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What Talents Do You Have?

Matthew 25:15: (NKJV) *And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.*

Jesus taught us about a lot of things in a lot of different ways, but it seems as though his favorite method was to teach in parables. In the Parable of the Pounds and Parable of the Talents, Jesus is either teaching us that he wants to give us money, or he is teaching us a sober lesson about our responsibilities to him throughout the period of the Gospel age. Which is it? It is unequivocally a lesson in responsibility - yours and mine to him - let's figure it out!

It is not about, "What do I get?" but, "How well do I do?"

POUNDS [Luke 19:11-27](#) **TALENTS** [Matthew 25:13-30](#)

Basic story in both: A Master is traveling to a far country, gathers his servants to him and gives them each a sum of money to work with while he is gone. Upon his return, he demands an accounting of their activity in his absence. To those who have worked, he doles out a reward and to those who have not, he doles out a punishment.

These two parables are VERY similar in scope, yet very different in detail. Because of the similarities between the two, we think they should be considered together as we believe they express two different parts of the same lesson.

What was the reason that Jesus spoke these Parables?

POUNDS [Luke 19:11](#): So, the kingdom of God *would* appear, proving that when Jesus often said *the Kingdom was among them* he was speaking of a developmental stage of the kingdom, not the final phase.

[Acts 1:6-7](#): The timeframe of these verses in Acts is after Jesus was raised. Surely it was time for the kingdom now, they thought!

These also teach us that there are things we do not need to know. We should focus on what we need to know. We should learn the accountability lessons taught by these two Parables.

TALENTS [Matthew 25:13-14](#)

So the focus here is on the return of Jesus. Because the Master "returns" in both parables, we can therefore connect the appearing of the kingdom with the return of Jesus.

[Matthew 24:42-44](#): Satan is the *head of the house* and Jesus is the *thief*!

Jesus is giving all kinds of hints about his return and asks what the Christians would be doing before he comes. This is an enormous test for those who call themselves footstep followers of Christ. The purpose for the stories (parables) was to set the stage for action without Jesus to personally direct it. They also set the future stage for Jesus' return and for the kingdom to appear. He would go away, there would be a long intervening time during which his followers would have things to do that he assigns them to do. What are these things?

These parables are lessons in accountability. They are lessons in empowerment - not entitlement!

Jesus obviously represents both the nobleman and the Son of Man:

POUNDS [Luke 19:12](#): (NKJV) *Therefore he said: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.*

TALENTS [Matthew 25:13](#): (NKJV) *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

So who are the servants? The followers of Christ.

Servant: Strong's #1401 *doulos* (doo'-los); a slave (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary)

[John 13:13-16](#): (NKJV) ¹³*You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Most assuredly, I say to you, a **servant <1210>** is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than He who sent him.*

We are called to be slaves, but a steward was a slave who took care of their Master’s goods as if they were their own. There was extraordinary responsibility entrusted to stewards. The followers of Christ are the stewards.

Steward: Strongs #3623 oikonomos; a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer, an employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher (of the Gospel):

We are God’s property, therefore responsible for ourselves: 1 Corinthians 6:19: If you call yourself a true Christian, than *ye are not your own*.

We are stewards over the mysteries of God: 1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (KJV) ¹Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and **stewards <3623>** of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required in stewards **<3623>**, that a man be found faithful.

Jesus left his stewards with certain responsibilities to share the Gospel truths with others.

POUNDS Luke 19:13: (NKJV) *So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, Do business till I come.*

- Each servant was given one pound (of relatively small worth - \$500.00 - \$600.00 in today’s dollars) with specific instructions to “occupy” it - in other words, get busy and trade with it.

Each servant was given the exact same amount (1 pound or some translations call it a *mina*), so we can surmise that this could represent the equal opportunity given to each true follower of Christ to grow the value of the Kingdom from something of relative little worth in the eyes of men, to something that brings significance later.

What are we all given that we are supposed to use? The Gospel itself with an equal opportunity to grow the value of the Good News of salvation for the entire world.

TALENTS Matthew 25:15: (NKJV) *And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.*

- Similar context - each servant is given a specific number of talents according to his ability. Each talent was worth 60 times one pound. (Source: McClintock and Strong’s) showing the great earthly value of what we offer to the Lord...“what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?”

Here is a major difference between the two parables - the value of a talent is astronomically higher and the fact that each was given “according to his ability” indicates that the lesson here, while similar, is very different in application. The least calculated value of the talents given is equivalent to about \$30,000 - \$36,000 while the highest calculated value is about \$150,000 to \$180,000.

Some stewards had the capacity to do more than others so they were given more. They were given a responsibility they could handle.

So they were all given the Good News of the Gospel (Pounds) and the responsibility to pour themselves into that Good News to see how they could develop (Talents).

POUNDS Luke 19:13: (NASB) *And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, do business with this until I come back.*

Ten slaves - Ten (and its multiples) is a general symbol of a complete number or group. There were ten lepers, ten virgins, the woman with ten pieces of silver (Luke 15:8), one hundred sheep (a multiple of ten), etc. The fact that these ten are supposed to “do business” in their master’s absence with their individual pound seems to indicate that they represented the entire group of true Christianity throughout the time since Jesus ascended.

TALENTS Matthew 25:15: (NASB) *To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.*

Three slaves - Three can indicate a complete experience. Jesus’ three temptations, Peter’s three denials and three reinstatements, the three facets of sin (lust of the eyes, the flesh and the pride of life) and Faith, Hope and Love, etc.

So, having these three given Talents according to their ability seems to indicate the full and personal experience of the entire group of true Christianity throughout the time since Jesus ascended. Your abilities and my abilities are different. We need to immerse ourselves in the work. Remember, this is about empowerment and not entitlement. Jesus is not teaching us “once saved, always saved” in these Parables. He gives us something of great value and tells us to work with it.

POUNDS Luke 19:13-14: (NKJV) ¹³So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, **Do business <1210>** till I come. ¹⁴But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us.

Do Business: Strongs #4231 *pragmateuomai*; to busy oneself with, i.e. to trade: 1) to be occupied in anything 2) to carry on a business 3) to carry on the business of a banker or a trader

Do business describes a general overall focus of attention. The advice was to not be idle because the master was going to come back and see how well you did. Are we involved in the work of the Gospel or are we overly involved in the affairs of this world?

So, the experience of the true followers of Christ throughout the age is to be occupied with the opportunity to grow the value of the kingdom even though the world (its citizens) sees it as almost worthless. (The value is only about a week’s pay.) They actually rebel against the absent Master!

TALENTS Matthew 25:16-18: (NKJV) ¹⁶Then he who had received the five talents went and **traded <2038>** with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.

Traded: Strongs #2038 *ergazomai* to toil (as a task, occupation, etc.), (by implication) effect, be engaged in or with, etc.: 1) to work, labour, do work 2) to trade, to make gains by trading, “do business” 3) to do, work out 3a) exercise, perform, commit 3b) to cause to exist, produce

This word describes a specific effort focused on a specific work.

The labor of the true followers of Christ throughout the age is to be engaged in the work of developing “according to their ability,” with the end result being fully exercised in the work of Christ. To the world this is a waste - why develop these incredibly valuable “talents” for the gain of Christ and not your own monetary gain? When Jesus left, he asked his servants to manage the Gospel for him, everybody equally. But he also asked us to look inside ourselves and decide what is it that I myself have to give in relation to this Gospel; that I can pour my talents into so I can make my work that much more valuable.

POUNDS Luke 19:15-24: “Your” mina (pound) has earned - notice the humility - the servants did not say “I” have earned. The “opportunity given to each true follower of Christ to grow the value of the kingdom” is not about the individual. It is about the kingdom and the Good News.

This servant knows he did not fulfill his stewardship as commanded and immediately rationalizes his position by blaming the master for his own inactivity. This servant is focused on what he himself did, and not what the pound could have done. Even though he kept the pound respectfully wrapped up, he was wrong - for that was not the purpose of his stewardship! It had the ability to grow and develop, but it stayed idle not helping anyone. For such a “hard” master, he sure was generous with those who followed his commands.

Are we focused on the gain the Gospel can bring by making it available? So, perhaps the lesson is that the body of Christianity is given something that looks like it is of small value with which to work. The body’s objective is to focus on that work and to daily “show up” to work and deliver. Even though the age of the Gospel is long and seemingly unsuccessful, it is imperative for that body to fulfill its obligation, even in the smallest of ways. Wasted opportunity equals lost potential!

TALENTS Matthew 25:19-30: While not specific, this certainly fits the context of the previous parable in which the Master returns having received a Kingdom. What am I doing with my talents and abilities in the service of Jesus?

This is unusual - a servant entering into the joy of their Lord! Lord, you gave me these talents and abilities, and look what those talents and abilities produced. Look at yourself in the mirror. Am I somehow in my daily life - not on Sundays only - working up a sweat for the



work of the Gospel? How am I personally contributing? Here the lesson is about what the Master gave to the individual. The talents could represent our personal potential and talent, which are easily recognizable as valuable in the eyes of the world. Those who obeyed are simply reporting what they did with what they were given and thus the personal “I” response - not a response of pride but of accountability. *To whom much is given, much is required.* Seeing the task from a human perspective, this servant essentially ignores the command and buries the talent in the earth. Spiritually, he buries his talents and opportunities in earthly things and then when called to accountability, he blames the master for his own irresponsibility in stewardship. This is not even close to being enough. We must be invested in his cause because we are held accountable. Irresponsibility is rewarded with hard consequences...

The last consequence of the Parable of the Talents: Wasted personal opportunity equals lost standing! If we have dedicated ourselves to the service of Jesus and he has accepted that dedication, then we are obligated. In effect, we have signed a contract with our Lord and must put forth effort. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth* = a state of deep regret. We need to challenge ourselves to use our natural talents, not let the opportunity slip by or be intimidated by someone who does something better than we do. Maybe your talent is seemingly small but still important, like the ability to encourage or to pray for others.

If we multiply our efforts, our reward will be multiplied as well - now and later:

2 Peter 1:2-4



Observations:

- The opportunity to be a true Christian inherently requires taking responsible risks.
- Greatest risk (activity) produces the greatest reward;
- Minimal risk (such as a bank investment) would have been tolerable;
- No risk at all (respectful protection or burial of this opportunity) is punished;
- The irony is that the one who was most protective suffered the greatest loss.
- The choice of inactivity is the choice of loss!
- Lesson #1: It is of MASSIVE value that we execute growth in our experiences, opportunities and our literal talents and abilities in the Lord's service. THE LORD EXPECTS GROWTH! Growth only happens when risk is present.
- Lesson #2: Just because an assigned task takes much longer than anticipated does not give us permission to forget about that task or to not take it seriously.

Long term gain: (Pounds Parable) *five or ten cities* (Talents Parable) *many things* = Large kingdom responsibility that the Master came home with, along with the job of the Master as a result of the personal Christian development.

Long term loss: (Pounds Parable) NO outer darkness, BUT a removal of the privilege (the pound). (Talents Parable) Outer darkness for the talents - a loss of position (and a removal of the talent). The loss is from being inactive.

Three opposites of responsibility:

1. Excuses - Excusing away our failure to make spiritual progress. If things go poorly, it is always something else, where we live, or the circumstances weren't right, or we just can't catch a break.
2. Blaming Others - We blame when we feel inferior, inadequate, fearful, jealous, doubtful, and guilty. We blame our church, our elders, our family, our boss, or even the Lord. We blame away our responsibility.
3. Focusing on the problem rather than the solution - Do we talk about and dwell on the problem, or are we busy solving it?

These Parables are personal! They are about you and me. Let's make sure we learn the lessons and apply them every day. What talents do you have? What can you invest yourself in to the glory of God this week?

*So, what talents do you have?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*