

## The Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

<sup>14</sup>“Again, it [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup>So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup>“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>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.’ <sup>21</sup>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!’ <sup>22</sup>The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ <sup>23</sup>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!’ <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ <sup>26</sup>“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? <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

1. In Jesus’ parable, whom does the master represent? Whom do his servants represent? What does the master’s long journey represent? What does the master’s return represent?
2. In addition to the basic and essential gift of saving faith, God gives many other and varied gifts to his people. In his parable, Jesus uses the word talent—a word used for a coin or for a measure of weight—to refer to these gifts. What insight into Jesus’ use of the word talent is found in the following verses? Ponder the various “talents” that God has given to you.
  - “See, I have chosen Bezalel, . . . and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:2,3).
  - “Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).
  - “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:6).
  - “After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10).

3. At his return, the Lord Jesus, like the master in the parable, will commend his servants for:

- \_\_\_\_\_ their accomplishments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ making him richer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ their faithfulness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ doubling whatever he entrusted to them.

4. What does this parable about faithful Christian service have to do with salvation?

5. React to each of the following statements or scenarios:

- The third servant in Jesus' parable did not believe his own words (verses 24,25).
- The fact that it is the Lord who distributes "talents" keeps us from both pride and envy.
- "Like the third servant, I'm not very gifted either. In other words, I'm not qualified to do much. That's really why I don't serve at church."
- It is obvious to her fellow members at Bethel Lutheran Church that Jane, a teacher by profession, has the spiritual gift of teaching. It just so happens that the congregation's Sunday school is in desperate need of a teacher. Jane responds: "I'm sorry. I don't have the time." In the end, Danielle, an Altar Guild member, sees the need and volunteers.

**Helps:** (1) The master is the Lord Jesus, who ascended into heaven and who, after a long journey (humanly speaking), will return on judgment day. The Lord's servants are professing Christians. (2) The leader will want to study the contexts of the passages. The talents that the Lord gives us include our skills, abilities, intellectual and physical gifts, time and opportunities for service to God and others, spiritual gifts, money, and material possessions. (3) On judgment day, the Lord Jesus will commend his servants for their faithfulness. (4) Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone. As a fruit of saving faith, Christians respond to God's grace by faithfully using what the Lord has entrusted to them in service to God and others. (5) If the third servant had truly believed his own words, he would have used his talent faithfully—at the very least, put it on deposit—knowing that his master would expect a return. Every Christian has been gifted to serve. The fact that gifts, talents, and abilities come from the Lord will keep Christians from the sins of pride and arrogance as well as envy of others' gifts. At times, the Lord may keep a Christian from using his or her God-given gift in the ministry of the local congregation. Yet "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). Every member of a congregation, especially the gifted, is important and needed for a complete ministry to be carried out. A congregation's ministry may be less than the Lord intends when members have to fill ministry roles for which they have not been gifted by God.