

REFLECTION ON TALENTS MATTHEW 25:14-30- SALE Rev'd Fran Grimes

Today we look at the well known Parable of the Talents.

Jesus is teaching his followers what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. He is not talking about the place, "Heaven" but the "Kingdom of Heaven" which is the realm where God reigns as King in heaven and on earth. This Kingdom of heaven is the way life is for all who follow God as their Lord and King here on earth and in heaven. Jesus is saying, this is what God's Kingdom is like. This is how it works:

A Master is going on a journey and entrusts his servants to look after his property. He gives them talents or in some translations bags of gold. This is a very weighty show of his trust in them. Talents were in fact a unit of weight, some say about 3000 shekels which could be up towards 46kgs. It was considered to have been the most that an able person could carry. It is nearly double the maximum weight of a suitcase we can take on an overseas flight. Whether these bags were full of gold or other currency, these bags were full of the currency of the Kingdom.

As the master looks at each servant he considers their ability and gives accordingly- 5 bags, 2 bags and 1 bag.

He then goes away for a **long time**. This detail would have been helpful in the early church because many of them were longing for Jesus' return and hoped it would be imminent. It's helpful for us too as we long for Jesus the Master to return and put everything right. It may be a long time.

When he does return the master wants to settle accounts with his servants. Interestingly the same term is used in Matthew 18 in Jesus' parable about forgiveness. It seems settling accounts or taking stock is an important part of what a king does with his servants- How have they been going? Have they honoured me in the responsibilities I've given them? This is how the master approaches the 3 servants in this parable.

The first 2 have used their respective talents well. They put their talents to work and double their money. They know their master and they know that this is what he expects. They honour their master and they know what pleases him so they act accordingly. This might mean they take risks but they are determined to make good use of all they have been given and to please their master. And he is pleased. He says Well done good and faithful servants You

have been faithful with a few things I will put you in charge of many things. The Master is overjoyed and invites these 2 to come and share his happiness.

But now he comes to the 3rd servant. Only given 1 talent, (still a hefty bag of gold), the master already knew that this servant's ability was less than the other 2. To each his own, we are all differently abled, so he didn't want to overstretch the third servant. He gave him as much as he thought he could handle. But what the master didn't realise was how much this servant distrusted him. He didn't realise until the settling of accounts that this servant didn't love his master, he didn't even like him, he feared him. This servant was very undecided about the amount of effort he would spend honouring his master. In fact he seems to distrust and scorn his master. Maybe he was bitter about some past hurt, maybe he was just lazy. In any case he has buried the talent in the ground and he digs up the dirty bag and hands it over saying why he has given no thought or effort as to how to use his talent.

Firstly he calls the master a hard man. He has seen the master harvest where he does not sow and gather where he has not scattered, and the master doesn't deny this, but the master does pick up on the fact that even though the servant knew this, he didn't even try, he still hid the talent in the ground, out of fear and lack of trust.

The master sees this act as wicked and lazy. This servant is not being faithful to his life's work or to his master. He has no respect for the master, he couldn't care less about what might please the master, and he acts in laziness, no thought, no care with what he had been given. He didn't even make the effort to put the talent in the bank to earn some interest. The talent is taken from him and given to the servant who has 10 talents.

And the conclusion from Jesus is, "Everyone who has will be given more and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have even what he has will be taken away."

In looking at what these talents represent we see that for that Master's Kingdom they were the currency being used to build the Kingdom. Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom of God, so it seems the talents represent the currency of the Kingdom of God. They represent anything that will contribute towards the building of the Kingdom. So they may well represent money and property if these are means to build God's kingdom. More commonly we see these Talents as actual special abilities we may have been given. It seems the

English word Talent actually is derived from this parable. If we have been given a Talent we should use it to glorify God and build His Kingdom.

But what about all the other things that build God's Kingdom- there are so many- the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit , in fact anything God has given us in that builds His kingdom. We should use everything that God gives us to build His Kingdom. Everything that builds God's Kingdom is the currency of the Kingdom. Kingdom currency builds God's Kingdom. Our Thessalonians reading today speaks of Faith Love and Hope of Salvation- this is top dollar Kingdom currency for God's Kingdom.

But we need to want to build God's Kingdom because we love and trust God above all.

The reason the 3rd servant didn't use his talent well was that he did not trust the Master, he did not want to build the Master's Kingdom so he buried his talent -his gift, his bag of Kingdom currency. It seems that disdain and disrespect and the lack of love and honour lay at the root of the 3rd servant burying his talent he did not want to please his master. Fear and distrust motivated his actions.

Sometimes we are tempted to do the minimum with all God gives us because we are scared or even just because we are lazy. Like the 3rd servant we don't trust God, we jump to conclusions and say well if that's what God is like I'm not going to risk too much serving him. I think I'll just bury what he's given me- or sell it or cover it up and not use it because I'm too scared to do anything else. I don't want to take the risk. When prayers are not answered, when deep hurt and pain are experienced, when life becomes difficult when there is grief or health worries, we say, "This isn't how it's meant to be. Why can't God be just who I want Him to be and answer every prayer in the way I want it and make life easier? "

Life is difficult and it is tempting to blame and shy away from God but these are precisely the times when it is most important to come to God and realise we can trust Him. We can draw on our Faith, Love and Hope of Salvation because God has given us all we need to get through in the times our earthly dollars and cents won't help and only God can.

It is important to use all that God gives us to grow His Kingdom in us and in the world.

Like the first 2 servants it all begins with **trusting** our Master .We need to exercise our Faith in Him and take risks because we know we can trust Him. Which particular talents we use in each situation is secondary. Firstly we need to trust God, exercise faith in God .Build His Kingdom, not the world's and not our own.

One of the most helpful prayers I pray is the Surrender prayer, it is a prayer which places my life completely in God' s hands –

“Jesus I surrender myself to you, take care of everything.” Trusting at this level means using our faith to **actively** give over our areas of concern to Jesus and to keep looking to Him , cast all our cares on Him. This is using our faith. This is growing our faith. This is making the most of our talents- our Kingdom currency.

God wants us to **look to Him and trust him** and use our Kingdom currency in the midst of all life's experiences so that even in the most difficult experiences, the pain , the hurt ,the grief we can know that He walks beside us in and through each experience .Painful experiences can be used by God to grow our trust and faith , to grow God's Kingdom .

The first 2 servants used every thing they had to grow and honour and draw near to their Master, they knew what pleased him and loved the gifts he gave them. They stayed close and their lives thrived.

Make the effort to draw near to God, to use everything He gives us to face life's experiences, to grow in our faith, hope and love for Him, to trust Him and grow to becoming all that He longs for us to be.