

Rev. Janet Doyle
Sunday, January 23, 2022
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Scripture: Matthew 25: 14-30

Sermon: Faithful Servants

There have been some great investments made throughout history. John Gray invested \$10,500 in the stock of Ford Motor Company in 1903. When Ford bought the stock back in 1919, the stock was worth a whopping \$26.25 million. Asa Candler bought the recipe for Coca-Cola from John Pemberton for \$2,300 in 1891. Candler then sold the same recipe in 1923 for \$25 million! Peter Thiel, one of the original investors for Facebook, invested \$500,000 in the company in 2005. His return was 800 times the initial investment, as he sold all 25 million shares of Facebook for \$400 million in 2012.

History is full of people who made both profitable and unprofitable investments. Money can be managed well, and it can be managed poorly.

A faithful Christian will be a good steward of the money that God has given him or her. However, there are things in life that are much more important than money, and we are to be good stewards of those things as well.

Today, we are looking at the Parable of the Talents and we will learn what Jesus is teaching us when it comes to managing what he has entrusted to us.

In this Parable and the preceding parables, Jesus is teaching us about how to live until He returns again. It isn't a gospel of economic prosperity. Instead, it challenges believers to live a life following Jesus and using all that God has given for the sake of the Kingdom. Jesus' disciples are to endure through difficult times and to live in anticipation of the Lord's return.

Jesus tells this story to his disciples to prepare them for the days ahead when their faith will be tested. Jesus is teaching us again about the end times and urges us to be faithful in our life as we actively wait for him.

Jesus tells us a parable in which He is represented as a man who is going away on a journey and before he leaves, he calls his servants and entrusts them with HIS property. The master gives his servants various talents. A talent is a form of currency. The master has great faith in his servants. To one

servant he gives five talents, to another two talents, and to the third one talent. The master is entrusting them with a great amount of money and opportunity.

The servants represent believers. The talents represent the gifts that God has given us. They are things like faith, mercy, forgiveness, intelligence, singing, teaching, serving, preaching, leading, listening, loving. They can also be opportunities, too. Opportunities to invest natural gifts, and spiritual gifts of the Spirit we read about last Sunday in 1 Corinthians 12.

The master gives each servant talents according to their ability. He entrusted them with what they could handle. He gave each one the right amount according to what they could do. He then goes away, and they don't know when he will return. This is just like Jesus. We don't know when he will return.

When the master is gone, the servants get to work. The one who had received five talents immediately started working and ended up making five more talents. The servant with two talents went out and made another two talents. Both of these servants made 100% return.

But what did the third servant do? He took the one talent and buries it. He is afraid to lose it for fear of his master, so he does nothing with it.

God graciously entrusts to his servants' certain skills and a certain amount of power. God gives us certain abilities and certain capabilities.

We must not undervalue what we have been given from God. Some are given more, some are given less, but all are given much to be used for the Kingdom. Jesus tells us in Luke 12:48, "everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."

This is why the master was so angry at the servant who did nothing with the talent he was given. The servant blamed the master's character for his lack of diligence. But the master knew the heart of the servant and called him "wicked and slothful."

These are the words we never want to hear from our Master. This parable is meant to bring us to a healthy fear of God and make us ask ourselves, "What are we doing with what God has given to us?"

James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Just as the master gave of his own possessions to his servants, so also, God gives out of His generosity to us.

A young man once volunteered at a library and the librarian asked the young man to clean the books that had some mold on them. The librarian left the young man to do his job and went back to the front desk. Later that night the librarian went to where the young man was working and found him standing there reading a book and his work not even started. When the young man was asked why he didn't do the job assigned, he said, "O, well, I didn't want to do that, so I just started reading." How disappointed the head librarian was in this young man. When the boss isn't watching are you faithful to your task?

"After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them."

The Lord holds us accountable for what we have been given. What are we doing with what God has given to us? Are we wasting it, burying it out of fear, or are we using it to serve God and bring glory to Him?

The master wanted to know what had been done with his possessions that he allowed others to manage. God will hold us accountable for how we handle our finances, the opportunities He gives us, the family He gives us, the church He gives us, the neighbors He gives us, the educational opportunities He gives us, the service opportunities He gives us, the homes He gives us, the friends He gives us and so much more.

The master's reply to what the first two servants did with the talents is, ***"Well done, good and faithful servants! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master's joy."***

With the first two servants, the master was generous and kind in his reward for their faithfulness. Things didn't go as well for the third servant. ***"The servant who had received one talent also approached and said, 'Master, I know you. You're a harsh man, reaping where you haven't sown and gathering where you haven't scattered seed. So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'"***

The third servant allowed fear and misunderstanding of the master lead him to be an unfaithful, unwise, and unproductive servant. How sad!

It is so easy to be this third servant: unproductive, unfaithful, unwise, paralyzed by fear and selfish motives. We can become distracted by the things

of the world and not keep our eyes on the glory of God. May we be faithful managers of what God has given us!

The third servant claimed that he hid the talent because the master was a harsh man. However, we see from his reward of the two faithful servants that the master was actually a very kind and generous man. He rewarded them greatly. Since the third man was unfaithful and foolish, he will then experience the harsh side of the master. If he had only been faithful, he would have been greatly rewarded.

When we turn to God and faithfully follow Him, there is a reward for us that is beyond our wildest imaginations! When we are Faithful Servants, God will graciously reward us. Likewise, if we reject God and His ways, if we are unfaithful, there is a harsh judgment that awaits us.

So, people of God, brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, let us be faithful because the Lord will hold us accountable. The Lord gives us gifts and the Lord wants us to use them to glorify Him.

God has blessed us with everything that we need to faithfully follow and serve Him until He returns. He's blessed us with everything we need to be the Body of Christ in the world but not of the world.

We have no excuses to not be fully living the life that God has called us to live in Jesus, equipped by His Holy Spirit: a life of faithfulness, a life of generosity, a life of love, and a life of holiness.

Take some time this week and reflect on all the good gifts that God has given you. Ask yourself how you have managed the gifts God has given to you. Are you investing in the kingdom of God? Are you one of the Faithful Servants?

If we are faithful to the Lord and live as faithful servants of His, we will hear these words: ***“Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy.”***