

Talent Show

Giving All We Got

September 4, 2022



Today we're learning lessons about what not to do with what God's given you. So let's start with the question *literally* at the *heart* of the matter: **Are you using the talents God gave you?** Tough question for a Christian. Because a 'yes' means you *will* put in the effort – while a 'no' means God *will* put you out outside His kingdom. But there's gotta be some gray area, *right?* Like last week when we touched on the **parable** of the talents, I had mixed feelings when we kinda *ripped into* the nervous *one-talent* guy who just buried his master's money for fear of doing something wrong. I mean, that seems understandable, *right?*

Well, we're gonna take a closer look, cuz after more digging, I *don't* think the guy gets a fair shake – and I want to make the case that he's *not* as bad as he seems in the story... he's much *worse*. In fact, he's a real *jerk*. So **let's read and see what you think**, Jesus said:

[The kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth [So... *undeserved* or *justice served?*]. - Matthew 25:14-30 NIV

Well, we've been talking about the treasures of truth in God's Word and last week we read part of this parable because it showed how treasure is *handled* in our *heavenly* home; it's *shared!*

Of course, **the surprising part however, is that the sharing is mandatory!** And *somehow*, it's perfectly fair to *punish not-sharing* as a *serious* offense. So, why exactly should we *believe* that Mr. One-talent *deserved* everything he got? Well let's dig for answers; starting with *perspective*.



You see, talents were *not* coins; they were the largest measure of currency in Jesus' day. And a single denarius was given for an average day's wage – but a *talent* was equal to 6000 of them. That means *one talent* was equal to about 6000 *days'* pay or almost 20 *years* of work! **One talent is big money!** And these servants *knew* that. And they *knew* their master. And they *knew* the *business*. **This had opportunity written all over it!** *Because*, there was no middleclass in Jesus' day and the few who had this kind of money *weren't* looking to create *competition* but continue *consolidating* wealth. *This* was a *rare* chance for the servants to *show* what they know and *prove* themselves as prospects for that *elite* class. It'd be like owning the *sole* concession stand at Lumen Field and turning it over to one of your managers for a MNF game. But when you return from vacation you find out they never even opened the doors! Ol' One-talent *knew better!* **He wasn't being safe, he was being lazy!**

And **he wasn't just lazy but wicked and self-centered!** *Because* all the money *was* still at *risk* – if anything happened to this guy, the master's money would've been lost forever. The only difference between him and the other servants was *his* talent had *no* chance for profit. Makes me think of this *English* guy who was out hunting for coins in 2010 when his metal detector gave a "funny signal", and after digging down a foot, unearthed this big clay jar. Well, *something* must've happened to *whoever* hid it – *because* it *still* contained over 50,000 ancient coins that were buried about 250 years after *this* parable! It's worth *millions* now, but back *then*, the coins were worth about four years wages for a Roman soldier. So, consider this: Ol' One-talent buried about five *times* that amount! **I don't care what century you're in – that's gross negligence!**

He not only *deliberately* wasted this golden *opportunity*, but he cares so little about the master who *gave* it, that he's reckless with *his* massive assets. And here's the frosting – after he gets called out for his mistake – he blames *his* behavior on the *master!*

I *knew* that you are a hard man [callous; harsh], harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed [dishonest; corrupt]. - Matthew 25:24 NIV

But that's not how the story goes. Look at the facts; this was a master who **entrusted** his fortunes to servants, **praised them** for their efforts, **rewarded and promoted them**, and then **invited them** to the VIP section to party with the CEO. Ol' One-talent has got it all *conveniently* wrong so he can *justify* what he did by saying, "*I was afraid*".

So the master exposes this excuse as a *lie*, by pointing out the flaw in his logic:

So you *knew* that I harvest where I have *not* sown and gather where I have *not* scattered seed? Well then, you *should have* put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. – Matthew 25:26-27 NIV

If this guy *really* buried it because he was so *afraid* of his ‘*ruthless*’ master – then he would’ve *at least* put it in the bank for *safe* keeping and a *little* return. But *c’mon*, if *that’s* what the master wanted, *he* would’ve done that. *Think man!* **The only reason it was ever in your hands was to give you an opportunity** – and even *if* you really *were* so blinded by fear, why *didn’t* you change your plan when you saw what your co-workers were doing?! *I call shenanigans!* **These actions weren’t a result of fear, but a lack of it!** So, you tell me, did this *lazy, self-centered, wicked* and *reckless liar* deserve to get kicked out? Well *I’m* changing my vote to yes!

But what does that mean for *us*? What *lessons* can we learn from this one-talent *Goofus*? Quite a few actually, and they’re real important for everyone who’s *not* a fan of *weeping* or *gnashing* teeth.

First off, **there’s no such thing as a no-talent servant.** *Each* servant was given *something*. And *likewise*, God’s put big treasures into each of *our* hands. We’ve *all* been entrusted with natural *abilities*, unique *understanding*, timely *situations*, caring *connections*, profitable *possessions*, and rare *opportunities* that allow us to *show* the Master *where* our heart’s at.

The real *question* is, **do you recognize the talents you’ve got as treasure from God that was given with the intention of investing in His heavenly kingdom?** Or are you *burying* what you’ve got to focus on turning a *personal* profit in *earthly* pursuits? Well, just a friendly reminder, but the **only** investments that *matter* are the ones that follow us into *eternity*. So:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working *for the Lord*, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It *is* the Lord Christ you are serving. – Colossians 3:23-24 NIV



He is the Master and we are the servants. And He’s given us *His* talents to see how *we* handle them. Which means keeping them *above* ground and *in* action. And that *does* require some risk – because it means stepping out in faith and facing the possibility of *embarrassment, disappointment, or failure*. But just like the two servants who *didn’t* get chewed out, we can *seize* the opportunity if we keep our eyes on the prize. **We should be eager to grow what we’ve been given when we stay excited to show the One who gave it.** And pay no attention to ol’ One-talent’s take on the Master! Instead, trust *Jesus’* picture of a God who’s *excited* to see *whatever* you got; because that’s *why* He gave it!

So, at *home, work, school*, or right *here* at His Place – risk *something!* Because *One-talent’s* tale also teaches: **God expects a return on His investment!** And on the Day of Accounting – you’ll want to be ready for your *audit* by building the balance where God finds His bottom line. Here’s a hint:

His master replied, “Well done, *good* and *faithful* servant! You have been *faithful* with a few things ...” – Matthew 25:21 NIV

The praise is for their *faith*, not their *results* because **the bottom line is found in our heart, not on a ledger**. That's the *real* return God wants; progress. *Any* improvement means someone seized an opportunity to grow and got *better*. And progress at *any* rate is all an eternally *patient* Master needs. That's why *both faithful* servants received the *same* reward for *different* returns:



I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness! – Matthew 25:23 NIV

God loves to give promotions as our ability *increases*, whatever the amount, so be ready for more *authority, influence, and responsibility*.

But realize those are just *means* to an *end* because the real *reward* is sharing in the *Master's happiness!* Because *that's* something you can't *buy, earn, or make* on your own. No, the *Master's* happiness is completely unique as the *pinnacle* of pleasure. **It's the true joy that comes when serving others in God's name**. And it eludes *us* as long as we chase the *lesser* joy of serving *ourselves* – which we only choose because we don't *naturally* know *His* unique joy and peace that *passes* our *human* understanding... *but we can!*

And if you're still worried about putting yourself out there, remember, in this parable Jesus *doesn't* offer an example of a servant who *uses* his talents *and loses* the master's money. Because that's *not* how it works, *remember?* It's the *faith* that pays off every time. When we risk *our* talents for *God's* kingdom, we *can't* lose! In fact, **the only way we can lose, is to hide our talents or bury them in earthly pursuits**.



Because, our third lesson was already we learned last week: Only the **buried talents are taken away!** Because burying never makes things *better*, only *worse*. Remember **Ms. Belvedere?** *That's* what happens to things kept down here. And the Master knows that, which is why He's giving us the opportunity to learn from Him *before* we learn from *here*.

And that's the simple secret of success for the other *two who* got it right: **Know the Master!** It's only when we *ignore* or *reject* who He really *is* that we treat His entrusted talents carelessly. And that's when we choose to learn the hard way, only gaining the rotting treasures earth has to offer. Which brings us to the last lesson from One-talent's stupid strategy: **Buried talents bring regret and anguish**. Don't forget that the parable *ends* with both encouragement *and* a warning:

Everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 25:29-30 NIV

So, good news or bad news? It's always been up to us. Sadness and *regret* is the *return* in *this* life *and* after it, for *wasting* the incredible opportunities God has given. While joy and excitement is the reward for all progress! And that big day of accounting *is* coming, where we'll show what we *did* with what we were given. So *sure* – it *can* be risky business – but if you just use your God-given talents to turn a *tiny* profit for the kingdom – well, well done faithful servant *it's party time!*