

Matthew 25:14-30

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[0:00] Her art to point both pagans and hypocriticals to hypocrites to Christ at the same time.! She comes with a trigger warning.! She always comes with shock.

But that's the point. I think I like her, and I think she's also misunderstood for precisely the same reason. It's because she was picking up the same thing as the biblical prophets and Jesus. And I'm going to share a quote from her, the reason I tell you that story. It's because she was asked one time, why does she write such graphic and absurd stories?

She said, when you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use a more normal means of talking to it.

You can assume. When you have to assume that it does not, that they do not share your same beliefs, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock.

[1:00] To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind, you draw large and startling figures. And I think she was a close reader of scripture, because this is exactly what the prophets were doing, and this is exactly what Jesus is doing in these parables that we will be looking at.

So here's my challenge to you. Do not let our cultural familiarity with these parables blind us to the shock Jesus originally intended.

We are so familiar with these stories. Let us not forget that they were shocking then, and they should shock us back into belief today. Let us not be the hard of hearing.

Let us not be the almost blind, as O'Connor says. But let us hear these words of Jesus anew, and let these words shock us back into a better understanding of the truth.

So that's my challenge to you in the next four weeks. Take these parables, read them, let them shape you, let them draw you closer to Christ.

[2:08] So, to our parable, the parable of the talents. I will read it, and then we'll do a closer reading, and then we'll sum up. So, read with me.

Verse 14, chapter 25 of Matthew. For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one. To each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

Now, after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents.

[3:15] Here, I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little.

I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. And he who had the two talents came forward, saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents.

Here I have made two talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much.

Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you

scattered no seed.

So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. But his master answered him, You wicked and slothful servant.

[4:21] You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance.

But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So the reason I open up with, we're going to talk about eschatology, is because if you want to study eschatology, the study of last things, what will be in the future, the best books to read, and write this down if you want, there's three.

It's Revelation, Daniel, and these two chapters, and Matthew. Good books are good. But as an aside, you can read good books. They're great. But do not neglect the scripture.

[5:36] We have the spirit, and we have his word. And we should do well if we have questions about what is to come, then we should go to the source.

And so, obviously, Revelation and Daniel are good resources. I can, like, commend you to read it over and over with the cross-references. That's where you should begin.

But in Matthew 24 and 25 is a concentrated vision of what is to come when Jesus is asked that same question.

So, if you look with me in the beginning of chapter 24, for context, we'll start in verse 3. As he sat on the Mount of Olives, Jesus, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?

And Jesus answered them, and he goes on. And he has several things to say, a lot, comparatively, two whole chapters.

[6:42] And, and particularly, he ends it, at the very end, with our parable today. But, I want to, I want you to notice that this is the third of a series of three parables that almost have the same point.

So, look with me at the very end of chapter 24. From 20, from verse 45 to the end of the chapter, that's a small parable that actually is not titled in your English Bibles.

But we can count that as one. It has a lot of similarities to the one we have today, the talents. And then the second parable in the series is the parable of the ten virgins. And, obviously, ours today, the parable of the talents.

Now, I'm pointing this out because they have similar points, and they're all answering the question, what does it mean to be ready for the Lord? What does it mean to be ready for the Lord?

Now, we could take three Sundays and these three parables and exegete, and they would be very profitable. But I only have one week with you, so I'm going to choose the third one. So, why this parable besides that?

[7:56] I'm going to say something personal and something textual. So, personally, this, there's some text in the Bible that haunts you. And this one, particularly, has haunted me.

And I believe haunted is the best word, maybe there's another word, but the best one I could think of because it sticks with me. As you go through your Bible reading plan, there's always some portion of Scripture that you can't just leave there.

It always follows you. And I hope that this parable also does the same thing for you today in a good way. That it will go with you and you dwell on it. Dwell on these words that Jesus has given us.

And it's probably because they were in my marriage vows, which is kind of a big deal, and we'll get to that later. But it always follows me and always haunts me.

And I hope it does the same for you. And contextually, it's interesting that this is the last parable that Matthew records for Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, and it's connected to the first parable.

[9:06] So, turn with me to chapter 13. Chapter 13 of Matthew is the first parable that Matthew records. And a structure, the normal structure of a parable is that there's a story, there's a point, we could say, and then

there's a result.

And we'll see that in ours. But the point, the four at the very end, is repeated word for word in ours, but it was first recorded in chapter 13 in the first parable.

The parable of the sower, we won't read that, but someone asks him, his disciples, ask him, why do you speak to them in parables? In verse 11, chapter 13, and Jesus answered them, to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

For, here it is, for to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

Sounds familiar. Now, I would love to dive deep in how Jesus is using that there, but I just want to point that out. There are bookends, and I just want you to see, one, it's beautiful, but there's also something pointed by he begins his parables with this, and he ends with this.

[10:36] And we'll get there at the end, in verse 29. So, there are two different readings we can have this. A quick reading of this parable, and you can be forgiven if you have only read it this way, because I have for a long time.

Maybe that's why it bothered me so much, is that I think it's more than punishment and reward. A flat or a quick reading of this parable would be, it'd be punishment, reward, and God rewards the faithful and punishes the wicked, which is definitely there.

But I think I'm going to challenge us to have maybe a closer reading of this parable. And I submit to you that maybe a closer reading would reveal that the point of this is more on how to answer the question how to be ready for the day of the Lord.

It is by daily faithfulness. Daily faithfulness. Faithfulness is the key difference between the differences between the faithful servant and the wicked servant.

And so I submit to you that the point that he is driving at through this parable is daily faithfulness in the light of being ready for the day of the Lord.

[11:58] So some details before we deeply dive into reading it together is that just to keep you on track in the characters, it's always good to write down the characters of a parable if you're confused.

There is one master and there are three servants. One master, three servants. And the servants are divided into a five-talent servant who makes five, he doubles, five talents more.

So there's a five-talent servant. There's a two-talent servant who doubles two talents more. And then there's a one-talent servant who hid his talent.

So he just has one. So five, two, and one. It's always good to write down the details of the parable to help you read it.

So let's read. So I actually want to begin us a verse above. So if you look at chapter 25, verse 13, the very end of the parable of the ten virgins, he says, Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

[13:06] I think this explains the for and the it in verse 14. So if we read verse 14, For it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property or possessions.

What is the for? The for links it to the previous parable in the ten virgins, like we just read, Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. But what is the it?

The it is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, used interchangeably in Matthew. The for and the it is linked to the kingdom of God.

Verse 15, read with me. To the one he gave five talents, to another two, to another, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability or capacity.

Then he went away. So what is a talent? Talent comes up here for the first time. It's a very large sum of money, which is interesting.

[14:18] It's almost inconceivable. One talent equal to roughly what a laborer might hope in to earn in half a lifetime.

One talent. Think about how much you make. Think about when you're middle age, what you think you make, and that's one talent. That's a lot of time. That's a lot of wealth.

But think about five talents. This is an enormous, almost inconceivable amount. So that helps.

This points to something greater than what he's actually. It's not about the talents. It's about something else. So verse 16, he who had received the five talents, went at once, and traded or

conducted business with them, and he made or they gained five talents more.

Went at once highlights his eagerness for the work. Notice the five-talent servant went at once his eagerness to do the work of his master. And traded is to engage in activity that involves effort, and it involves work, obviously, but if we stop and meditate on this, it involves risk.

[15:34] Trading involves risk. And this servant was eager to do the master's work, and he was eager to jump in the work, knowing the risk. Now this is contra to the third servant, and we'll get to him.

Verse 17, so similarly, the one who received or had the two talents gained two others, but he who had received the one talent went, going away, and dug up the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time, the master of those servants came, or comes, and settled, or settles, accounts with them.

I highlight the long time is a reference to 24, 48, when Pastor, in the previous chapter, verse 48 says, but if that wicked servant, this is the first parable in the three series of parables, but if that wicked servant says to himself, my master is delayed, and that was the wicked servant.

That was his first question, if you go back and read. The delay is a long time, so even after a long time, these servants worked. So I highlight also those servants came.

[17:03] When you see came, it can actually be rendered comes, because it's in the present tense. I only highlight that because in English, it makes more sense to say it came, past tense.

But I think Jesus is making this intentional. This is present because this anticipates the master's return. This shows that not only the third servant, but all the servants, all three servants, anticipated their master's return, even after a long time.

This is a key moment of the parable, gospel. And this is where the theme of daily faithfulness comes in. Because they were anticipating the master's return, they knew he would come back, even if it was a long time.

They still did the work. Some. The two first servants, they did the work and with risk. How much more should we reflect on that today?

Verse 20. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered or handed over to me five talents.

[18:21] Here, I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little.

I will set you over much. over a few things you are faithful. Over many things I will set you. There's another way you can render it. Enter into the joy of your master.

And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, Master, you delivered or handed over to me two talents. Here, I have made you two talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Or it can be rendered over a few things you are faithful. Over many things I will set you. Enter into the joy of your master.

There's a couple of things I want you to notice here. We'll camp out here for a little bit. Notice that the master's response to the five talents servant is the same as to the ten talent servant.

[19:25] The one who ended up having, or the five talent servant, sorry, originally, is the same response as the two talent servant. That was a mistype.

And over a little or over a few things is is is at the front of this because it is there by emphasis.

So over a few things, over a little, you have, they have set you over much. See, it's contrast. Jesus loves contrast. And what's repeated twice, I want you to see is that enter into the joy of your master. Enter into the joy of your master. Here, faithfulness, daily faithfulness, leads to joy in the Lord. You see the work, you see the risk, you see yes reward, but it is joy in the master.

So, let's ask. Faithfulness, faith. It's a really big, it's actually a small word, but it's a really big Bible word. It is everywhere.

[20:40] It is everywhere in Paul, and sometimes it's, we would do well to stop, to think, what is this faith? I think we use it so much.

Let's stop and think about what faith is. So if you were asked, what is faith? By your child, or even an unbeliever, what would you say? It would be a hard question to answer.

But, I want to share with you something that has helped me in this, is that the Heidelberg Catechism is something that I read in college, and actually, very college of me, printed it out and put it on my dorm room door, like on the outside.

I guess I thought it was Martin Luther or something, but I don't remember which question or answer I put on there. I wish I did, but this one has always stuck with me.

There's a few questions and answers that have really stuck with me with the Heidelberg Catechism, and I encourage you to read it. But in question 21, Catechism is a question and there's a prescribed answer.

[21:49] And the question 21 comes, what is true faith? So what is true faith? And I guess when I first read this, I didn't expect this answer.

True faith is not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture. It is also a wholehearted trust.

And I'll read the whole thing. With which the Holy Spirit creates in me by the gospel that God has freely granted not only to others, but to me also. Forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation.

These are gifts of sheer grace granted solely by Christ's merit. So, I'll point you to the first two lines. True faith is like a two-sided coin. One side. You have to have both. One side is a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture.

[22:55] Sure knowledge through Scripture. But it is also a wholehearted trust. A wholehearted trust. True faith is one coin, two sides.

You have to have both. Sure knowledge and wholehearted trust. I hope that helps you understand what faith is.

And faith is everywhere in the New Testament. And I encourage you to hang on to that when you see that and think about that. the one coin, the two-sided coin of sure knowledge and wholehearted trust.

So, I'm going to stop here, pause here, and because of the line, well done, good and faithful servant.

this came up in my marriage vows. And I just want to share this with you because maybe many of you actually have been married by Nathan, our pastor, and he, if I understand it right, he wrote these vows.

[24:07] And they're very good. And I will not read the whole thing to you. But I will read you the first four of what he gets the man to affirm.

There are four questions. And so, for Father's Day, I know fathers, but if you're a father, you're probably married. So, as an aside, I want to speak to specifically husbands because this is something that we should dwell on and be reminded of.

So, Nathan's marriage vows that he has required most of us to take is very good. But the fourth question is specifically the one we want to keep up with.

I'm going to read the first four to keep context. So, the first question, husband, do you affirm before God that your marriage is appointed by God and is ultimately for God by serving as a representation of Christ's love for his bride, the church?

Ask yourselves this side of marriage, these questions. do you promise to love Christ above your wife and your wife above all others? Third, do you, husband, recognize that you have been given a divine call to unconditionally love your wife by pastoring her, providing for her, and protecting her, and that you are to lay down your life for her just as Jesus Christ died for the church?

[25:36] The fourth question, do you commit to love your wife by seeking her spiritual growth in Christ that she may one day appear before God clothed in Christ and have it said of her, well done, my good and faithful servant.

That fourth question always gets me. I think about that every time I read this parable. I think it's a good question for us husbands to ask ourselves regularly.

I'll read it one more time. Do you commit to love your wife? Are you committing to love your wife by seeking her spiritual growth in Christ that she may one day appear before God clothed in Christ and have it said of her, well done, my good and faithful servant.

what can you change in your daily life to seek her spiritual growth? Husband, maybe making time each day for her to read or meditate on scripture, forcing that time, making that space for her,

maybe making the effort to ask her intentional questions about what she is thinking, not what you're thinking, but what is she thinking, which is extremely difficult.

I understand that. And not immediately attempting to problem solve. Are you laying your life down in that way? Let's, let's, husbands, let's, let's think about how one day we will present our wives and we hope that we can present her in a way that is said of her, well done, my good and faithful servant.

[27:27] that haunts me, I hope it haunts you, husband. So happy Father's Day. Verse 24. He also, who had, he who, he also, who had received the one talent came forward saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard or harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

so I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. Verse 26. But he, but his master answered him. Notice that he repeats his own, the servant's own, own words. You wicked, evil, and slothful, or lazy servant, condemning words.

You knew, or you did not know, did you know that I reap where I have not sown and gathered where I scattered no seed? That's slothful or lazy, shrinking from something, holding back, lazy, idle, passive.

These are condemning descriptions. You wicked and you slothful servant. He goes on. The master in verse 27.

[28:53] Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received or recovered what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. Notice the master points to the servant's foolishness in his logic of the master's character.

master's character. The master is just repeating his own words to point out his foolishness. God makes demands on his people and this involves risk.

Notice banking back then and today we kind of forget about banking being risky today in our context, banking would have also been a risk then.

This servant tried to play it safe for his own benefit because he did not want to feel uncomfortable. He wanted to play it safe.

[30:01] Now let's stop and think about what that mean, what that might mean in the larger context. What's Jesus trying to say by pointing this out? Risk, as one commentator I read recently said, risk is at the heart of discipleship.

Risk is at the heart of discipleship. And we think of discipleship, let's just think. That may mean sitting down one-on-one with another guy.

But really, when we're thinking about daily faithfulness, your daily life, what risks are you taking for the Lord in the areas that the Lord has given you?

Think about your circles that the Lord has placed you in. Not what you want to be in, but where are you right now? Are you in a marriage that you're playing it safe in? Or are you taking risks for the Lord of calling out sin, sin, and sacrificially loving your wife as Christ loved the church?

And that's risky. But think about parenting, maybe. Many of us are in parenting area of our life, deep in it.

[31:28] Are you playing it safe with your kids? things for the Lord in the way you discipline them, raise them up in the Lord?

Are you opening up scripture, which is risky because it takes effort and it takes sacrificial love for that? That's risk. Think about the church body, another that we're all in.

are you playing it safe here amongst each other, sliding in and out, or are you one another?

It is a risky thing to do. Risk is at the heart of discipleship. I challenge you to think about all the other areas of your life and ask that question.

Are you playing it safe? Are you the third servant with a shovel in hand, burying and keeping it safe? Or are you the one of the first servants where you're taking risks and working for the Lord?

[32:45] Ask yourself that. So, we get to the point, in the center of this parable, in verse 29. For, we know that because the for.

For, and this can be a little confusing, this is not expected, this is part of the shock value, you don't expect him to say this. For, to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance.

but, from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Now, this is a bit hard to understand, but I will give you a trick.

There, this whole thing is, this whole verse, is, there are three verbs here. They're all passive verbs, meaning, and they're like passive, and then future, meaning, all that to say, will be, verb, will be, verb, will be, verb.

So, will be given. The one who has will be given, the first, will have an abundance, that's the second, and then there's only one, with the one who has not.

[34:00] The one who has not, will be taken away. and the four is possibly explanatory aside by Jesus, so taking us out of the parable, taking us out of the story, and explaining.

God gives, through these three verbs, God gives an abundance to those who serve faithfully, and God takes away from those who serve wickedly. Now, this reminds me of two things.

One, you might have seen that evangelistic track, two ways to live. It's a great explainer of the gospel, and we see the two ways to live in this parable, the wicked and the faithful.

But it also reminds me of an early document that is very interesting. It's called the Didache. You may have heard of it, but it's basically a very early church manual, church of book order for the early church.

And it has things about, like, Lord's Supper, baptism, all the things. But it begins in a very interesting way. And it's always stuck out to me too.

[35:12] It begins, early church document, early Christians, think of this, says, there are two ways, one of life and one of death.

And there is a great difference between these two ways. Notice what is not there. There is no middle way. There is wicked and there is faithful.

Even the early Christians saw this, and I think maybe they were reading this and seeing that. So think about that there are maybe the third way could be the third servant.

So, last verse. Verse 30. And here's another shock. You don't see this coming, although it's repeated. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.

In that place, they will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Notice the change of description of the wicked servant. A further condemnation by adding worthless and useless.

[36:19] He adds condemnation by adding a description to that third servant. The one talent servant was unready to meet his Lord. At the end of the day, it ends with the one talent servant, the one that refused to take a risk.

He was unready to meet his Lord. The one talent servant knew the master would return, but chose not to make himself ready.

It was a choice. He did not choose to live by faith in his daily life, anticipating the master's return. Don't forget that.

It's connected to the previous two parables and the theme, the second coming, the Lord. It goes back. These three parables have the same similar conclusions.

What does it mean to be ready for the Lord? Which is really a better question when we think about eschatology. not what might happen, but what does it mean to be ready today?

[37:28] I think actually concludes in the next verse that's not in our parable, which is classic me, right? So, ignore the title between verse 30 and 31.

We'll end with 31, because I think this is a better end. I think it's connected. it says, when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the glorious, His glorious throne.

This is our hope, this is our encouragement, that is the foundation for daily faithfulness through the work of the Son, past, we can look in the future to this, when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the nations with Him, then He will, and that's a promise, He will sit on His glorious throne. And how precious is that truth. Pray with me.