

Bible Class The Parable of the Talents. Matthew 25:14-30

Many thanks to Brother Russel for his introduction of this subject, who gave a comprehensive overview, so the following are just a few additional points.

In this parable on the day of reckoning, when the man calls his servants to see what they had done with the sum of money he had entrusted with them, he expected them to have been busy. There was an expectation that they knew what they had to do with the money. Out of the three people in the parable who received the funds, two knew what they were supposed to do. They all knew that what they had been given was not theirs, but that it had been entrusted to them, and had to be looked after. The owner of the money also knew the abilities of his servants, and gave them what he felt they would be able to cope with.

The first two doubled the investment, by making good use of what they had been given.

The response to both of these servants was the same Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. – even though one had produced a lot more than the other.

In this there are several lessons. I agree with Brother Russel, that the investment, the talents, each given according to ability, is not simply the gospel. Instead it is the responsibility to produce the richness of character, to multiply the fruits of the spirit, to demonstrate the eagerness and enthusiasm in the time of probation, to be responsible caretakers of the Gospel of God, by demonstrating it in practice.

Take Joseph for example. He was given very little by real assets in life, when he arrived in Egypt, his sole possessions was the loincloth the slave traders allowed him to protect his modesty. But he saw in

every situation he found himself in, as an opportunity, not to shout his mouth off about the Kingdom, or stand on the street corner shouting Jesus will save you, but he quietly, and methodically put the gospel into practice, showing integrity in action, so he learned to be trusted, he demonstrated he could work hard without complaining, but with a cheerful outlook. He stated his position as a Hebrew, and then remained true to it. Multiplication of the talents came to him easily after that, because not being corrupted or corruptible by the bribes of others, he took that open, honest, sincere, and joyful personality with him despite setback after setback, trusting – not in his own abilities, - but that God was in control, and was overruling his life for good He never forgot that. Being second in command over all Egypt did not alter that same personality one bit. He stayed focused and true.

All he was given was opportunities - to showcase faith in action, give glory to God, and put the gospel into practice.

His case is a marvellous example of one with great ability, like Daniel, and David, men and women listed in the roll-call of the faithful in Hebrews 11. But there were others, like Jonathan's armour-bearer, or Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, or Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, or Naaman's Hebrew servant girl or Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:10... the list can go on, of obscure but faithful characters in scripture, who when the moment came they used their faith, their trust and hope – their spiritual abilities to bring about good, and change and fulfilment of God's purpose. It may be suggested that these maybe were not so "talented" or did not have so many abilities, but in God's eyes, it makes no difference. The result was the same. They took the opportunity, and used their knowledge of the gospel to bring about the riches – the fruits of the Spirit, the consequences of which God used to further His purpose.

But in the parable, there was one out of the three who made excuses, because he had not used the opportunities given to him. He

knew the knowledge was precious, - like all the others, moreover he knew what was expected of him. He also had abilities, but a little more limited than the others, but it didn't matter. His master knew he was capable.

But in the day of reckoning, he was forced to watch the positive outcome of his fellow servants, whilst all the time, he had nothing to show. He had had plenty of time to make up excuses, and as usual it involves blaming others.

He revealed that he did not know his master at all. Accusing him of being an hard man – this was not true, as he only gave the talents in proportion to the abilities each servant had, the master took that into consideration. A hard taskmaster, would never do that.

Secondly he accuses his master of being a thief, of stealing the fruits that others produce – forgetting that if it were not the master hiring the servants in the first place, and giving them the means to produce the fruit, then none of them would be profitable servants. Then the servant admits the real reason:

I was afraid... He did not have faith. He had knowledge. There are those who have knowledge of the gospel. But believing in it, and trusting it – no, that is too much for them. It means a personal commitment that they are just not prepared to give. The other two understood the desires of the or Master and worked hard to fulfil and advance them. But this type, don't really care, they are too lazy to bother, or think particularly about anyone else.

The example Jesus gives about the man didn't even bother giving it to the bank to perhaps make a little interest, shows that this type are those who are entitled, and believe that somehow their "spirituality" their knowledge alone can save them, and that they have a relationship with their God, and somehow in the day of reckoning everything will be alright. They, in fact won't even do the minimum required. Too much effort.

Nabal is a type like this. He was given a lot of responsibility, he had riches, flocks, herds, he had abilities too. But his day of reckoning came early. It was an opportunity. A talent. Would he multiply it? He didn't see it as an opportunity to do good, and advance the purpose of God. He allowed his character which had become mean, and morose, sullen and resentful, to overflow into practice. He demonstrated evil fruits, he buried his opportunity, once and for all. He wouldn't be given another.

He was entitled. He thought he deserved that talent, that it was his all along, he was special, one of the chosen – he was in the Ecclesia!!

But just, exactly how did he contribute to the welfare of the ecclesia? Kind words to a fellow brother or sister? Comment on the various ecclesial forums available? Send a letter of encouragement? Make a phone call and reach out for spiritual support? Speak to a neighbour about God's word? There are examples a plenty on how any moment, any day can be turned into an opportunity

If we don't we are digging a hole for ourself to be placed in the day of reckoning an everlasting habitation in outer darkness.

Brother Terry