

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

Theme; Use what the Lord has given you

Outline

- I. Master gives to each talents
- II. Lord gives it, expecting it to be used for His kingdom, no matter how large!

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew the twenty-fifth chapter verses fourteen through thirty.

Boys and girls, I pray that you are doing well today. Do you like helping others? Yep, I know that you do. You like making sure that people are safe and okay. You help at home with your little sister a lot. Have you ever been told that you are too small to help? Sometimes, but often there will be something for you to help with, mixing cookie dough together, pouring in eggs for breakfast. There's a lot of small things that you can help with. In our text for today, we see something small, one talent, that goes unused. The Master is mad that the servant did not make good use of his money. How can we make use of the things that God has given to us, both small and big? Ponder that question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

### **I. Master gives to each talents**

Our text for today is one that many have struggled with. Early in our history, this parable was used against America. Preachers in England saw the Puritans as unprofitable servants, declaring that their emigration to America was God casting them into a land of darkness, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Later, however, this parable was used for America. Revivalist preachers declared America to be a place of opportunity, where profitable servants would be blessed. Faithful stewardship would result in financial prosperity. In fact, in the 1920s, Sinclair Lewis wrote a social satire of such preachers (*Elmer Gantry*) and the way they used this parable to proclaim the cash value of Christianity.

Even today we struggle with it because the mention of talents makes us

jump to finances and we do not like to talk about finances. But we have to remember that our Lord is not talking about physical wealth. Rather, He is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven. He Is talking about stewardship. The things that have been granted to us by the Master and how to make the best use of what we have been given while the Master is away.

A master goes on a journey and leaves his possessions to the care of his servants. “To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.”<sup>1</sup> We may estimate the values of these investments at roughly fifty thousand, twenty thousand and ten thousand denarii. Since one denarius was a day’s wage, this would be a “small sum” only to a very rich master.<sup>2</sup> The master gives to each according to his ability.

The same could be said of us today. Our Lord has given to each of us skills, talents, hobbies, passions, and much more according to our abilities. They are never the same for each individual believer. We all have the unique to us abilities that the Lord has given to us. The talents that Jesus gives us include all the intellectual and physical abilities we are born with and those we develop as we mature. Our talents include all the material possessions that rightfully come into our hands. And they include the many opportunities God provides us for using our talents to serve him and our neighbor. <sup>3</sup> Are you a child? God wants you to develop your talents in an all-around way—your mind, your body, your knowledge of the Bible and the Christian faith—so you can live out a life of service to your fullest potential. Even now, you can help out in home and church and school, showing the love of Jesus in how you live toward others. Are you a father or a mother? You have been given the gift of children, entrusted to your care. What higher stewardship can there be? You have the calling and the duty to teach your children the Word of God, to raise up your children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. That’s

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 25:15). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>2</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 25:15–17). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>3</sup> Albrecht, G. J., & Albrecht, M. J. (1996). [Matthew](#) (p. 362). Northwestern Pub. House.

your #1 job. My calling as pastor is to help you do that. You older saints, those of you with a little more free time on your hands: God is not finished with you yet. You have years of wisdom and experience to draw on.

We all have talents and skills that can be used in God's service, in the many tasks to be done in the church. Do you want to know how you can help? Just ask. There are lots of ways for you to help. All of us, together, make up the body of Christ. And just as in the human body, where we need all parts doing their job—the toenail and the armpit, as well as the eyes and ears and mouth—so also in the church we need all hands on deck, each doing his part, large or small, for the body to function to its fullest.

## **II. Lord gives it, expecting it to be used for His kingdom, no matter how large!**

He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.<sup>17</sup> So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.<sup>18</sup> But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.<sup>4</sup> The servants make use of the talents that their master has given to them in His absence and the faithful increase. The same is true of our lives now. Our Master and Lord gives us abilities and He expects us to use them in his absence and bring Him a profit in His kingdom!

Yet, many times we do not make use of the talents our Master has given to us. We imagine that it is sincere modesty and humility that cause us to refuse to be of any special service to God and his kingdom. We say, "I'm not qualified. I'm not well enough acquainted with the Scriptures. So let someone else serve on the church council. Let someone else teach Sunday school." It is one thing to be humble and modest, but it is another thing to use false modesty as a cloak for laziness, selfishness, or indifference.<sup>5</sup> Rather than make an increase, we hide away the talent the Lord has given us. Covering it up with dirt and refusing to make use of it. We are unfaithful servants when we should be faithful.

Eventually the Master returns. He calls his servants to account for what

---

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 25:16–18). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>5</sup> Albrecht, G. J., & Albrecht, M. J. (1996). [Matthew](#) (p. 363). Northwestern Pub. House.

they have done. Two of them receive his commendation, ‘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.’<sup>6</sup> The last however, received his master’s rebuke and anger when he returned to his master the one talent. ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,<sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’<sup>26</sup> But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?<sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.<sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.<sup>29</sup> For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.<sup>30</sup> And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’<sup>7</sup>

What this servant overlooks is his responsibility to his master and his obligation to discharge his assigned duties. His failure betrays his lack of love for his master, which he masks by blaming his master and excusing himself. Only the wicked servant blames his master. “The foolish virgins failed from thinking their part too easy; the wicked servant fails from thinking his too hard” (Alf). Grace never condones irresponsibility; even those given less are obligated to use and develop what they have.<sup>8</sup>

The same is true of us. All of us are servants in the Kingdom of God. Our gracious God has redeemed us in Christ to “live under him in his kingdom and serve him.” More grace! Christ’s holy precious blood has purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. The cleansing water of baptism has brought us into Christ’s church and given us the Spirit to live and work for his kingdom. Grace upon grace! We need to realize that God calls upon us to serve him with

---

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 25:23). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 25:24–30). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>8</sup> Carson, D. A. (1984). [Matthew](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 517). Zondervan Publishing House.

our individual talents, not because he cannot get along without our help, but rather because faithful service to him is of great value to those who do the serving.

An unused talent cannot be kept for long. Like an unused muscle, it gradually wastes away. In the kingdom of God, an unused talent is confiscated and given to someone else. God will see to it that his work will be done and that his kingdom will come. If we are negligent or indifferent toward the opportunities that God gives us to serve him in his kingdom, he will surely give those opportunities to someone else.

Martin Luther's explanation of the Lord's Prayer in his Small Catechism says it very well: "God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us." And: "God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also." We cannot stop God. We cannot prevent him from doing his gracious work in our world. But we can deprive ourselves of the blessed opportunity to share in that work. "From this preserve us, heavenly Father!"<sup>9</sup>

We know our Lord to be a good and gracious master, a most generous Lord. He has gifted us with talents in abundance, each of us with the right amount for who he wants us to be and what he wants us to do. Whatever your talents—your natural gifts and abilities, your acquired skills, the opportunities God sets before you for love and service, and yes, your money—these are the talents you can put to use in God's kingdom. We do this individually in our daily lives, and we do it collectively in our life together as church.

It is required of a steward that he be faithful. Through Word and Sacrament, your faith is being strengthened, and that in turn will strengthen your faithfulness. To be a faithful steward, you need the ongoing forgiveness of God to pick you up when you fall. You need the continued strengthening that only comes through the ministry of the gospel in the church. These means of grace are God's gifts to you to help you to be the faithful steward God wants you to be.

---

<sup>9</sup> Albrecht, G. J., & Albrecht, M. J. (1996). [Matthew](#) (pp. 364–365). Northwestern Pub. House.

Grace upon grace upon grace! Until our Lord returns, he will strengthen you for his service and stewardship, so that you will faithfully use your talents, talents on loan from God. And when our Lord returns, he will commend you and welcome you with these most gracious words: “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.”

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.