

## **Parable of the Talents**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

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Matthew 25:14-30.

A scriptural synopsis, a *paraphrase*: An important man called his servants together before leaving on an extended trip. He delegated responsibility to each of three servants. To one he gave 5, to another 2, and to another 1 “talent” (KJV), each “according to their abilities.” The ones with 5 and 2 invested what they were given and doubled the master’s resources. The one given 1 dug a hole and buried his “talent.” After a period of time, the master returned for an accounting. The two who doubled were commended equally. The third made excuses to explain his fear and why he simply hid the talent for safe-keeping. Sorely disappointed, the master rebuked him soundly. He had the talent taken away and given to the one who already handled the most, and had the unfaithful servant thrown into “outer darkness” (KJV).

This is a story, a parable, told by Jesus and like so many of His stories, truth unfolds ministering to every level of our maturity and every level of comprehension. Each hearer comes away with nuggets of truth that perfectly fits his or her place in life at any given moment in time. We can never exhaust the Truth of the Bible. There is always more to be gleaned from His marvelous, living Word. It behooves us to re-read these familiar portions of the Scriptures often with fresh expectancy for further personal enlightenment from the Holy Spirit.

I think what is happening in the church today is a broader understanding of the *whole* of God’s truth. We could see His truth being dropped into one’s understanding as a stone thrown into a pond. Where it breaks the surface of the water is a single spot that can be measured. “There’s where it went in.” But there are circles of ripples emanating from that single spot in the water – that are like truth upon truth upon truth. One foundational truth can be applied in many ways and often builds on a person’s previous level of understanding, enlarging on that basic truth.

Jesus used parables to teach people. He spoke to both those who could understand and who could not. The disciples could understand much, but sometimes required from Him further explanation. Why speak in parables then if they were so hard to understand His true meaning? “So that hearing they will not understand” (Mt.13:14; Is.6:9). How many of you have had times in your life when something was said that you had no interest in and no understanding of, but some time later it became clear and/or important? Think about this truth: *Jesus will never give you comprehension of something until you are ready to obey it.* If you do not obey at the point of understanding, you become a candidate for judgment! When He knew He had a whole group of unbelievers who wouldn’t “get it,” Jesus didn’t want to validate them for judgment at that time.

We are living in a time, in a nation, that has been validated for judgment. This nation has heard about Jesus every way there is to hear – every way there is to tell them. That’s not always been true in my lifetime, but it is true today. As a nation, we are set up for God’s judgment. Why hasn’t it happened? Why has He stayed His hand? GRACE! The pure grace of God. It is only the grace and mercy of God that holds back the return of Jesus! He is giving sinners ample time and opportunity to repent and come to the knowledge of salvation (cf.2Pet.3:9).

Can you think of anything that has been prophesied in the Word that is to precede His return but has not yet occurred? What kinds of signs? Wars and rumors of wars? Nations rising against nations? Earthquakes in diverse manners and places? What do you think has to happen yet? That the Gospel has to be preached to all the earth? Oh, please. Not only have we preached it to them, we are training the nations to preach it to their own. We are living in the fulfillment of prophecy. We are living in Matthew 24. Every day another sign is reported in the news.

The prayer “Come Lord Jesus” (Rev.22:20) is so selfish today. You see – that’s just for “me,” because I’m ready. I don’t fear His return. I’m excited about it! But, if you read the Book of Malachi, it says, “What would you do if He did come? Would you have to get soap and hyssop and clean yourself up?” (Mal.3:2) What will be our response to His question of what have we done with all He has given us? Will *you* be able to stand face to face with Him at His coming?

I surely believe the Lord is poised to return. I don’t know if this will be what we call “the Second Coming,” which probably is the second thousandth. We’ve called them “revivals.” How many times has He come back to the church in power? Over and over and over with great moves of God. And He is coming again – SOON! Whether He comes in the clouds (1Thes.4:16,17), or to every church that names the Name of Jesus, I am convinced it will not be in just one “Toronto” move or only in one “Brownsville” move – *He is going to move in power wherever people want Him.*

Our common prayer is and has been, “Oh, what I want is a great harvest of souls.” Then are you ready to answer Him when He asks you, “Okay, what did you do with it?” “With what?” “With what I gave you, the *talent*.” From time to time, I hear people say: “I have no talents.” That simply is not the truth. He gives to everyone – liberally.

Some translators attempt to assign a dollar figure to the word “talents.” When we’re interpreting biblical stories or parables or truths, we need to learn to discover the underlying principles – we look for what was the *intent* of the author. Here, the *intent* is, the master gave something extremely *valuable* – not only valuable to Him, but to the servants as well. He said, “What I’m giving you is valuable.” The word “talent” actually means “to bear,” or something “*weighty*.” One of the words that describes “glory” is “weight.” Not in the sense that it is tough or hard to bear, but it means it’s *valuable*. The glory of the Lord is “heavy!” It is valuable. So, too are these “talents” entrusted to the servants.

For fuller understanding, it is also important to identify the characters in a parable. “Master” speaks to us of Christ who is the absolute owner and proprietor of everything and all people everywhere (Mt.28:18; Lk.10:22a; Jn.3:35) – a truth no longer widely understood in our society. The “servants” are those who are of the master’s household, those who belong to him, those for whom he paid a price. He owns them. They are representative of any believer – each one is a member of the household of God, every one a part of the Body of Christ. The subject of this parable is actually “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

It’s the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God if you prefer that phrase. It is where the King rules, where God is in command. He is fully in charge. I believe that the King deposited something precious with us to use and to do – in every visitation or in every revival in the past. Then, He stepped back to see what we would do with what He gave us. And that is this story, the story of the *talents*.

I believe the church is now at the place in this story when the Master, Jesus, is coming back. Just as the master in our parable, Jesus will come for an accounting, asking, “What have you done with what I gave you?” Jesus is coming back – sooner than you know – and it isn’t just to save souls. Saving souls is the easiest thing for heaven! It isn’t heaven’s *work* to save souls. That’s been done! Calvary paid it – in full. All that heaven waits for is that the unbeliever is told “It is finished!” (Jn.19:30; Heb.10:5-10).

We’re talking about the Kingdom of Heaven – on earth. The Kingdom of Heaven – now. The Kingdom of Heaven is where? Within you (Lk.17:21) – *but only if He reigns*. The Kingdom of Heaven is in you – “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom.14:17), *but only if He reigns*. And He, the King, has a right to everything you are – because He owns you (1Cor.6:20a; Ac.20:28).

We think we are such big *owners*: *my* gifts, *my* ministry, *my* life. Truthfully, we don’t *own* anything. Everything we have is on lease! He entrusts us with so many things. The Master’s trust in man simply amazes me. Why would He trust *us*? He knows all our failings, our shortcomings, our flaws. We try to tell Him in prayer, giving Him “unknown information:” “Oh, Lord, I’m not worthy.” I can just about hear

His response, “I know that. I knew it when I chose you, when I died for you, when I called you. I have known it all along. You are *not* worthy, but Christ in you is.” That is the grace of God.

The extraordinary part of this story is the master’s *trust*. The One who created this world owns it (Ge.1:1; Ps.24:1,2; 50:12b; 89:11), owns everything in it (1Cor.10:26; Deut.10:14; Jb.41:11), and then redeemed it through Calvary (Tit.2:14; 1Pet.1:18,19). Incredible! Amazing to think that He would love a sinner such as I (Jn.3:16,17)! Truly amazing! And then, after providing for everything we need and cannot accomplish for ourselves to secure an eternal destiny in His presence, God turns around and invests in us. *He trusts us to reveal His message of love to the world* (Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15-19). He trusts us with everything His Son is: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col.3:27).

We have the whole thing backwards. We think *we* give something to *Him*. We’re not brazen enough to say we expect a lot from Him in return, but, tell the truth, we live that way. Let one thing go wrong in the home and listen to the prayer! “My God! I’ve given You my whole life! I’ve served You all these years! Why are *You* letting these things happen to *me*?” Isn’t that interesting? And then we tell Him He’s the King.

I have no problem trusting God. He has never lied to me, never failed me. “All Thy promises are true” (2Cor.1:20). “Your promises are thoroughly tested and Your servant loves them” (Ps.119:140 NIV). Oh, my friends, it’s not hard to trust someone who never lies to you. What a unique feature that is today. “Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him, how I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er.” An old song, but the truth remains. He is so worthy of our trust, but what the most astounding thing is, is *His* trusting us.

The doling out to, or the entrusting of these people (servants) by the master is interesting because not all are given the same *amount*, but they are all given *equally*. You say, “How can it be equal if one gets 1 and one, 2 and one, 5?” Read the rest of the verse – “according to his ability.” “Oh, well, that means – if you are born with talents – if you just have a natural talent – then you get more because you’re more capable.” No. It doesn’t say “capable.” It is according to your *ability – to handle what He gives you*. (The dictionary defines “able” as “having sufficient power, skill, or resources to accomplish an object.” It relates that “capable” is “having [that] ability, capacity or power to do something,” and speaks of “competence.”) Because, to the one who can handle the most, more is given and much is required (Lk.12:48).

We spend so much of our lives asking God to give us what He’s already finished. I really think we’d be very surprised if we could hear heaven’s answer so many times as He says, “I did.” “Bless me, Lord.” “I did.” “Prosper me.” “I did.” Are you carefully hearing this? He completed it all at the cross. He gave us His Son way back then, along with every gift and provision implied there. Then, He gave us His Holy Spirit on that first day of Pentecost (Acts 2). I don’t care how fervently you pray for something, if you already have it, you have it. And He isn’t going to do anything more until you do something with what you have, with what has already been entrusted to you.

Here in the parable, we have these three men who are recipients of something of great value from the master with very few directives. He just gives the “talents” and then leaves. The only thing they know is who they got them from and that he is coming back. He is returning, we just don’t know when that will be, but it shouldn’t matter when. Yes, Jesus IS coming back and He is coming in a great move and when He does, it’s going to “separate the men from the boys” (cf.Mt.25:31,32). It really is.

People are so confused today. We think these terms are synonymous: “giftings” and “titles.” In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul describes what are called the “five-fold *ministry*” in the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. They are leaders and have their place, but we are not referencing them in this parable. A *minister* is *someone who has been given responsibility under the authority of another*. We are ALL *ministers* and our three servants could be considered as such.

The master says to these servants, “I’m going to give you these things, these “talents” – but I will be back for them.” Remember, we do not *own* the *talents*, they belong to the Master. So, he gives to his servants something that is very precious to him. He entrusts the *talents* to them. To one he gives 5, to the second he gives 2, and to the third he gives 1. We, of course, wonder, “How *fair* is that?” because we would compare with one another. “How many did you get? Five? Fine! I only got 2!”

Let’s remember that our parable began with the information that the master gave to each servant “according to his ability” (Mt.25:15b). This is not favoritism. God does not give anyone more than he or she can bear or handle (1Cor.10:13), and what a gift that is! Yes, we can trust Him, and be certain that we can handle whatever comes our way. He assigned it and we can do it!

I don’t know what you may be going through at this time. I don’t know how you weigh or value what your assignments have been from the Lord. I certainly don’t know if you feel that *fairness* is an issue. I do, however, know this: *what He gives you may not look valuable to you, or **weighty**, but it is to Him!* Everything God gives to us is for Him and to serve His divine purposes. Every negative that comes into our lives – God brings to good (Rom. 8:28). Everything exists so that He might be glorified (Mt.5:16; Jn.15:8; 1Cor.6:20; 1 Pet.2:12). We are simply and miraculously recipients of His grace and mercy as His purposes are fulfilled through our lives. We were called out of darkness into His marvelous light, that He might receive the praises (1Pet.2:9).

We could spend a great amount of time discussing the *gifts of God*. Consideration of that phrase usually sends us to 1 Corinthians 12 where there is a listing of nine of His gifts. I assure you there are many more than nine. For this moment, may we understand that, at our salvation, we began with His gifts – He gave us Christ – He gave us the Holy Spirit – He gave us the Word. He gave us salvation. He gave us repentance. Yes, repentance is in itself a *gift* (Ac.5:31; 2Cor.7:11; Rom.2:4). Without this mighty gift, you can know about your sin yet not feel sorry for it at all. If that is your condition, please pray for a spirit of repentance so that you can turn from your sin and be restored to a right relationship with God, for *any* sin will separate you from Him (Is.59:2) and that would be of your own doing.

Gifts – Wisdom – Grace – Protection – Guidance. It all comes from our God – from the One who is the Guide – the Governor – the Giver – of all good things. I love the way James encapsulates this whole concept. James says, “Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness and no shadow of turning,” and He isn’t going to change His mind! Hallelujah! Everything good in your life comes from God. Period. (Jas.1:17).

In your minds, you are probably saying, “Amen” to James’ statement. That’s easy – “everything good.” What about the things that are difficult, hurtful, or ugly? Can you say “Amen” to those, believing that God still is, and always has been, in control? The difference is He will work out something good in your life through the negatives – if you let Him. I used to believe if you had *enough faith*, you didn’t have to go through any troubles. I was told that as a young believer – by people I held in high esteem. And so I tried to have *more faith* so that I would never have difficulties – and I ended up with **PRIDE!** It was cloaked like this. I would critically think, “I never had to go through *that* ordeal. Well, there must be *something* missing or wrong in her life to open her up to that! Hmmmmmm.” Come on, church, He is working an “eternal weight of glory” in us, in every one of us (2Cor.4:17).

His gifts – they are wonderful and we are all recipients of them. He just doles out gifts – faith assignments. We need to look with His eyes to see all He provides. It is God who gives faith and assignments. Ephesians 2:8-10 reads, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not from yourself. It is the gift of God, not by works – nothing you’ve done – so that no one can boast, for we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works* which God prepared in advance for us.” (paraphrased, ital. added)

We are all servants – *under* – under submission to another’s authority. I know scores of people today, who, in times past have been in the ministry (professional clergy and others) and are extremely anointed

capable people, but they never have accepted their 2 talents. They want to be the 5. What wisdom if we can hear this: *A number 2 person in a number 1 position always fails.* It does not matter how many gimmicks or natural abilities one may have, we are talking about *divine talents* – God's placements. If God didn't call you to be a number 1, then you need to be happy and productive being a number 2.

There is a danger in simply sitting in the pew, waiting for the Master to return (with more “goodies”). We keep eating at the table provided for us, good spiritual food. But we don't need anymore food, we're fat now! What we need is a little exercise – a little walking – a little talking – a little witnessing – a little sharing with others about the goodness of God. “Oh, but you see, sister, you don't understand. I have the gift of prophecy, and they don't give me a *place* in the church service.” Well, it probably isn't needed there. How many “thus saith the Lords” do you need? Outside the doors of the church, the people don't know the Lord “hath doth said!” Your co-workers would be startled if you boldly said, “I was praying for you this week, and God gave me something for you.” “Oh! God told you to tell *me* something?” “Yes, He did.” People are receptive to that kind of witness, even if they do not plan to do anything with it, they are *curious*. “What did He say?”

Others may say, “Well, *I'm* just waiting on the Lord.” Really? “Yes, I've been studying and making notes and I have a whole manual prepared – as soon as I'm *appointed...*” Read it again, Ephesians 2:10b: “...which God prepared in advance...” We must see that waiting on the Lord is not a quiescent marking of time until God somehow discovers us with our gifts. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it!” (Eccl.9:10; Col.3:17, 23). “Well, I just don't know enough Scriptures to witness...” Do you know one? How about, “God so loved the world that He gave...”? (Jn.3:16).

You don't have to be a preacher to witness. In fact, most people don't want to hear from the clergy. They expect that kind of conversation from us. They don't expect it from you. Your boss or co-workers do not expect you to say, “You have seen some good things that I do here – a positive work ethic and honesty in all things; I come on time and do not abuse the system. You see that I give my all to the projects. I want to tell you why. I met the Master and I belong to Him. He has made these changes in me.”

*God has a place for your life, not just a plan* (Jer. 29:11). As long as you think of it as a “plan,” you will just sit and call it “waiting.” But when you see it as a “place,” you will understand that God has set you there – in that job, or in a specific church, or with certain family members.

We need to be very careful with what He has given to each of us – gifts, assignments, responsibilities. The Master trusts you to do what the pastor cannot, or the elder cannot, or the deaconess cannot, or I cannot. You have a *place* and no one can do for God in that place as successfully as you can yourself. You are the *minister* He needs and He has set a great task before you. He trusts you to be faithful in fulfilling your spot. “Well, I have no talent.” That is not the truth! The Bible says you do. Read Ephesians 2:10 again – “...created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance...”

Perhaps it is simply your smile. Your smile could be more of a *ministry* to someone than any 50-minute sermon. Maybe it's your honesty at work, your diligence for details. Perhaps it is something else, but that something else is uniquely *you*. There *is* something in you, specially put there by God to carry out His purposes. Hear the words of this older chorus, “There's something within me that holdeth the rain. There's something within me, I cannot explain.” There definitely is something within you. It has been there since the time you became His; something *valuable* that He placed within you – God-given abilities – for things that you haven't even tapped into yet. You have great potential and He knows that. He put those *talents* in you – the *weight* of His expectations. They are valuable to Him.

It is important for every individual believer in any given church to grow into the mature Christian God has in mind. Individually, our lack of growth can hinder the forward progress of the whole church. It is vital that we learn that *we* are the ministers, the servants, and then to rise to God's level of expectations for us. He has provided the enabling power of His Holy Spirit so that we never have to “perform” on our

own steam. We simply learn to yield to the power of God within, working through us. What a gift! What a God!

In this parable, the master gives 5, 2, and 1. Let's look at these men. We'll refer to them by the number of talents they each received. The master looked at them and assessed, "You can handle 1; you can handle 2; and you can handle 5." And then he left. He gave them opportunity to do whatever they would with the talents. But, he does not stay away forever. In time, he returns. Let's remember that the talents are *weighty* to God. All He asks is an exercise of what He has given – an investment of the talent.

What the man given 1 talent did was to begin digging a hole to protect what he had. I watch people do this. I see them – they're saved. They've said, "I'm the sinner, You're the Savior. I believe You are the only begotten Son of God, You died for my sins, and rose again by the power of the Father." If you have come to this attestation, you are saved. The question becomes, "what are you doing with your salvation? "I'm protecting it. I don't eat with sinners, I don't fellowship with unbelievers. I keep myself from contamination." You are also keeping yourself from illumination!

How shall we understand "digging a hole?" Perhaps it is like rehearsing the past – the negatives, the hurts, the pain, the regrets. "I'm not going to do anything with this. I've tried this before, years ago.... Yeah, I know I have 1 talent, but I remember *before* how the people..." People – "they" are *always* the problem! We escape responsibility when we can blame "it" on "them." They hurt me. They let me down. And we dig this hole because we've got this one precious thing God spoke to us and we're not going to lose it this time! We're not going to let others take it away from us. Digging a hole – it is like looking at all the past failures, anger, hurts and disappointments and saying, "I'm not getting out of the boat again!" This is self-protection and it makes a person useless in the Kingdom.

Number 1 possesses this valuable something but his mind goes back to how terribly hurt he was – in the church. So he digs. "I'm not going to church. I can be a good Christian without going to church. Church is where you get hurt." And the unforgiveness continues festering as he digs some more. He has buried it deeply. He's still saved, but the resentments based in the past go on. It's easy to bury, and it's easy to dig them up again – the enemy will help you! Incidents from long years before can paralyze us today when we do not deal with them as God intends.

The truth is, no matter how small or large your portion is, you can learn to minister in the pew or in the foyer. In the parking lot is another good place to minister. We've all been given assignments – "faith assignments." That's what these talents are. They're things yet to be developed. If you know the Lord, the gift can be developed. A smile is worth a million dollars to some people! You can break the power of hell with a smile. You really can.

Isn't it time for us to be accountable? When He asks what we did with it – and you can count on Him asking – we need to be able to say, "Lord, I know *exactly* where it is. I didn't bury it or lose it. I doubled it." And what we accomplished with our *talents* this year should be doubled again next year. That is not really *amazing* to God. He didn't come on the scene and say, "WOW! You doubled it?" He says, "What'd you do with what I gave you?"

One will say, "Oh, man. I knew You were a hard Judge so I hid mine. I played it safe. But I stayed saved." Another one says, "I doubled it. I invested and doubled it." The Master will say, "Good. Well done." And may I add something here that fits? "...which is your reasonable service" (Rom.12:1). We think if we *double* something, it's noteworthy, or unreasonable." "I beseech thee, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice – holy and acceptable." That's "your reasonable service." Come on, church, isn't it time for us to recognize, "all that I am and all that I have and all I shall ever be is Yours Lord, so help me to use it wisely. Help me know where to invest. Don't let me cast my pearls before swine (Mt.7:6), but don't let me miss an opportunity either." Where do you get the wisdom to know the difference? Well, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally

and upbraideth not” (Jas. 1:5). It’s time for the church to recognize the Word of God is true (Ps. 119:160)! Every verse, every promise, every provision.

When the master returned, he looked for each servant to give an accounting of how he had handled the talents entrusted to him. The man who had 5 doubled his and knew the master had commended the one who had 2 for doubling his. “Ah. He said to the man who had 2, ‘Well done.’ I bet he’s going to say to me, ‘Outstanding! Marvelous!’” No, he just said the same thing, “Well done.” Or, “as I expected.”

Some of you have multiple giftings from the Lord. He expects a multiple return. He started you out with 1 or 2 – to test you (Deut. 8:2; 13:3; Ex. 16:4) – to see what you would do with what He gave. Whatever God has given you is enough. It’s enough for you to please Him. You can please Him every bit as much as a highly anointed Pastor can please Him with the multiple giftings he possesses. Because all God requires from you is a doubling. And as you double it – “unto whom much is given, much is required” (Lk. 12:48) and “unto him that hath not, it shall be taken away” (Mt. 13:12; 25:29) because he can’t handle it! Even what he has shall be taken away and given to the one who has the most (Mt. 25:28).

I used to be so confused with that. And then I freshly listened to the Lord. He revealed, “*Because the one who has the most has the ability and has the dedication and the commitment to handle more.*” God’s not going to leave you like you are today. You’re not relegated to being a #1 talent, and you a #5, and you a #10. That’s not how He does it. He gives *evenly*. He gives you a #1 because you’ve never been tested. He gives you a 5 because you have been tested on the level of a 1 or 2 and now He’s going to give you 5 and see if you can handle that – *without pride*. And then He gives you 10 and you make 10 more and say, “Here it is Lord, I give it back to you.” He says, “You’ve given Me 10? That’s twice as much as I gave you.” “Yes, Lord. It all belongs to You.” “Fine. Give him that extra one over there. He can handle that now.” And He adds to us as we are capable and dedicated enough to handle what He gives.

I made a sobering statement that this nation is now vulnerable to judgment. We actually are set for it. We deserve it as a nation for rejecting God and continuing in our rebellious paths and evil ways. If you’re going to pray for this situation, you need to pray for *grace and mercy*. “Well, we’re a Christian nation.” Not really! We’ve sent missionaries out and done a lot of “religious” things. And thank God, in our pledge of allegiance, we still say “under God” and we still have on our coins “in God we trust” representing our motto. Who knows for how much longer? But I tell you this, it isn’t going to change anything whether they wipe it off or leave it on until the people of God, *individually*, can say, “In God we trust! One nation under God, indivisible.” Certainly, that’s not a reality now. And we’re not in a political battle. Do you think we are because of the political scene with elections and all? This is not a battle of man against man; it has become a spiritual battle!

The *minister’s* task (that refers to all believers) is to take everything He gives us and make it multiply. When that happens, present church buildings won’t be able to hold the masses of people. Whole communities surrounding a church are starving for truth, *desperate* to find a way out of their dilemmas and problems. Every social worker you know would tell you that. Every physician – every.... It doesn’t matter what field you pick – they don’t know what to do. Human rights? We don’t even know how to spell it! We give rights to one and that means we take them away from someone else. The natural wisdom of man is not cutting it. Can you understand that? Then understand this also – in the very near future, we all are going to have the greatest opportunities we’ve ever had in our lives, or I in my 75 years of living – to bring the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ to a thirsty, dying community who is saying, “Who shall save us from these disasters?”

So, what will you do? Will you cower in fear? Fear of rejection? Fear of Man? Or fear of change? “Oh, I just don’t want to lose what we have. Ohhhh, I just...” I know churches that refuse to grow because they’re afraid things will change if “new people” come. How sad. You like your church the way it is. It’s alive today but in 10 years it’ll be a graveyard unless we add – unless we multiply – unless we reproduce. We’ll be dead if we don’t give birth! If we don’t do some new things. “Oh, I just hate it if some changes take place. I just hate changes.” Really. So, – you wish you were still in diapers?

**Change is growth. Growth is maturity. Maturity is usefulness. Usefulness is what pleases the Master.**

We don't have time to sit around and suck our thumbs! "Well, I hate it when Pastor goes away. When he's here it's just – it's so different, and I hate it when different ones are missing." Oh, please! Grow up!!

I want you to see these three men who have been *entrusted* with faith-gifts, or, the gift of faith, because it takes that in order for us to multiply. And it's *His* faith! "Thank you Lord, for faith." You think, "Oh my! There's a woman of faith." Good. Where'd she get it? "Well, there's a man of faith." Good. What are you? I hear people say, "Oh, we're a *Word* church." Someone else says, "We're a *Faith* church." My question is, "What's the other kind?" Every church should be a Word-Faith church. If we haven't *faith* in the *Word* we're not a church!

Three men. The first man, the one who buried his talent, I call a *faith-stopper*. It takes *faith* to get out of the boat, especially in the middle of the sea. There are far too many faith-stoppers in the church. Just about the time the senior leadership says, "I believe we've heard from God and this is the course we should take. I'm going to get out on the edge of this boat..." Immediately, a faith-stopper says, "Don't do it! I got out of the boat once... and I'll tell you, if it hadn't been for the Lord... If you do this, things could really go wrong. I think we should just sit on it and enjoy what we have." This one is a *coward*. People like that should never sit on a Church Board. They have little or no vision for growth or multiplication. They're self-centered. Full of self-pity, "Poor me," digging holes. They almost whine, "I'll never forget when I was... I tried this before, and it didn't work. We've never done it that way." They are self-protecting and lack understanding of opportunity. That's a faith-stopper.

The second man, the one with 2 talents is what I call a *faith-stepper*. He's *capable*, but he doesn't initiate things as much as he *follows* those who do initiate and are successful. This man is interesting because he does exactly what Number 5 does – he invests his talents. He sees *faith that works* in someone else and says, "I can do that too." That's not wrong. Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1Cor.11:1). They both doubled what they had been given. Besides, the Bible tells us not only to pray for our leaders but to *watch them* and pattern our lives after their successes. We all need to learn something from someone else.

Number 2 didn't sit around waiting until he got 5. He simply took what he did have and worked it. Focus on what you have, not on what you lack. That would be the voice of the enemy emphasizing what you don't have, or comparing your gifts with those of another. The scripture advises that you will always come up short in your own mind when you compare like that (2Cor.10:12,13). "Well, if I had what they had. If I had 5..." That's the enemy's lie to you. When he makes such suggestions, those negative thoughts, confront him and say, "Thanks for bringing that to my attention. I know you are a liar! So, I choose to move on."

Or, perhaps you tend to think this way: "Well, just because everybody's clapping and singing 'Hallelujah!' I'm not going to." You need to! Do you have breath? The Word says if you have breath, 'Praise the Lord!' (Ps.150:6) "Well, I'm not the type." Yes you are the type. You were created in the likeness and image of God (Gen.1:27). And if God likes praise, we don't care what others think or do. If we're pleasing Him, that is what matters. If the dancers dance and it's "against *your* religion," change your religion! The Book says He loves the dance! (Ps.149:3)

Be a faith-stepper, they're capable.

Number 1 is a faith-stopper. He is a coward. Number 2 is a faith-stepper. He's capable of following what he sees is right. He doubled his investment and received the same commendation as the one he followed. Number 5 is a *faith-starter*. He is *competent*. He knows he has been given 5 opportunities that

are expressly for the master. And he understands that he must do everything possible within the framework and sphere of his influence to double that – at least. Number 5 is a *bold leader*.

The Bible says, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pr.28:1). That is the foundational scripture for my ministry and I use the lion as my logo and on my stationery. The lion goes after what he wants. Do you? “Well, I’m just believing God.” For what? “I’m believing Him to do what I don’t want to do.” I hear people pray, “Oh, Lord, save souls!” His answer to that prayer must be, “I did! I went to the cross long ago!”

Oh, church. Can we be honest? We have not been faithful with the *talents* God has given to us – not since the time He began giving us the *heaviness*, the *weight* of His glory. Not since salvation have we truly doubled what He has given. We have safely hidden in our “tabernacle” trying to stay uncontaminated by the world. (cf.Rom.12:2). We bless God. We come together whenever the church doors are open and fellowship in His presence. We fill up our emptiness as if the church was a filling station. “I tell you, I wouldn’t miss a service for anything!” Tell me – do you come on Wednesday evenings because you have run out – or poured out?

Faith-starters are competent people who step out ahead of the rest and begin to do something – like Peter. I love Peter. “Master if that’s really You, bid me come.” “It’s Me. Come.” Peter jumps out of the boat. We make fun of him because he started to sink. At least he got out of the boat! He wasn’t afraid. That was faith. He didn’t need 29 confirmations to do something. He thought, “I have heard from God. I heard directly from His mouth. He said, “Come” and I’m going!”

That’s what God is looking for today – *faith-starters* – some believers who dare to say, “I know I’ve heard from God, and He said... and I’m going!” But we just think the thoughts. We have trouble taking any initial actions. You cannot turn a ship if it isn’t moving. We say, “Lead me, Lord.” “So, start your engines!” “Well, I’m just not certain whether this is Your voice or my own ideas.” You’ll know, real soon. There will be no question. “Oooops! That one was mine!” But don’t go back and start digging a *hole*! “Well, I tried. I stepped out of that boat, and I tell you. I *thought* it was Him... ::whine:: ::sob::” Well, try again!

Sometimes the wisdom of this world shamefully exceeds the wisdom of the church. They say, “If at first you don’t succeed...” We say, “Well, if it’s God, it’ll work the first time.” But we forget that God has a higher purpose behind all of our “doings.” Sometimes it’s a way, or a method, or a lesson we are to learn. Do you think it wasn’t Jesus who said to Peter, “It’s Me. Come on.”? Isn’t that what Jesus said, or did Peter misunderstand His direction? Of course it was what He said. “Yeah, Peter. It’s Me. You want to come? Come on out.” We could all preach the message: Peter had faith as long as he looked at Jesus, but when he looked at the waves, his negative circumstances, he sank. Can you actually imagine Jesus did not know ahead of time what would happen to Peter? I can just hear it. “WOW! I wouldn’t have called you out of the boat if I’d known you were going to take your eyes off Me!”

We do that to one another, don’t we? Admit the truth. In the church, we are so hard on someone who takes a precarious step out in faith. Our first servant of this parable wouldn’t risk anything. He was making commitments to himself, “I’m going to bury this thing. Nobody will ever know I have it. But when the Master wants it back, it’ll be here somewhere.”

The Lord didn’t say, “Peter, come on out here, but I know what is going to happen. You’re going to sink (fail).” That’s what *we* want up front. “Now, Lord, if this is really You, I want to know – is it going to work?” If we are truly honest, we should add our hidden motive, “...because I’m not going to get out there on those waters – and then sink like Peter – for everyone else to watch.”

Of course we are going to sink from time to time. For Peter (and us), *Jesus knew that was a desperately needed lesson*, that could not be learned any faster. We need to think about that when we dig around in the holes of our past pains and disappointments. Those hard things had to be in our lives to help us grow

up. We had to learn to go through things – with the Lord. It was *necessary*. Note this as well: there are necessary “falls” we have yet to encounter, preparatory for how the Master plans to use us in the future. In His grace and mercy, He *allows* us the growth-experiences. He is always there in the middle of every muddle. We may not fully understand the whys of our circumstances, but this we can count on: “Call upon Me and I will answer!” (Jer.33:3)

Oh, God give us more faith-starters. Men and women of vision. Competent. Willing to step out and initiate some things. Try something. If that doesn't work, try another something! But walk in faith and not by sight (2Cor.5:7)! And, as it always should be, it is all for the master (Col.3:23). To both of the servants who worked their investment and doubled the talents the commendation was, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into My joy.” The Messages says, “Come, be My partner.”

In the master's mind, he gave the same; he gave evenly; he gave equivalents. To the one who could *handle* 1, he gave what he could handle, and the servant could have doubled it. To the man who could *handle* 2, he gave 2. To the one who could *handle* more, he gave the 5. ***He always gives according to our ability.*** God never gives an assignment that is beyond what we are able to accomplish, or a burden greater than we can bear (1Cor.10:13). His Word denies that, for He makes a way for us if we will search for Him in every circumstance of life (Jer.29:13).

Here is what we need to hear – what we need to know – what we need to learn. If we can learn to ***think like God*** and ***think with God***, we can come to this place of maturity, and say, “Okay. What is it You *do* give me, Lord? I think I can do something with it. I *plan* to do something with it. I want to be a *faith-starter* so others can follow me. If I'm not a person who could step out first and lead the pack, then, I'll be a *faith-stepper*! And I will follow the ones that are out there blazing the trails. And, Lord, I will believe You, trust You, that the consequences, the rewards, will be the same.”

Whatever He has given you, you *are* capable of doing. And when we are faithful in the doing, the Master is delighted! His response is “Well done!” Whether it was 1, 2, 5, 10, or more, He is delighted with those who are faithful to do something good with what is His. We need to learn to be responsible for what *talents* He has given so that all of it can be *given back to Him*, multiplied. It is our *offering* back to Him. That's what thanksgiving and praise are all about! (Heb.13:15)

Then the master made an extreme statement. To the one who hid the talent – “Throw him into *outer darkness*.” I always thought that meant hell – until I did some searching of the Word. In other places in the scriptures, the word translated “darkness” IS the word /ge'henna/. But in this parable, it's not “throw him into hell.” It is a different word, /skotos/, and it means “obscurity” or, being stopped where they are.

Once you have light, revelation, a truth, you are held responsible by God to work and function within that light. If you do not, the shade comes down and you are *out of the light*. You are in “darkness” and without joy. Churches have many joyless people sitting in the pews who say, “Oh, yeah. I used to be like that. You know, we used to do that in our church, years ago. Oh, no, it's not new to us.” No, it's not. You've buried it, though. You need to dig that up again, the revelation you once walked in. You have lost your joy! You have lost your light! And, you have lost your main purpose altogether – and that is – it all belongs to Him! He wants you to operate in the gift He has given to you – so that *He* might be glorified in and through your life.

Next year I don't want to be where I am now, spiritually. I don't. I am blessed to know a couple things and I give Him all the praise and honor for every revelation He's given me. I have prayed this consistently throughout my ministry-life (almost 50 years). I've said, “God, when You stop giving me fresh revelation, please stop using me” because I've heard some boring preachers. I've heard preachers who 10 years later are still preaching the same things. I don't want to do that. It's important to me to continuously grow in maturity with the Lord and in revelation.

It's important to me that *you* grow. And if I don't grow, you can't. And I believe that ought to be our prayer. I don't want to be thrown into a place of stoppage. I don't want to be thrown into a place where I no longer have illumination when I read the Word, not understanding what it means. I don't ever want to do that! I choose to multiply what He has already given so I will receive more from Him.

So – go on investing. I'm investing in you right now. And I believe God for a return on my investment. Maybe it won't be a thousand-fold. I don't know. I can't see all of that. Man looks on the outward things, God looks on the heart (1Sam.16:7). But there will be those of you that are embracing what you're hearing (reading) and learning from God through His servant today saying, "I get it! I'm going to be a *faith-stepper*. I'm going to be a *faith-starter*. I will not be a *faith-stopper*." As you embrace your new level of revelation, you are giving me an incredible return on my "preaching" investment, which I promise you, I will return back to Him!

Let's read from the Jerusalem Bible, Luke 12 from verse 47: "The servant who knows what his Master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive a few strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him. Take from the one that which he has and give it to the one who has the most." Again, we ask, "How *fair* is that?" In God's economy, it is extremely fair and just. The one who has the most doubled it, and now is ready and the recipient for more.

God is just at the horizon of our lives. When He comes again, He wants to take every church to the place of maturity that it can receive more revelation, more responsibility in the harvest, more trust from Him. But He cannot take us there until *every individual* comes into the understanding that – "He is the King of Glory!" And everything we are and have and ever shall be, or ever shall have, is to the praise and glory of God alone. When that occurs, we will see it happen – so quickly! And we will look back and say, "How come it took us so long to get this far?" And yet, time goes *whish!* so fast, because that's a *suddenly* of the Almighty!