

Parable of the Talents Mathew 25

Introduction

Several years ago a friend, a professor at Westminster Seminary, lost his wife of nearly 50 years to a short battle with pancreatic cancer. Over the ensuing months he had been very transparent sharing his griefs and sorrows. In one correspondence he wrote this:

“I miss her so much. Evenings and weekends are very long...
I have deep regrets, that I didn’t give her much more...”

Sound reasonable? “I have deep regrets that I didn’t give her much more...”
I’m sure many people in his situation feel that way.
With his wife gone, he has a different perspective. He sees their partnership against a new horizon and feels the weight of her worth, what she deserved, what a treasure she was.

What are you measuring when you compare
where you know you should be with where you in fact are?
Here’s the love I owed my wife or children...
Here’s the study I owed that course last semester...
Here’s the effort I owed that project at work...
Here’s the practice I owed my sport...

What word accounts for the difference between where we should be and where we in fact are? FAITHFULNESS We innately measure it in life.

God also measures faithfulness.

Faithfulness is an attitude in your heart toward the end of things (your life or Jesus’ coming again) governing concrete action today. It requires a kind of split vision: you can’t live faithfully **without** one eye on the end of things and one eye on today.

1. Why is Jesus concerned with faithfulness?

One of the controlling themes in these chapters, particularly the kingdom parables of Jesus, is the Lord's condemnation of **Israel's faithlessness**.

*Go back to chapter 23. Here Jesus puts a cap on the parables addressed to the Jewish leaders by pronouncing a series of woes- judgments.

*Then in chapter 24 Jesus predicts the literal destruction of Jerusalem, God's culminating act of judgment on apostate Israel.

*But, the destruction of Jerusalem, however, isn't just about that; it is for all people of all times, because it serves as a paradigm for the final judgment of all people at the parousia, the second coming of Jesus, the end of earth history.

Jesus says that there are two basic dispositions toward His coming: The foolish and the wise. He illustrates these attitudes in chapters 24-25. Both appear in the church.

The wise are alert/ready- they don't know when Jesus is returning, but they are prepared. Prepared= Faithful.

The foolish are living for today, are ill-prepared and lazy:

- like those in Noah's day: **IGNORANCE** of the need to repent
- like man unaware of thief in night: **COMPLACENT** of danger
- like unfaithful servant: **ABUSE** of resources entrusted

Such indifference/ ignorance of Jesus' return **reveals a heart of unbelief**, bringing severe judgment: cast into the *place of weeping and gnashing teeth*.

This is some of the most **sobering teaching** in the whole Bible.

Consequently, Jesus repeatedly says to His disciples: *Be on the alert!*

By the time we get to this parable, we should know: Be on the alert!

Alertness is the necessary pre-condition of faithfulness, it is the fertile soil out of which faithfulness grows.

2. What does faithfulness look like?

Faithfulness is putting to use what God has given to you for the advancement of his kingdom.

Faithfulness is an attitude that directs my heart today-
in view of Jesus' return or the end of my life-
to tangible investment of the resources God's entrusted to me.

Negatively:

NEVER see your life except against the horizon of the rising Son of God.

Positively:

ALWAYS see your life as a partnership with Jesus with a day of accounting.

Why does Jesus need to tell this kind of parable? What's our human tendency? For me, if the relatives are arriving on Saturday afternoon, I clean on Saturday morning! (They walk in and think things are always clean!).

When we were trying to sell our home in Texas to move to Virginia, we were in a constant state of readiness- who knows when someone might pop in to inspect the house?

We lived every day in view of an impending visit from a would-be buyer. We wanted to be faithful to the opportunity to sell the house.

3. The Foundation of faithfulness

- 1) **We belong to the Master.** He made us for himself.
You don't exist for yourself, because of yourself, or by yourself.
- 2) **The Master delights to entrust HIS possessions to his creatures.**
"The earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof." (Ps.24:1) All resources available to human beings- time, abilities, intelligence, wisdom, creativity, natural resources, money- they are all God's.
Every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. 50:10
Whatever we have to make life good was first God's to make him glorious in generosity.
- 3) **The Master distributes talents** as He pleases. The talent wasn't an individual coin. It was a measure of silver, amounting to buying power. One talent was at least 10 years wages for a common laborer. It is, therefore, a ton of money. That seems to indicate that everything you need to be everything God wants you to be He will give you.

That means you have enough time in the day, enough money and intelligence to be faithful to God every day. We have the Holy Spirit!

In the parable the Master does not give equal amounts. It's five, three, one. Do you object? Don't you relish your sovereignty over your things to do as you please?

But if you don't like what God's given you to invest in His kingdom, ask Him for more. Do you already use everything He's given you to the fullest? He isn't keeping anyone from being an overachiever. We tend to keep ourselves under achievers.

The doctrine of God's sovereign distribution should be very liberating to you. You can know, for example, you are not called to do certain things because God hasn't gifted you to do them.

4. The Function of faithfulness

The tension mounts in the drama because the Master has gone on a long trip. That implies

- 1) an unspecified, relatively lengthy period of time before His return, and
- 2) he is not physically present during the time of investing.

Faithfulness, therefore, is tempted by lack of sight. It is you, your talents, and how strongly/ vividly you believe in a day of accounting.

When is the greatest period of temptation for many children? When they leave home for college. No one is there to tell them to do anything. Would you have thought or done anything differently this week if Jesus was physically standing next to you at all times?

Aren't we a silly lot. Of course Jesus is with us constantly. But somehow because we don't see him we think he won't see us.

Faithfulness is, therefore, an attitude: my whole life is His; I live it all before Him. I won't parcel my life into domains; this is mine, that is God's. God doesn't want just your money, just your time, just your abilities; He wants your whole devotion, your heart, which, when He has it, necessarily governs all the others.

[Jesus illustrated this when some brought him a coin in order to see if they should pay taxes to Caesar, a wicked ruler. He said, whose image is on the

coin? Caesar's. Then give to Caesar what is his and to God what is his. His image is stamped on your heart, so give your heart to him.]

If you are serious about faithfulness to Jesus, you will begin to change your mindset from:

How little can I get away with giving to God? (Minimum to God)

How much can I keep and do for myself? (Maximum to me)

To:

How much can I produce for God?

My oldest son Mike waits tables at a local restaurant. As a server he is a maximalist. He keeps the water glasses full, the table clean, careful and devoted attention to those he serves- everything necessary for the enjoyment of the meal he will deliver! People recognize such effort. One time on a \$50 check he was tipped \$35, from a clientele that typically tips low!

If Jesus was physically sitting at a table, what kind of service would you give Him? That's easy! Jesus said in the following verses, the way you serve lowly people, IS serving him.

He who oppresses the poor taunts His maker. Pr.14:31

Do you find in your heart a minimalist tendency? I'll do the minimum God requires? Should you repent of that?

What would it be like to be a maximalist?

Depends on what you think of God.

Is it a pain to serve someone you love?

I'm sitting at the kitchen table, the phone rings, I let the answering machine pick it up, and it's my daughter: "Daddy, help, I'm stuck and I need a ride."

Would I pick up the phone? Would I think twice about going to get her-

EVEN TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!

Notice the wicked servant's attitude:

I knew you to be a hard man...

Is he right? Partly. The man is correct that God certainly looks for returns from those with whom he invests his resources. *“If you knew that much, why didn’t you at least put the money in the bank?”*

But is God really a *hard* man? The word *hard* here means grasping, exploiting others. Does God need to exploit anyone? Is God stingy? He owns it all already!

The man says, *you reap where you did not sow, and gather where you did not scatter*. Translated, I think that means God takes the labors of others for Himself. In a sense that’s true, in that God will be gloried in all things, but it’s also true that God delights to invite us to share in our labors for him. He gave us the talents to begin with, God is gracious!

The concern driving the wicked man is fear. *“I was afraid”*. Fear produced laziness, an unwillingness to work, and cowardice, unwillingness to take a risk.

The heart of the man’s problem is **he doesn’t see God for who He is**. We always give to God in proportion to who we fashion Him to be. If God has been gracious to you, shown you unspeakable mercy, extended immeasurable self-sacrifice and patience, you couldn’t give him too much! Your stewardship over his property would be an enormous privilege, a pleasure, *you enter into the joy of your master*.

Those who receive grace in turn use it for the greater glory of the giver. The wicked man did not think there was grace for him. If you don’t believe in grace, you’ll inevitably fear God.

How is God gracious to sinners?

a. CONVICTION

He convinces us that **our faithfulness** won’t save us. Many people who go to church think their faithfulness to do what God requires will make them acceptable to God. It is the blessing of God to know that we don’t and can never give Him what we owe Him.

b. CONFIDENCE

He convinces us that the faithfulness of Jesus is sufficient to make us fit for heaven. The Spirit causes us to see the glory of

Christ, that he came in partnership with His Father, He came to earth endowed with buying power. He lived a perfect life and died a substitutionary death- one life- and from His one life and death purchased a host of people from all the nations, an innumerable multitude of worshippers for the father.

He opened a fountain of grace for you, weary sinner, from which to drink and trust that you are forgiven, accepted, righteous, secure.

If you believe there is an ever flowing fountain of grace for you, why not take risks? You'll never regret what you sacrifice for Him.

Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. Rom. 10:11

5. The Future of Faithfulness

The text is clear that those who are faithful receive more. They will be rewarded in glory, given greater responsibility over God's new creation.

But even in this life, those who take risks for the kingdom, trust God by faith, find more faith coming to their hearts.

Faith believes that in whatever situation God leads me, there will be grace for it.

All faithfulness will be assessed on the great Day of Judgment. We live in a moral universe under a just and exacting judge, and he will settle every account of every one of his creatures.

2 Cor.5 For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

If you can imagine this room full of pennies, about waist high, each one represents an act or thought in your life. On that day Jesus Christ will inspect every one of them with you. He'll look at the date, and you'll give an account. It will be utterly fair.

There are only two possibilities:

- 1) Jesus inspects as your friend, your soul's lover and defender.
- 2) Jesus inspects as your judge.

Those who did not trust the Master, will be cast into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior, who know their faithfulness can't make them right with God, but look in faith to Jesus to make them acceptable, will be welcomed into the Master's house, rewarded for their labors.

Jesus will inspect our pennies with His nail-pierced hands. Those worthless things we did will be swallowed up, amazingly, in His scars.

Those things which were pleasing to God will be stained by His blood, made perfectly acceptable to the Father.

And in a moment of unspeakable awe, shall hear Him say,
"Well done, good and faithful servant."