and start fixing your eyes on your Gracious Master who gave *everything*, for you. Live with *Him* in mind. Live for Him and not for yourself and not for anyone else, in order to please *them*. Live, not in *fear* of what you *haven't* been entrusted with; in your inadequacies. Live in *faith* and *trust* in the One who *gives* the gifts and entrusts them to you. Live for the One who lived and died for you that you might live forever with Him. Use whatever gifts He's entrusted to you until He returns, in faith and trust and joy in Him.

Why are some people so gifted it seems? And then there's the rest of us? The Eternal Master knows what He's doing. Can you trust Him in that? Can you be content in what He's entrusted you with? Even *happy* in what He graciously entrusts to you?

Has He entrusted you with a mind to think? Legs to walk? Health to be alive? The breath of life? A roof over your head? The knowledge of the Scriptures? The Way to eternal life? It's not about using the gifts you *haven't* been entrusted with. It's about what you *do* with the gifts God *has* entrusted to you.

You might not be the richest person on the planet. That's okay. God doesn't expect you to give ten million per year to world missions. But what are you doing with the finances He *has* entrusted to you? Remember the poor widow? What did she do with the little that God had entrusted to her? *"Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."*

You might not be the best teacher. God hasn't entrusted you with that gift. But what *has* God given you? It's not what you do with what you *haven't* been given, but what you *have* been given. Do the best with what He's given you.

How have you put what He's entrusted to use, so that it's expanded and multiplied? When the Gracious Master returns one day and asks an accounting of whatever it is He's entrusted you with, the *last* thing He wants to hear is, *"Here is what you've entrusted to me. You can have it back, safe and sound, untouched, just the way it was when you gave it to me!"*

That's not why He gave it to you. He could have buried it in a hole Himself. He gave it to you to use, to multiply His gifts; to put them to use for His kingdom; to expand it; to enrich it. He could do it all Himself if He wanted, but He wants you to share in the joy of His kingdom work; to be involved, creating and doing *His work through* you. And you, having the joy of watching Him work through you. The honor and the joy of being entrusted with what is His and seeing Him use it and multiply it in ways you could never imagine.

Imagine Dad giving you the keys to the car for the first time so that you could use it for the day! Picture him leaving for work, entrusting *you* with the car. And at the end of the day, when Dad gets home from work, you say to him, "Don't worry Dad. The car is safe and sound. I didn't want there to be any problems or risk being in an accident or getting a scratch on it. After all, I figured, since you're such an experienced driver, I should just leave the driving to you. It's still sitting in the garage. I never moved it all day. Here are the keys." But where's the joy in that, for you or your father? That's *not* what Dad had in mind.

What's the kingdom of God like? It's like God working through us with whatever He's entrusted us with and saying at the end of the day, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"*

Years ago, a gave one of my Green Bay Packer hats to one of my boys. A special hat, signed by some of the Packer players. If your dad gave you a hat like that, what would you do with it? Keep it on a shelf? Keep it hidden away in the closet? Seems like a good idea. But that wasn't why I gave it to him - to hide it away in the closet. I wanted him to wear it; to play with it; to enjoy it; to share my joy of seeing him wear it and enjoy it! I didn't want him to give it back to me one day in perfect condition. It would bring joy to my heart that the cap looked old and worn and used. Not much value when it came to selling it, but priceless to the giver and the receiver.

When Jesus returns one day and is looking forward to hearing you tell what you did with the gifts He's entrusted to you, He doesn't want you to give them back to Him untouched, in the same condition He gave them to you. He wants to see what you've done with them; how you used them. That's *why* He gave them to you in the first place. To put them to use and seeing His work multiplied in what He's given you, so that you can share in His joy with Him! It's for your joy!

You can hear it in their voice, "Master ... you entrusted me with five bags of gold. *See, I have gained five more!*" "... you entrusted me with two bags of gold; *See, I have gained two more!*" "Look Master, how exciting!" "Thank you for *trusting* me, with what is Yours. I'm so happy to have been part of this venture and to see blessing come to You. You've been so good to me. You've given me so much. I'm so glad I could do something for you! I'm honored; overwhelmed, that You would even ask!"

In Matthew's previous chapter, Jesus asks, *"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?" "It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns."*

The two faithful servants - notice the reward given these two. Their *reward* for work well done, *wasn't* a gold watch, or an early retirement, or a vocation trip. Their faithfulness led to even *greater* usefulness.

Who is a faithful servant? Not one who is perfect. Not one who doesn't fail. But one who lives by faith, *trusting* in the Master, especially while He's away. *Waiting* for Him to return. Looking *forward* to His return. Not idle, but busy. Busy using the gifts the Master has entrusted to him while He's away. Honored to be *asked*. Honored to be *used*. Gladly busying himself for the sake of His Gracious Master - to see Him blessed and honored and glorified!

The unfaithful servant doesn't live in *faith*, but in *fear*. Faith and trust in his Gracious Master is *not* his motivation, but fear. Fear of a harsh Master. But even *that's* a cover-up; a smokescreen. What's the real issue? The Master knows. He's not fooled for a second. *His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant!"*

That's the *real* problem. It's *not* so much that he's *afraid* of the Master's harshness. If *that* were the case, the servant would be scared of doing *nothing* with the Master's money and returning it without any profit. If the servant were *really* afraid of the Master, the *least* he would do is what? Put the Master's money in the bank to earn interest. How much work could that be! Why, this servant didn't even do that! He wouldn't do the *slightest* to see the Master blessed! He wasn't *afraid* of the Master. He was just downright lazy!

How could he be so lazy! How could he so dishonor his Master! How could we? How could he, not for a second, think of someone other than himself; especially, having such a Gracious Master who trusted him with what was His? There was only *one* answer. The servant wasn't *afraid* of the Master and he wasn't just lazy. Deep down, he was wicked! That's where all his actions came from. Wicked unbelief in the Master!

Is it any wonder the third steward is called unfaithful? What the Lord had entrusted to him, he buried and left to lie idle and unproductive! The master's trust aroused no response in his heart. The unfaithful steward is a picture the *nominal* Christian. The "Christian" in *name* only. One who uses the name "Christian", yet never uses the gifts God has entrusted to them. Might that be a picture of you?

The tragedy of the third servant? He did *nothing*. He didn't misplace his talent. He didn't waste it on wild living. He didn't do bad business with it. He did nothing. He buried it. And because he didn't use it, he lost it altogether.

What's it like in the kingdom of heaven? What will it be like in the end, when Christ returns? After a long time, your master will return and settle accounts. What will He say to say to you? "Well done, good and faithful servant ... Come and share your master's happiness!" Or will He not even address you, but rather say to those who do His bidding, "*Take what I've entrusted to them and give it to the one who has ten bags ... and throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!*"

"He's here! The Bridegroom's here!" Are you ready for Him? How are you living out your days until Jesus returns? In heartfelt thanks for what He's done for you? Serving Him or serving yourself? Living in busy faith or in unbelieving laziness and wickedness?

What do you own? Nothing. All you have is a gift, *owned* by Christ and *entrusted* to you. To one, five talents, to another two, to a third only one. Why the difference? The Master's riches are entrusted to His servants with all love and wisdom. To each as God best sees fit - life, breath, time, abilities, gifts, wealth, speech, health, family, work, play, position, influence, money, education, relationships, His wondrous Gospel, and every other blessing He bestows on us. All *gifts* from our Lord, as a sacred trust to be employed in His service.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ ... But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (1 Corinthians 12:12-18)

The best way to wait for Jesus' *second* coming? Keeping your eyes fixed on His *first* coming - the cross for you today, and every day; and living by faith, gladly using what you've been entrusted with in "thanks" for all that He's done for you, as you look forward to the joy of the wedding feast that has no end!