

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

Background: Remember that we are in the last few days of the Lord's life and he is teaching his disciples by means of parables how they should conduct their lives. The parables to date have emphasised the need to watch and wait for the second coming of the Lord but in the one we are to consider now he showed the need for us to occupy our time in working for him as well during the period of time he is away.

Summary of the parable:

- A wealthy man travels into a far country
- Before going, he gave his servants different amounts of money according to their ability
- The servants used the money – the talents – and some did well, some did very well, and some did *not bother at all*
- The master returned
- He rewarded the servants according to how they had worked
- He was angry with the lazy servant, and had him cast out of his sight
- There was great sorrow and crying when this happened

These are the main points of the parable – but what does it mean to you today?

Firstly, let us bring it up to date and into today's language:

- The wealthy man is the Lord Jesus who has gone into heaven (a far country)
- He has given us the natural ability to understand the truth and his word
- Jesus expects all his servants to do their very best with what they have been given working in God's service. They should be reading and learning themselves and then teaching others the good news of the kingdom. By so doing they are working and so increasing the "talent" they have been given.
- The lazy servant is like the Christian today who has the bible in his house but never has it in his *hands*. He never tries to read it or tell anyone else about it, he is lazy and thinks only of his own comfort.
- Jesus will be angry with the lazy and thoughtless people when he returns

Now we have a few "keys" to unlock the parable we can think more clearly about it and see how it applies in our lives today. *This is a most important issue for us to consider.*

We have all been entrusted with the message of the gospel of truth. Each of us has certain natural abilities which God expects us to use in his service. We must read God's work and teach others about it so that it "grows". We must also allow it to influence and change our lives for the better so that God's word is increased in *us*.

Notice each of the faithful servants increased his talents by 100%. God did not ask the man with two talents to make another five, but he did expect the man who had five to start with to make another five. God *never* asks more of us than we are capable of doing. He was just as pleased with the servant who had increased the

two talents to four as he was with the servant who had increased his five to ten. These two servants showed *effort, work, and the right attitude*.

The Man with One Talent

Jesus was very angry with this man. He had not bothered to work with what he had been given; he “hid” his talent and did not let others see it. He buried the talent in the earth and lazily carried on with his own work. This type of person with the one talent who has been lazy will be cast away by Jesus when he returns. This is the Christian who puts “away” God’s word and works and does not give his time and energy for God.

Notice that in verse 24 the lazy servant is complaining that he acted as he did because he was afraid of his master, and saying that his master was unjust in asking too much of him. This of course was an excuse. He was a lazy evil servant who did not *want* to work for his Lord. Notice that he wrapped his money up in a “napkin” or sweatcloth before burying it. Labourers in the hot climate needed a sweatcloth when they were working. This servant obviously did not intend to do much work at all because he buried one of his tools along with his talent.

Look at ourselves

After thinking seriously about the servant with the one talent we must *all* seriously think about *ourselves*. What do *you* do with God’s word and the *mind* God has given us? Do you leave your bible on one side and *do your own thing*? Do you bother to try to understand the bible and then tell others about it?

Remember what happened to that servant! God was angry with him and the talent was taken away from him.

The faithful servants were given positions of honour by their master. So the Lord Jesus will give positions of honour in the kingdom to those who bother to work for him *today*. If we have been faithful in this life and worked with our ability today God will give us greater responsibility and positions of honour in the kingdom.

Everything in this life that is worthwhile requires time and effort. Genius is said to be made up of 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. In other words *nothing replaces effort – effort for God is a good investment in life*.

We are blessed to have been given these parables. We have them as a warning and as guidance to us today. We can see the faithful and the lazy; we can see what they did and how God viewed the effort in their lives. The two ways are clearly set before us. *What are we to do with God’s word and work?* Are we lazily leaving it to others and not trying to understand our bibles and telling others about it, or are we working with all our ability? *Let us take warning and begin afresh today* using our time and energy as God intended us to.

Extra work: Using the lessons from the parable give present day examples of how the different types of people live their lives. Outline the type of person we should be and the type of person we should try not to be in God’s service today.