

A similar parable is also found in the gospel of Luke, 19v12-27, where it is rendered as the parable of the pounds rather than the talents. Although the wording is different in places the concepts are very similar. It is not found in either Mark or John. That Jesus changed the words means that he repeated the theme of the parable for effect. Luke records it as being delivered in Jericho on the final approach to Jerusalem that year as thousands flocked to the capital to attend the annual feast of Passover and *“he added and spake a parable because he was nigh unto Jerusalem and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear”*. It is therefore a cautionary warning that the personal responsibility to the judgment was crucial to each individual and that political freedom from the might of the Roman Empire and greater independence were not the priority.

After speaking this parable, it is said that *“And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem”*. The parable is therefore linked with the ascent of the spiritual man, the new man begotten from above. Jesus was aware that he would inherit the responsibility to judge his brethren and sisters, those who strove to follow his footsteps and take up their cross also and follow the lamb to calvary. This was an encouragement to him and highlighted the aspect that God knows the end before the beginning. The Father knew that the Son would be successful in sacrificing himself for the sins of the world. That God trusted him spurred Jesus onto success. He believed God and based his actions on the certainty that what God said happened. If only others were more like Jesus.

It is the second of the three parables in Matthew 25 where the Lord Jesus Christ sets out three aspects of the coming judgment, namely, the opportunity to be included, those responsible to the judgment seat, and the judgment of the wider world by the enthroned Messiah. *“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return”*. Jesus knew that he had to depart to be with the Father, and that he would have to subsequently return, only then would the Kingdom be restored to Israel. This was centuries in time into the future. He knew that this was the *“many days”* the contemplation of which made the prophet ill with concern, Daniel 8v26,27. First he had to demonstrate to the Jews, his wayward people, that he was the suffering Messiah who deserved his elevation to be **made** both Lord and Christ, Acts 2v36.

The talent was a unit of weight. It was usually of precious metals and therefore was equated with money, which until reliable coinage was constructed was literally weighed out for value. It is only used in the gospel of Matthew and equates to about \$1,000. In Matthew 18v24 an immense sum of 10,000 talents is mentioned. In Revelation a similar Greek word is used in 16v21 where the hailstones are said to be that heavy! It is generally regarded that the idea of talents referring to abilities comes from this passage of scripture as language developed.

The pound was a different weight Greek Mna, which may have come from the Hebrew Maneh. It is different from the word also translated pound in John 12v3 & 19v39. That these words are different is important as no jot or tittle if inserted or removed without reason. Luke has the same amount entrusted, always a pound, a different amount obtained through trading, 10 or 5, and a greater reward granted 10 cities or 5 cities.

From a similar start the reward received is relative to the success obtained through effort. This contrasts with the record of Matthew where the different amount entrusted was rewarded with the same promise – *“I will make thee ruler over many things”*. The amount of that reward is not specified. The distribution was made *“to every man according to his several ability”*.

There are three types of believers who are represented in the parable, all had to trade with the assets of their master, and whether they were good servants or bad servants depended on how they utilised the responsibility to their Lord. The first was talented and was given more and was expected to produce more. The second was entrusted with less and produced less but still in proportion with the responsibilities entrusted. In Luke the amount given was always the same, one pound, instead the individual produced more from the same. That there are different levels of ability is seen by the partitive way that Jesus differentiates between these. We should accept this and not rail that we are not treated the same as others but accept that *“to whom much is given, much is expected”*. If each pursues for themselves to the best of their ability to labour with the tools that we are given (money is a tool) for the furtherance of the glory of God, all will be well, but sadly we do not always so! We need to return to that experience we should all have realised, at least in part, at some stage of our spiritual development. If we feel that we are not currently there at present, perhaps the majority of us feel thus, then we need to get back there as soon as we can. Review how we can do so for ourselves, not looking to tell others what they can do to achieve that necessary goal. More of this is needed! The requirement to *“occupy till I come”* is not stressed by the wayward and false orthodox church.

The third class as those who receive responsibility to labour from their lord but refrain for doing so. They understand that Jesus is a hard and austere man as seen in the little quoted remark of his that – *“but those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me”*. This firm unyielding Christ is different from the picture often painted by those ignorant of what the Bible actually says. He will not allow the foolish to act with impunity. Those who do not recognise this Jesus will not even actually attend, as they have worshipped a false Jesus, and he owes no responsibility to them, to even require them to attend his judgment seat. They will not even be there at all! For this reason, many so called Christians will dismiss Jesus when he returns, as the anti-Christ because they were not called away to judgment.

The man who hid his talent in the earth, was not even prepared to put that talent to usury. It was buried, hidden away and kept from being useful even by others who come into contact with it, the bankers! There is a lesson here, that entrusted with the master's goods, we must keep them on display and even that bare minimum will reap the reward of usury. However, if we are embarrassed by Jesus and turn our backs on him and deny him, then we will also be denied in the presence of the angels.

Some argue that the accusation that the lord was a hard and austere man was unfounded, but in the parable, Jesus embraces this aspect. Acting out of fear rather than love, the foolish man states that *“because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down and reapest that thou did not sow. And he said unto him out of thine mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man taking up that I laid not down and reaping that I did not sow”*. So different a Jesus!

Those who read the Bible and try to understand it will always move away from that deceitful lie that the love and grace of God are unconditional and independent of works because instead, justification is based on faith without works, despite the numerous passages of scripture, like the ones we are considering today, which teach the contrary.

Bankers fulfil an important role in society. They finance the ambitious and the needy with capital for the expansion of business opportunities and the bridging of necessary payments which otherwise would not be possible. They assess risk and price the interest payments to include an element of "bad debt". There is a saying if you have not lost money on a loan, then you have not lent properly and appropriately and therefore assisting in slowing economic activity. Jesus in the parable requires the use of a banker for some of those at the judgment seat. *"Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury"*. During the long time of the gentiles, usury has been a dirty word, a sin, which led to the rise of Jewish money lending of the enforced despising of that people who had been compelled by so called Christian society to take up that role. Jesus would not have approved. He understood the role that bankers play in such matters.

The other aspect of this is that the money loaned to the borrower, still belongs to the lender. The creditor, Jesus, calls it *"my money"*, *"required mine own"*, *"his Lord's money"*. How many borrowers treat the creditor in this way and when perhaps the project fails, forsake the responsibility to the one who lent them the funds, as the money is no longer there! This is irresponsible and an affront to Christ's words. Society has turned this around to make the creditor the villain, and the careless the victim! Jesus will not be pleased if we imbibe the foolishness of this evil world and replicate their standards and not his standards.

In a democracy there are always more debtors than creditors, is the majority right because they outnumber the minority? Of course not! Look at what happens when no one lends to their neighbour, both are reduced in activity and wealth, in lost opportunities if nothing else. It is a fact of life which should not be denied. Cultures which refuse to engage in appropriate debt services suffer, history is clear on that. Merely gifting to others breaks down the element of responsibility and appreciation and when we neglect this it is to our detriment. There is a time and a place for both, but neither should be excluded by a concerned believer. Choosing when to gift and when to lend is not always an easy decision to make.

That rulership and authority over cities are the rewards Jesus talks about, demonstrates the substance of the Kingdom of God/Kingdom of heaven. It is a literal reward easily understood by his hearers and an incentive to serve now. Such rewards on earth, the place to which Jesus will return as that nobleman who is to receive that Kingdom promised, will be appropriate to the spiritual commerce of the rewarded. This also teaches that it is not what we receive that determines our future reward but how much effort we put into serving God that will be decisive! We will not look round to see the most talented disciples ruling over more cities but the most productive disciples having that authority. Merit based on work not talent. This is the way Jesus explains it to his listeners, and the most equitable system ever pronounced to reward God's children.

The aspect of taking away even that he hath is not the action of a cold-hearted despot, but the fair and reasonable response to an absolute dereliction of duty which earns the title of *“wicked servant”*. What was it that this foolish disciple had which could be taken away? It was not his life as what was taken was also given to another (he who had ten pounds) nor was it the gospel, as the one with ten already had that! No, the pound was something like the opportunity of future service, which being removed from one means that others can serve Christ in their stead. Is this a suitable explanation? One with ten cities will serve Christ more in the Kingdom more than one who has five! The fewer the number of these disciples, who do receive the reward, the more service can be rendered by those who remain and avoid the rejection! Does the ratio of the rejected to the approved, one to two, mean that more disciples will receive mercy than not? This is not an implication that we can take from the parable, but this does reverse the ratio of those who receive the seed sown, in the parable of the Sower, where it is three rejected to one approved. It would be a great boon of grace and a delight to the struggling disciple that more of the responsible called will be saved than not, however sadly this seems unlikely from other scriptures including many are called but few are chosen, and the history of the Truth where most who commence the journey turn aside long before they reach the judgment seat!

The Jews appear to be the citizens who hated the nobleman. They did not want Christ to reign over them even thou they were the natural sons of Abraham and therefore the natural citizens in prospect of the Kingdom restored to David. However, they did not even merit being described as servants, even wicked or foolish, because they gave not even lip-service to the Messiah. How sad that Jesus had to regard his fellow countrymen in this way. This is similar to how God regards them because they also hate Him for allowing so many of them to die in the death camps of Europe.

Those who look forward to having authority and rulership over others in the kingdom age, must first learn to exercise self-control over themselves now, as Jesus himself most assuredly did. In Luke 12v37 Jesus promises to serve those servants himself in that glorious future paradise where – *“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find watching, verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them”*. What a man! What an example to others, both now and in the future!