

Matthew 25: 14-30

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, '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!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, '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!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'you wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Martha Berry was a lady with a vision; she had a vision to help under privileged children. She had a vision to start a school for under privileged children. Ms. Berry believed all children deserved a proper education. There was a problem though, she had no books, no building and no money with which to carry out her vision, but she had a vision and she had faith. So she went to someone she believed could help, Henry Ford. Martha Berry went to him to ask for a donation. Mr. Ford reached into his pocket gave Martha Berry a dime. Most people would have been insulted, here is a multi-millionaire and all he could give was a dime. But Martha took that dime and bought a packet of seeds and she planted a garden, raised a crop, sold her crop and with her profit she bought more seeds. After three or four harvests she had enough money to purchase an old abandoned building for the children. She returned to Mr. Ford and said, “Look what your dime has done.” Henry Ford was so impressed that he donated one million dollars to Ms. Berry’s School.

The question which underlies the message this morning is: “what will you, or are you, doing with what God has given you?” I have been asking “What is your vision for this church? What would you like to

see happening here? Do you have a vision for this church? Do you even care?" I pray that one day all of us can realize that each of us can make a difference if we just put to use our God given talents.

I have always heard that within any church 20% of the people does 80% of the work. It's great knowing that some people are willing to invest so much time into the Lord's service, but the truth is the Lord has given all of us, each and everyone of us, a talent or talents to use in the service of His Kingdom. I sometimes wonder what the church; our church would be like if every one of us used our talents to serve the Lord, all the time, and not just part time. I sometimes wonder what the church; our church would be like if every one of us used our talents to serve the Lord, instead of ourselves. Sometimes we are so focused on ourselves, and our personal agendas that we do not have time to focus our energies on using our gifts to serve the Lord, and sometimes, we use our energies just to maintain where we are, some do not want to do anything which would bring about any kind of change. Some are content with doing just enough to get by.

I love the words the master said to his faithful servants; “*you have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness.*” These are the words we too will hear, but only if we are faithful with what the Lord has given us. For those who are faithful to the Lord it is an exciting prospect. If we are faithful to Him, then Jesus’ return should be an exciting time for us, but if we are like the lazy servant we should be afraid very afraid. Not only can we hope and look forward to rewards if we are good stewards of God’s gifts, we can rest assured that God wants to reward those who are faithful. Again, He will reward those who are present tense, faithful.

Revelation 22:12-13 says, “*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*” The question for you is, will you receive the rewards promised in Scripture, or will you be punished for disobedience? Only you can answer that question, and remember God knows the answer.

Many years ago as missionaries would travel to other countries and work with the tribal people they would bring and give them sundials as gifts. The natives were so fascinated by these sundials that

they put a roof over them to protect them. Is their something today blocking you from using what God has given you? God has given each of us gifts and they have a specific purpose, but if we do not use then they are as useless as a sundial covered by a roof. We would be like a car with the transmission stuck in neutral, our motor is running and sounds impressive, the lights, radio, and horn are all in working condition, and new tires, but the problem is that it is not going anywhere.

The lazy servant chose to bury his talent. Burying a talent was the safest way to protect money in those days. According to ancient tradition, a person who buried money entrusted to him would legally not be liable for it. Are we always ready to go forth and put our God given talents to work for God's kingdom, or using our talents periodically and digging holes to bury them the rest of the time?

Our Community Meal just ended and I saw a number of individuals who like the first two servants were using their God given talents for the increase of God's kingdom, but how many were digging holes to hide theirs. God gave each of us specific talents and His desire is that we would always be ready to use them.

I heard a few people say, “Wouldn’t it be nice to have this many people and small children every week?” The answer is yes it would be. What are you doing about it? Are you inviting these parents with small children to attend? What do we have for them when they get here? We have classes and services for you the adults, but what have we in place for the small children, the middle schooler’s, and youth? Are the facilities we have inviting for them, are they inviting for us? Is the outside of this church inviting? Does it say to anyone who sees it, “Come in and see?” How about the Narthex, the rest rooms, the class rooms, are they inviting? How many of you have the same décor today you had 50 years ago? None! I know all of you have put up new paint, or new flooring, or added new furniture from time to time; maybe even built a new house. **When was the last time, have you done the same for this church.**

The church is all our responsibility and if we expect new people to want to be here then our facility, the house of God needs to be inviting. And the only way we can make it inviting is if we use the gifts God has given us. The gift of decorating, the gift of painting, the gift of cleaning, and yes even the gift of monies.

The owner in our passage held each of his servants responsible only for what they were capable of doing. The lazy servant's excuse, yes excuse not his reason, of fear did not excuse him from acting upon what was before him. The same goes for us, our fear of saying and doing something will not or has not excused us from using our God given talents.

It is clear that God distributes certain gifts based on people's natural talents. The master distributed the talents based on the servant's talents and God gives us gifts based on our talents. We have no right to just sit around doing nothing and complaining about what God has or hasn't given us; we simply must put into use what God has given us. God knows us, He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows what gifts we can use well and gives us the gifts accordingly. What gift or gifts has God blessed you with, are you using them or are you out back digging a hole to hide it in?

If we do not use our gifts they will be taken from us as the talents were taken from the lazy servant. We cannot expect to sit back and do nothing in the kingdom and still have gifts to bless the kingdom with. My professor of New Testament believed that if he did not continually

read from the Greek New Testament he would forget how. So whenever he reads from the New Testament he reads from the original Greek. Once while pastoring a small country church he had an individual who tried to follow along when Dr. Melton read Scripture, but regardless of what translation this man brought it never seemed to match up with Dr. Melton's. Then one day following the service this man came up to Dr. Melton and asked what translation he was reading from. Dr. Melton told him he used a Greek Bible, to which the man explained, "You need to stop using that new age stuff and get back to the King James version like the apostles used." Dr. Melton continually read Greek so as not to lose the ability, are we doing the same with what God has given us or are we busy digging holes?

Again like the lazy servant, we will lose our master's trust if we are not faithful with what he has given us. How can we expect God to trust us with more, if we can't do anything with what we have now? Hopefully we all want to be used by God, but we need to stop sitting back and waiting, instead we need to be His faithful servant and go every time.

The most severe punishment of not using your gifts for the Lord is losing His presence. There is no such thing as a Christian who does nothing. Many times I hear people talk like it is alright to do nothing in the church. I have heard people say that they would be satisfied with just a little cottage in heaven, and they really believe that, probably because they never did enough to earn a whole mansion. If we do not use our gifts to serve the Lord and build up His kingdom, we will hear the same words as the lazy servant, “*throw him into the pit where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” It is a lot more serious deal to do nothing than we usually admit.

I have heard it said the fastest way to get to Hell is to do nothing. So often we are content with our casual Christian lives, and do not want to give. We do not always want to give of our time; I’ve done enough, ever heard or said that? We do not want to give of our talents; I’m not good enough or I can’t do that, ever heard or said that? We do not give of our monies; I can’t afford to give, ever heard or said that? We want to take and receive salvation, but we don’t want to give back into the kingdom of God. We want our rewards in Heaven, but we do not want to use our time and talents to receive them. We want God to constantly

do this and that for us, but yet we are not always about His business.

Why is that? What are you going to do with what God has given you?

Are you striving to just maintain, or are you working to use and multiply your gifts constantly for God's glory.

There are several reasons why the lazy servant failed at his task given to him:

- 1) He had little appreciation for what had been given to him.
- 2) He had no confidence in himself.
- 3) He was just plain lazy.

Remember to those who are entrusted with much, much is required. Our master is still away, and he is left us with talents. What are you going to do with what you have been given? Are you going to be like the third servant who did not use his talents, and was called lazy and suffered? Or are you going to be like the first and second, who was called by the master faithful? Our master will return and I hope he finds our work faithful.

Perhaps as you have listened today you realize you are like the lazy servant. You have done little to nothing with what God has given you. The good news is the master is still away, and you still have time

to do something with what He gave you. The bad news is there will come a day when he will come again, and if you haven't done anything, and don't plan on doing anything, you will be punished.

Perhaps you believe you have been a faithful servant, and simply want to recommit your talent or talents to His service. No matter where you stand, we all have been given talents, we all have gifts and God expects us to do something with them. We all have a decision to make. We all can commit to doing more, or we can choose to just dig a hole and hide. The choice is yours!