

August 10th 2014 Mtt 25 #2 "Joyful Achievement" Mtt 25:14-30

The second story that Jesus tells in Matthew 25 is yet another story about the way the Kingdom of Heaven will look at the end of this age, and once again it's about a Master who returns home unexpectedly after leaving his servants in charge of a huge amount of money. When He arrives He finds two of his three servants excited to see him and one extremely fearful.

It is this difference between the three servants that is paramount in the parable, and as you read through the story it becomes evident that everything relates to the relationship each servant has with their Master.

The Master, it seems, knows these three servants well. He realizes what they are able to handle as far as managing his substantial assets is concerned, so he entrusts one servant with five talents, another with two talents, and a third with one talent, and v15 tells us that he does so on the basis of each one's ability.

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

Now we often think of talents today as special abilities that a person has. We might refer to a singer, for example, as being very talented. But that's far from the meaning here. In those days a talent was a term used for a particular and large sum of money. One talent usually represented 6,000 denarii, and when you bear in mind that one denarius in those times equaled one day's salary, then it would take the average worker over 17 years to earn just one talent. So when the CEV paraphrases v15 in the following way you can see where they are coming from.

The man knew what each servant could do. So he handed five thousand (gold)coins to the first servant, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third. Then he left the country.

Now the reaction of each man to the responsibility that was given them begins to give us a clue about the way they related to their Master.

The first servant we are told went at once and put the Master's money to work and the second did likewise. Their Master had hardly left the property and they were about his business. Immediately, instantly, directly, they

used the ability they had to increase the resources given them for the sake of their Master.

Obviously these two men had a good relationship with their Master. They liked him a lot, understood what he wanted them to do with the great wealth he had entrusted to them, and they wanted to please him.

With the third servant however, the adverb 'immediately' is not used. He went off, dug a hole, and buried his master's money. It is as though he doesn't care one iota about His Master's expectations or even about His Master.

Then some time later the Master returns and the first servant can't wait to see him, and in v20 Jesus has him saying:-

'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

And I sense Jesus wants us to feel the excitement and joy in the servants words and also in the reply of the Master in v21

"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!'

What a great response!! The servant's faithfulness is highlighted above his skill! But the really amazing thing is how the Master invites him to share in his happiness. In his great joy because of his servants faithfulness.

Then along comes the second servant and the delight and the excitement of all is doubled, for the Master gives the second servant exactly the same commendation and invitation.

Now the Bible doesn't mention this but at that point I reckon that the Master and the two servants had a group hug.

But then everything changes for the worst. The atmosphere darkens when the third servant arrives. With him he has the single talent wrapped in a dirty piece of linen, recently retrieved from its hole in the ground. This servant had the ability to have transformed that one talent into two, but instead he had wasted his ability along with the possibility of the talent.

Yet much more horrible than what he brought with him was what this servant said to the Master before the Master even uttered one word. Verse 24-25

*"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.'***

That Master had treated those three servants the same. Yet whereas two of them could hardly wait to do all they could with what they had in order to please him because they loved him, this man despised him and proudly declared what he 'knew' about his master as an excuse for his inexcusable behavior.

Is it any wonder that the Master then turned to the servant and said-v26-27

'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.'

The Master's wrath was not on account of the money but because the servant being wicked, had failed to do what was expected of him as a servant. Instead he had acted in disobedience and rebellion and therefore robbed himself of the opportunity to share with the others in the Master's house and in the Master's happiness.

This man may have thought that he had a right to claim his position in the Masters house even though he really had no time for his Master and refused to obey his commands, but when the Master returned he soon discovered that he was an outcast. And unfortunately when Jesus returns there will be people just like that man. People who claim to believe in Jesus and even to follow Him, but they show by their obedience to His directions in the Bible that they don't really know Him at all and have no room for Him in their lives.

So this third servant is in a similar position to the 5 foolish virgins that we looked at last Sunday.

But what we mustn't forget in our understanding of this parable is that Jesus is not just speaking about the wicked servant. He has just as much to say about the good and faithful servants and what He says about them is extremely encouraging.

For those first two servants represent all those who by the Grace of God belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and who seek to live for Him because they love Him. It represents the Church of the Living Lord Jesus at work in the world today. It represents people who have a lasting and deep relationship with Jesus. It represents you and me.

And like those servants we are all different in our abilities and yet all equal in our Masters sight. And He has entrusted us with all that we each need to serve Him and enlarge His glory in this world.

The treasure He has given us is so many things. It is the power and strength and fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The comfort, encouragement, and power of prayer. The wisdom and truth of the inspired word of God. The joy and satisfaction of worship. The enabling fellowship of Christian brothers and sisters. The many opportunities to serve given us according to our abilities. The privilege of making a difference for Jesus in our world. And the list goes on.

But by far the most glorious thing I see in this parable is the joy that the servants had in serving their Master and the Joy he expressed over them because of that. They were both equally faithful not because of what they achieved but because of how they achieved it. With love and with Joy and a desire to please him.

Jesus does not want your service if it's simply the case of doing something because you feel you have to. Like the church member who puts up their hand at the AGM and says 'well if no one else will do that job then I supposed I'll have to'. That's not the way Jesus wants you to do His will. He wants you to do what you do for Him because you love Him, and only then will you find a joy in doing it.

I recall as a young Pastor working really hard to impress everybody else in the church. But thankfully over the years I've grown in my love for Jesus and I still try to work hard, but it doesn't seem like that to me, because I do it out of love for Him. And I would truthfully say that I am still astounded by the fact that God loves me so much that He has allowed me to serve Him in

so many different ways and alongside so many beautiful and faithful people here at Craigie.

That doesn't mean that there are not many occasions when I would rather be anywhere else than doing that particular task for the Lord. But the incredible thing is that once I start doing the task I remember whom I am doing it for and it doesn't seem that hard or that bad anymore.

(Church cleaning)

Whatever the Lord lays upon your heart to do for Him, remember that He has given you that task because he knows that you have the ability to do it well. And do it for Him because you love Him. Remind yourself often of that.

And then one day when he returns and He calls you to Him not only will you recall the joy you had in ministering for Him here on earth, but your heart will overflow as you see the obvious joy He has in you. And even more so when He says to you, "Come and share your Masters happiness".