

PARABLE: TALENTS

Matthew 25:14-30

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus; in the parable: rich man and his servants

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Rich man/master: (Mat 25:14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26).
- Number of talents: five (Mat 25:15, 16, 20); two (Mat 25:15, 17, 22); one (Mat 25:15, 18, 24).
- Servants' actions with talents: servant with five doubled it (Mat 25:16, 20); servant with two doubled it (Mat 25:17, 22); servant with one buried it (Mat 25:18; 24).
- Each servant accounted for his actions: five talents (Mat 25: 20); two talents (Mat 25:22); one talent (Mat 25:24).
- Master's response to servants' actions: five talent servant rewarded (Mat 25:21); two talent servant rewarded (Mat 25:23); one talent servant punished (Mat 25:26-28, 30).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' serenity when he told the parable.
- Master's trust in his servants.
- Five and two talent servants' diligence.
- One talent servant's slothfulness.
- Master's joy at five and two talent servants' success.
- Master's disgust at one talent servant's slothfulness.

Initial-situation:

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. On Sunday, Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. On Monday, Jesus expelled those who were buying and selling in the temple. Religious leaders began looking for a way to kill him. Tuesday morning was filled with confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

Tuesday afternoon Jesus was alone with his disciples. They wanted to know what would be the sign that Jesus was coming again, and when would the world come to an end (Mat 24:3). Jesus spoke to them about the last days. Jesus told several parables that illustrated the Kingdom of Heaven when he would return.

Initial-problem:

The Kingdom of Heaven will be like a rich man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

Final-situation:

For everyone who has, will be given more, and he'll have more than enough. Whoever doesn't have much, even what little he has will be taken from him.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus told the parable, "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven will be like a rich man going on a journey. He called his servants and entrusted his property to them. The rich man gave to each servant talents according to his ability." (*One talent was a Greek gold coin whose value equaled almost seventeen years of a day labor's minimum salary.*)

"The rich man entrusted to one servant five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent. Then the rich man left on his journey. The servant who received five talents went at once, put his money to work, and gained five more. Likewise, the servant who received two talents gained another two. But the servant who received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

"After a long absence, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The servant who received five talents reported, 'Master, you entrusted me with five talents. See! I've doubled the amount and gained five more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done; you're a good and faithful servant! You've been faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The servant who received two talents also reported, 'Master, you entrusted me with two. See! I've doubled the amount and gained two more.'

"His master replied, 'Well done; you're a good and faithful servant! You've been faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"Then the servant who received one talent reported, 'Master, I knew that you're a hard man to please. You harvest where you haven't sown and gather where you haven't scattered seed. So I was afraid. I hid your money in the ground. See! Here is the money that belongs to you.'

"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I haven't sown and gather where I haven't scattered seed. Well then, you should have invested my money with the bankers, so that when I returned I would receive my money back with interest.'

"The master ordered, 'Take the money from this worthless servant and give it to the servant who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he'll have more than enough. Whoever doesn't have much, even what little he has will be taken from him. Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where people will weep and gnash their teeth in pain'" (Mat 25:14-30).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?

6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the main point of the parable?
2. In the parable:
 - Who does the master represent?
 - Who do the servants represent?
3. What do the talents represent?
4. How can Christians strengthen and multiply their abilities?
5. What happened to the two servants who doubled their investments and to the one who hid his talent?
6. Which servant do you most identify with?
7. What excuses do you use for not using your talents?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The main lesson of the Parable of the Talents is that each person will be judged for his faithfulness and not his achievements** (Mat 25:14-30). God given responsibility is bestowed in proportion to each person's abilities, and each person is responsible for faithfully using what God has entrusted to him.
2. **Jesus will return to earth and hold people accountable for their actions.** Jesus may take a long time before returning, but he definitely will return. At Jesus' return, people will account to Jesus for what they did with their abilities and opportunities. The man on the long journey symbolizes Jesus (Mat 25:14). The long journey symbolizes the lengthy delay that will precede his second coming (Mat 25:19). The time for settling accounts symbolizes the time of judgment (Mat 25:19).
3. **In Christ's Kingdom, diligence receives a reward; whereas, slothfulness is punished.** The two servants who doubled their talents were rewarded, and the one who hid his talent was punished (Mat 25:20-26). We are responsible for wisely using whatever God has given us, and we will be rewarded or punished accordingly.
4. **God considers the person wicked who plays it safe by refusing to take risks.** Jesus called the man who fearfully hid his talent, both wicked and lazy (Mat 25:24-27).
5. **Jesus' return will separate one group of people from another.** The two servants who doubled their talents were called faithful servants and were invited to share their master's happiness. The servant who hid his talent was called wicked and lazy and was thrown into the darkness, where people weep and gnash their teeth in pain (Mat 25:19-30).

6. **People who accuse God and blame him for their own wrongdoing will be judged, condemned, and punished by God.** The master divided the money (talents) among his servants according to their abilities. No one received more than he could handle. The servant would only fail if he was lazy or hated his master. The servant who hid his talent, accused his master of being a hard man to please. He accused his master of harvesting where he hadn't sown and gathering where he hadn't scattered seed (Mat 25:24-25). However, the master judged, condemned, and punished the servant (Mat 25:26-30).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Pantomime Retelling of the Story:**
 The storyteller tells the story one time. Then the storyteller:
- Asks for a volunteer to pantomime the story as the storyteller tells it a second time.
 - Retells the story while the volunteer pantomimes it.
 - Invites a listener to retell the story.
2. **Chant:**
 Words in **bold and underlined** are stressed. Stress words by stretching them out.

ALL	
"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48 NIV).	
GROUP 1	GROUP 2
From <u>everyone</u> who has been given much,	<u>much</u> will be demanded;
and from the one who has been <u>entrusted</u> with much,	<u>much more</u> will be asked.
ALL	
"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48 NIV).	