

The  
*Faithful Steward*  
Matthew 25:14-30



## “The Faithful Steward”

– Matthew 25:14-30  
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**Matthew 25:14-30** *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went*

*on a journey. 16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

1 Corinthians 4:2 tells us that *“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”*

Different bible versions will use various terms such as “money,” “talents,” “pounds,” “coins,” etc. in the story before us. While the strict interpretation has to do with a monetary value, the often handling of this passage in terms of utilizing one’s special gifts and abilities is on the mark also. In fact, the English word “talent” and the meaning of such in our culture and vernacular actually came out of this biblical account. This parable essential speaks concerning *anything* and *everything* that the “master” gives his servants in trust to be utilized and invested in that Masters name or ultimately for the kingdom benefit. Thus the impact of the story in our lives will stem from the answer to the question: *what has He given me personally?*

Perhaps we should begin with the obvious: being “bond slaves” we really own nothing, and all that we have...whether it be money, possessions, or intangible abilities and gifts, are not ours and all of it will remain upon our “departure.” Therefore the next big question that needs to be asked therein, is “*why do we have it?*” If it all belongs to God, then why the loan? Is it all for *our* benefit, pleasure, and personal furthering? Or is it that God has made an innate investment in us and is seeking a return? Perhaps maybe even without being asked it should be our “reasonable service?” (*Romans 12:1*) A reasonable response to a God, who, *at incredible cost*, saved us from our sin and its penalty, and gave us life abundant and life eternal?

Yet the honest truth is that so often we desire...*simply out of self-preservation and selfish-gain*, a salvation from judgement and penalty, but not so much an actual *rescue* from the *power* that sin has over us. We desire an escape from hell, so we take the free gift. But there is no actual passion and desire to be free from sin and the flesh. No real zeal to experience life with Christ as Lord over our movements. Thus there remains a constant struggle within us! We want heaven but we want sin too. We want Jesus, but we want to control our own lives too! When did salvation and Christianity become “all about us?”

And further, we often do not really love God for the sacrifice. We just don't! Possibly we feel that we have some sort of an inherent value to render such an act as the cross worthwhile? But the price paid nor the sacrifice given has elicited in us a contrite and thankful heart. Truth be told, many of us are in this “Jesus thing” for *our* benefit and *our* benefit alone. We simply bought into the premise of Christianity for perceived immediate albeit temporal worldly benefits and on the chance that the whole judgement and heaven thing might actually be true! This is why so many who walked in the light for so long eventually walk out of it and back into the darkness. They were never born again and have always been lost.

Hebrews 6 warns us: “...*it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened — those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come — and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame. When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.*”

The story before us is designed to paint a vivid picture of something Jesus was trying to get across to his listening public. We readily and easily see that the “man,” or the “nobleman” in Luke's account, is a picture of Christ Himself. He is the Master. He is the owner of all. And He is also the one who hands out the “stuff,” and entrusts us with the abilities. Therefore one would be hard-pressed to paint any other picture concerning this account than the clear idea that the Master was giving these “talents” to these servants because he was expecting action on their part: *an effort, a risk, and an investment!*

In fact, the Scriptures are full of passages concerning our Lord's call to serve Him. And why not? He, as the Master over us, has also invested a great deal in us, and we *must* acknowledge that He desires, yes, even *expects* a return upon that investment. While He redeemed us through a sheer act of love, (this we know because he died for us “while we were yet sinners” and He died for those who would hate Him), He desires that we love Him back. His love was manifested in action and He seeks some action from us!

Yet once again, despite the plethora of Scripture directing us toward this fact, many of us have managed to ignore or even *deny* this reality. Such folks seek to steer clear of this scriptural account, for it is difficult even for *them* to ignore! The reasons for failure in this matter are legion. There is what appeared to be simple fear in the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant in our story, but *our* excuses can range also from “too busy” to “too self-absorbed” to sheer laziness!

Some of these servants ran with the opportunity before them, and ironically capitalized for themselves while gaining for their master! It's funny how that works! Yet such a fact should be no secret...for in Mark 10 we read “...*Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.*” But those who reject the practice of Christ service, also are rejecting the truth of such. And not believing the words of Christ Himself says “I do not believe Christ,” and because I do not believe, I am therefore not saved...I have yet to be reborn a new creature. This is not my take or that of this church, but that of the Bible itself.

The man in the story that fell short did so...at least on the surface, because of fear. Yet ironically it was not HIS stuff to lose, it belonged to the Master! It appears rather he was fearful of the Master, not fearful of losing the stuff. Again, while a healthy fear and respect of God is necessary, our relationship with Him...*if we are truly seeking one*, is not to illicit fear, but rather love in both directions.

Certainly “*perfect love casts out all fear.*” 1John 4:18 tells us so: “*Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*” The man in the story was motivated exactly in this way. He feared “punishment.” Is that what motivates your action? Do you do or *not do* out of fear of punishment or because your love for Him is more valuable than sin pleasure and fleshly satisfaction?

Christ Himself tells us that we should not “...*worry about these things, saying, What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*”

Some of these servants in the story moved immediately to invest what was given them, and they actually had no promise of any personal gain. RG LeTourneau moved to give to God what God had given to him to invest. He had no promise of personal reward, but he did it anyway, not out of fear, but out of a love he held for his Master. He directed his bookkeeper to start a “God account” and he began to put funds in it starting at 20% of all he made. Then it became 30%, then 40%, and then 50%. By the time he died, he was giving not the perceived obligatory 10% most of us give, but rather he kept 10% and gave 90% to God. He died a multi-millionaire.

“*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*” (1 Corinthians 4:2) The passage doesn’t say that one be found *successful* but that one be found *faithful*. Notice that there was not a *quantity* that was demanded, but faithfulness and righteousness. Not all of us will have a multi-million dollar businesses to use for God, but God is only asking that what He *did* give you, to invest for Him and His kingdom. We are called to simply “*seek first the kingdom of God*” and in doing so “*everything else we need will be given to us.*”

The Master in the story gave to each of His servants according to their ability. He knew them well apparently! Just as our God...*our Master*, knows us ever so well! He was not diminishing the one to whom He gave only two talents. For according to the first century exchange rate, the one who received two was given the equivalent of 400,000\$! God gives according to our ability, but no doubt according to our faithfulness also...right from the beginning. But the gentleman that received one, was also given according to the knowledge that the Master had of Him. I cannot help but wonder if the reason why some of us never *have*, is because the God we follow knows us so well, and knows that we will fail to invest for Him?

But what about that third servant? I can’t help but notice that Jesus used a different word to describe what he did. With the others, Jesus said that they simply “went” and did wise business with what they were given. But in the original language, Jesus used a different word with respect to the third man—a word that means that he “went off” or “departed”. Somehow, it seems, he separated himself from the others. Jesus said; “*But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money*” (v. 18).

The reasons for him to do so are many. But I can’t help but wonder why he seemed to “depart”? And why did he hide his lord’s money in the ground? Could it be that he didn’t really expect his master to return? Could it be that he hid his talent in a secret place in the earth—as people often do even today—with the hopes that he might keep it from the eyes of others, and so that he could one day come back and claim it for himself? Could it be that, throughout the time that the master’s return had seemed to be delayed, he grew to set his eyes on that gift more and more for himself?

The Master in this parable is presented to us very much as the Lord Jesus said He Himself would be. He has left us to return to the Father, with the promise that He would one day return. He has warned us that His time away from us will require that we “watch” and “be ready” (Matthew 24:42-44), because He would return at a time when He was not expected. But like the story of the ten virgins at the wedding, many of us are dozing and are failing to live in light of His return. We fail to live in the reality of our limited mortality. We fail to really believe it will all come to an end and that we will answer for the life that we have been given.

The first individual invested the Masters loan and was told “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*” The second...even though he gained less, received the same praise. “*His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’*”

Both of these individuals were given a common blessing, which included, “*Enter into the joy of your lord.*” Notice that the “joy” existed already, and in their love for their Master and their passion to serve Him they were granted the privilege to “enter into” that special realm! But in sad contrast, we see the third servant. It doesn’t appear that “love” was a factor for him at all. Our account says “*Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’*”

It’s interesting that he didn’t steal it (at least not yet), nor did he squander it, nor did he even lose the gift. But all of his action was motivated by a fearful obedience rather than a loving zeal. He lived only in a tepid fear of the Master, and never in a loving a zealous passion to be His servant or further the Masters holdings! And it seems that there was even an air of resentment with this servant. He went so far as to blame the Master for his own shortcoming and failure! He seemed to forget that **he** was the servant! His attitude was as if he was owed something he did not receive.

And then, like we often do, the man attempted to justify his actions. He presents the one talent back to the master and said, “*Look, I gave you what is yours*”. It was as if he was saying, “*There. See? I haven’t hurt you or taken anything unjustly from you. You therefore have no reason to be upset with me; because I haven’t stolen from you.*”

But the Master did not see things that way at all. Please note that the Master was not herein gentle and forgiving! “*But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’*” (vv. 26-30). How many of us have watched the faithful keep getting more while we seem to be entrenched or going backward? How many of us only became bitter and angry because of such, as if the other servants had done us personal harm, instead of realizing that such is the action of the Master, and the fault of ourselves?

The master called the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant “lazy and wicked.” Wow. He is not soft-peddling this issue at all is He? He rejected the servants’ excuses, and took what the servant **did** have and gave it to another. And lastly...and most alarmingly the last servant was “cast” into “outer darkness”; where there would be “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. This speaks of far more than simply not finishing in the front of the pack.

It means not finishing at all.