

Kingdom of God - Week #6

“The Parable of the Three Servants”

May 20, 2020

Church Family,

Greetings once again to our beloved church family! Please know you are being prayed for and preparations are being made for the day when we will gather again and worship the Lord together. Until that day happens, keep choosing to worship the Lord and know that you already have all you need to live a godly life.

2 Peter 1:3 says, “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.”^(NLT) Keep using all you have been given to faithfully live a godly life! We pray that the sermon below will encourage you to this end as well.

Welcome and thank you for joining us in worship today! This is the **6th** Sunday **after** Easter 2020 and it has now been **42** days since we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are marking the days **after** the Resurrection by focusing on Jesus’ teachings on the **Kingdom of God**. We are told in Scripture that for 40 days **after** Jesus’ crucifixion and **before** He ascended to be with the Heavenly Father again, Jesus specifically taught about the **Kingdom of God**.

Acts 1:3, records this for us.

³ *During the **forty days** after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about **the Kingdom of God**.*^(NLT)

Since we find ourselves at **day 42 AFTER** Jesus’ resurrection, it means that Jesus would have ascended to heaven **two days ago**, according to the biblical timeline, and the Disciples would have been two days into learning to live as Disciples **without** Jesus being present with them. The Disciples are going to be making decisions on how to do life and ministry now that Jesus has left for an unknown amount of time.

I believe it’s possible that one particular parable Jesus taught them concerning **the Kingdom of Heaven** would have been ringing in their minds and hearts as they began to choose how to use their lives for Kingdom purposes. I believe “**the Parable of the Three Servants**” would have been that parable, and I want to share it with you today.

Before we dive into this parable, let’s **pause for prayer** and ask the Lord to help us understand this teaching on the Kingdom of God that He has provided for us.

Prayer

“Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing the reality of Your Kingdom through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank You for all He has taught us and demonstrated for us through His life, death, resurrection, and on-going ministry on our behalf. Help us today to understand His teachings on Your Kingdom, so that we will be the Kingdom people You desire, and so we can enjoy the Kingdom fellowship with You both now and for eternity. We ask these things in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

As we turn to “**the Parable of the Three Servants**,” which you will find in **Matthew chapter 25, verses 14** through **30**, let me ask you to **pay close attention** to what Jesus is speaking to **YOU** today.

This is a familiar parable to many, and it can be tempting to “tune out,” because we may think we already know all there is to know about this passage. However, we just prayed that the Heavenly Father would help us understand this parable, so trust Him to reveal something new to you today.

Listen once again, with **AFTER Easter ears**, imagining that Jesus is speaking this message to you today concerning what He wants you to know about **the Kingdom of God**. These lessons from Jesus are meant to **reveal the reality of God’s Kingdom** to us and prepare us to live in this Kingdom, both now and for eternity.

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (NLT)

Let’s start by looking at the **Repeated themes of the Kingdom of God** that we see Jesus teaching us again in this parable.

1. The first repeated theme is Jesus will be leaving for a period of time.

In this parable, Jesus is the man “going on a long trip.”

Remember, Jesus had repeatedly told His Disciples that He would be going away to the Heavenly Father for an unknown period of time.

At 42 days AFTER the Resurrection, The Disciples are **NOW living in the period of time when Jesus is gone. This parable is **NOW** taking on a whole new reality for them than the day Jesus first taught it to them.

2. The second repeated theme is Jesus has left His “servants” with responsibilities to do while He is gone.

**What was it that Jesus told His Disciples to be doing while He was gone?

Just days ago, before Jesus ascended to the Heavenly Father, the Disciples would have heard Jesus tell them this in:

Matthew 28:18-20

“¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the

Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ *Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* ^(NLT)

The Disciples have responsibilities to do during Jesus' absence.

3. The third repeated theme is that Jesus will be Returning!

We looked at this in more detail last week, but here again, Jesus is speaking of His Return.

4. The fourth repeated theme is that when Jesus returns there will be an accounting for how we have lived our lives.

In our passage today, **verse 19** speaks of these last two themes this way:

¹⁹ *"After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money."*

My friends, Jesus has gone away to the Heavenly Father and left us with some tasks to do. He is also going to Return one day, and when He does, we will each give an account for how we have lived.

All the parables Jesus gives are consistent and clear in what we will see transpire.

The Disciples are now living out the experience of Jesus' having gone away, and they are going to have to choose how they will use their time and talents while He is gone.

Let's look at the example of the Three Servants that we find in the parable Jesus told, and see what all of us Disciples might learn from this parable as we each make our choice of how to live in Jesus' physical absence.

In verses 14 and 15 we see, the Three Servants all "**entrusted**" with the "**master's money**" and each one is given responsibility "**in proportion to their abilities.**"

One Servant is given **5 bags of silver** (or "Talents" as some versions have translated it).

One Servant is given **2 bags of silver.**

One Servant is given **1 bag of silver.**

Now let me take a minute and state clearly that this parable is **NOT about MONEY** nor about making Money for the Kingdom of God. The references to the bags of silver that were handed out are meant to exemplify **the greatness of the Master** and **His generosity** to "**Entrust**" such great wealth to His servants.

Let me explain the use of the term "Talent" or in the translation that I read, "bag of silver." The Greek word ("talanton") translated as "Talent" was a large monetary measurement of varying weights equal to between 50 and 75 pounds. These "Talents" weren't minted coins, but a measurement of the weight of the silver that was entrusted to these servants.

To help us get a better understanding of **the greatness of the Master** and **His generosity**, I did the math using the current price of silver of \$16.81 per ounce, which would calculate into \$268.96 per pound of silver.

If we run the numbers on the high side using the 75 pounds per Talent or bag of silver, here is a rough estimate of what was entrusted to these three servants.

5 bags of Silver x 75 pounds at \$268.96 per pound = **\$100,860 = 375 lbs. of silver**

2 bags of Silver x 75 pounds at \$268.96 per pound = **\$ 40,344 = 150 lbs. of silver**

1 bag of Silver x 75 pounds at \$268.96 per pound = **\$ 20,172 = 75 lbs. of silver**

These measurements simply provide a way to represent the “**weightiness**” of the responsibility that was entrusted to the servants.

Each of these servants were “**entrusted**” with the “**weighty**” **responsibility** of looking after a portion of their Master’s Kingdom while He was away.

As we already stated, the Master did go away for a long time, but upon His return *He “called them to give an account of how they had used his money.” (vs.19)*

Let’s look at **the first two servants** as they give an account of their use of the Master’s money:

Both the servants entrusted with the 5 bags and the 2 bags of silver are able to invest the Master’s money and provide a 100% return on the investment.

The 5 bags have become 10 bags, now worth \$201,720. = 750 lbs. of silver

The 2 bags have become 4 bags, now worth \$ 80,688. = 300 lbs. of silver

The Master’s Response is the same to both of these Servants in **verses 21 & 23**,

²¹ *“The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and **faithful** servant. You have been **faithful** in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’*

Let me call your attention to the Master’s response to once again highlight that this parable **isn’t about the money**. Look at what the Master praises these two servants for. Twice, in both **verses 21 and 23**, the term “**faithful**” is used.

The Master praises them for their “**faithfulness**” – not the amount of money they have made. He doesn’t praise the one who made an additional 5 bags any more than He does the one who made only 2 bags more, for they were both “**faithful**” to use what had been “**entrusted**” to them “**according to their ability.**”

My friends we must understand that Jesus will call us to give an account when He returns, and what He will be measuring is our **Faithfulness**. This parable also lets us know that He is overjoyed and ready to celebrate with all those who are found to be “**Faithful!**”

Now up to this point in the parable and our understanding of it...everything seems to be going as planned and there aren’t any problems for us. We like it when things go well and people are rewarded. We easily read ourselves into this part of the story and take no offense at what has transpired so far.

But Jesus’ parable doesn’t end at **verse 23**, and there is still one more servant who must give an account for how he used the Master’s money.

We find out in **verses 24-25**, that this final servant who was “**entrusted**” with **1 bag of silver** has taken the money and dug a hole in the ground and hid it (vs.18). He has **nothing** to show the master except the same amount he had originally been “**entrusted**” with.

We also find out that this servant’s response is due to a **negative view** of the Master, which he obviously already held when He was “**entrusted**” with his **1 bag of silver**, because he went and hid it in the ground. Listen to how this servant speaks of His master and then we will test it against what we have already seen in this parable.

The **One bag servant** says this, in *verses 24 & 25*, ‘*Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate.* ²⁵ *I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.*’

The **One bag servant** sees the Master as “a harsh man” and implies that he is greedy to collect the money that was made on what He had “**entrusted**” to them.

Let’s look at the character of the Master which has already been revealed in this parable, and see if it is consistent with what the **one bag servant** is charging.

In this parable we have seen:

1. The Master was a **generous** man.
He gave great amounts of wealth and responsibility to his servants.
As our creator we would say Jesus also gave them the abilities that they were to use to advance His Kingdom.
2. The Master was a **trusting** man.
He “**entrusted**” His money to his servants and didn’t micromanage the use of this money. They were trusted to go and use the money as their abilities would allow.
3. The Master was a **patient** man.
He didn’t return quickly, which gave the servants a long time in which to produce results.

Clearly the problem is **not** with the Master, but with the **One bag servant**. And his own words, recorded in *verse 25*, **condemn him** as the problem. ²⁵ “*I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth.*”

The **I’s** have it...the problem was that this **One bag servant** didn’t believe in the abilities that the Master saw in him or the gifts He had “**entrusted**” to him to make a difference for the Kingdom.

Out of fear, the **one bag servant** immediately disregards the abilities that the Lord has given him and **doesn’t even try to use** them. He immediately digs a hole and hides the bag of silver in the ground.

The **one bag servant** did “work” by digging the hole in the ground to hide the money, but all the effort he put forth would **never lead to any chance of producing a return** on the money the Master had “**entrusted**” to him.

Have you ever noticed that “Lazy” people often work harder to gain “**nothing**” in return, than they would have needed to work to try and make something of what the Lord has given them?

As this parable makes clear, the Lord will not bless or reward a Lazy do-nothing servant.

Jesus gives us a guiding Kingdom Principle to live by while He is gone.

Matthew 25:29

²⁹ *To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who **do nothing**, even what little they have will be taken away.* ^(NLT)

Once again, Jesus is letting us know that there are no free rides in **the Kingdom of Heaven**. There are expectations that must be met. If we are **faithful** there are rewards and celebration. If we are **lazy, disobedient**, and have **nothing** to show for what’s been **entrusted** to us, then there are harsh punishments in our future.

Through this parable we are reminded:

1. Jesus wants us to succeed.
2. Jesus has entrusted to us the resources to succeed.
3. Jesus expects us to succeed.

Jesus has done all that He can do to set us up for Kingdom Success, and He wants to celebrate with us when we succeed!

The choice comes down to us!

Will we choose to be **faithful** to use what we have been **“entrusted”** with to help advance the Kingdom?

If you are faithful, when Jesus Returns you will hear: ²¹ *“The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’*

If you decide to do nothing, when Jesus Returns you will hear:

²⁶ *“But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant!....*

‘Take the money from this servant....from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.

³⁰ *Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (NLT)*

The response you will hear depends on your **“faithfulness” NOW** as you live in the days while Jesus is gone.

Jesus gave us this parable to encourage us to use well what we have been given to help advance God’s Kingdom!

Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, help us to be faithful to you and to use what you have entrusted to us to help advance your Kingdom.”

Blessing:

“May the Lord give you eyes to see His blessings you have been entrusted with, and may He give you the courage to use your abilities to their fullest to help advance His Kingdom for His glory!”

“Go and Be Faithful!”

Please remember these other ways we are reaching out as a Church Family in these days of separation.

Church Phone: 724-628-3949

Church E-mail: centralfellowshipchurch@verizon.net

Church Website: www.centralfellowshipchurch.com

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Love and Prayers for you all!

Following Christ,

Pastor Mike Martin