

# The Great Treasure

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At the end of the parable of the ten wedding maids, Jesus said, “Afterward the other [foolish wedding maids] came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Mt. 25:11-13) Here are the five foolish wedding maids, those who had not had enough oil to maintain their vigilant wait for the bridegroom and who had been forced to run off to find those who sell oil, being summarily dismissed (see Mt. 25:9-10) – as will be those who do not watch and remain ready for the return of Christ, the Son of Man, but who must run off to find some man or woman (their “pastor,” “apostle,” “prophet,” “worship leader,” “elder” or whatever title their “spiritual guru” uses) in order to have their lamps refueled with the power of the Holy Spirit (whether for a genuine refueling or a counterfeit, the result is the same – they are gone when the Bridegroom comes). This *is* the point of this parable.

But Jesus did not stop there. He went on to give another parable that He directly connected to the parable of the ten wedding maids. In other words, Jesus gave the first parable as a warning about our need to be watchful and ready and then goes on to give a second parable as a further explanation of being ready. Jesus said:

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability;

Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, “Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.” His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”

He also who had received two talents came and said, “Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.” His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.” But his lord answered and said to him, “You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown,

and gather where I have not scattered seed. Therefore you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt. 25:14-30)

For any who might doubt that the context of these teachings is the time of the return of Christ, consider that the very next verse goes on to say, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.” (Mt. 25:31) But let us press on to the main point of this parable.

Some have seen the multitudes of disputes over the parables of the Lord Jesus and what the various features of the parables might mean and leave us with no strategy whatsoever for implementing or applying the meaning of Jesus’ parables. If we allow the many arguments and disputes to keep us from understanding Jesus’ meaning, we must then clip the parables out of the Bible and pretend they’re not there. The disciples, ordinary men taught by the Spirit of truth, understood the parables (Mt. 13:51) – why is it so difficult for modern men learned in Hebrew, Greek, homiletics, hermeneutics and “theology” to understand the parables? Jesus clearly said that the parables were intended for those who were outside His kingdom: “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables.” (Mk. 4:11) Anyone who doesn’t understand the parables (from the mind of Christ) can only be understood to be outside of Christ’s kingdom. Our only other alternative is to dismiss Jesus as a liar or as one deceived about His own teaching.

Let us consider the “cast of characters” in this parable of the talents:

- The lord of the servants. Clearly this is the Lord Jesus Christ. He physically left this world two thousand years ago and has promised to return in the same manner of His departure. (Acts 1:11) In Luke’s equivalent to Matthew’s parable of the talents, Jesus expresses this truth by calling the lord of the servants a “certain nobleman” who went off to “receive for himself a kingdom.” (Lk. 19:12) Simply put, He *is* the Master (Jn. 13:13) and this parable refers to the King, Christ Jesus.

- The master’s goods measured in talents. In Luke’s equivalent, Jesus uses “minas” instead of talents. (see Lk. 19:13) A mina was worth about three months’ wages whereas a talent, being a weight and not a specific coin or value, was worth perhaps as much as 10 years’ wages. What does Christ give us that would be comparable to this large sum given to servants who were then required to responsibly increase their master’s wealth? To suppose that this parable teaches anything about money is short-sighted and foolish indeed. Paul wrote that the great treasure we carry about in our earthen vessels is the light and glory of Christ and God so that we should radiate with the presence, authority and power of God Himself. (2 Cor. 4:6-7) Paul also wrote, “I have been crucified with

Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) Christ gave His life on the cross and now gives us His life to live out from our innermost being. (see also Jn. 7:38) “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal. 5:22-23) This is the direct result of His Spirit indwelling within us. (also see Rom. 8:11, Eph. 3:16, etc.) The only satisfactory answer to the question of what the minas and talents represent is His *life* given to and implanted within us. (also see Jas. 1:21) Though the “church” wants to spin these parables off as teaching the responsible handling of *money*, in reality these parables teach the *necessity* of responsibly handling the life of Christ so as to prevent our losing the life that He gives, (see Lk. 19:26, Mt. 25:29 – “...even what he has will be *taken away*.”) These parables, when seen in their true light, are a somber warning indeed.

- The servant who received five talents. This servant is surely representative of those who have received the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who “have tasted the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come...” (Heb. 6:4-5) Such as these have a great responsibility to live their lives responsibly in accordance with their God-given abilities so as to be entitled to receive God’s eternal “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Mt. 25:21)

- The servant who received two talents. When Paul lists the standards by which all men will be judged, he says that God “will render to each one according to his deeds, [giving] eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – [He will bestow] indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but [He will give] glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.” (Rom. 2:6-11) I would suggest (but not insist) that the servant who receives two talents is representative of those who never hear the gospel of Jesus Christ but who, perhaps from what they see of God in creation (see Rom. 1:20) grope blindly after God (see Acts 17:27) and pursue that which is beyond their reach. Those whom God will deem faithful to this standard (whatever it may prove to be) are equally entitled to God’s eternal “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Mt. 25:23)

- The servant who received one talent. These too are those who have received the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who at least to some measure “have tasted the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come...” (Heb. 6:4-5) Such as these also have a great responsibility but do not live their lives responsibly in accordance with their God-given abilities and so are summarily dismissed. This category will surely include all those who received the gospel but

then returned to the world but it will also include those who used “theological” deceptions (like hyper-grace, where “grace” gives license to sin) to excuse their flesh. In this parable, Jesus gives the idea of “depositing [the lord’s] money with the bankers” so that at least he “would have received back [his] own with interest” (Mt. 25:27) but neither in this parable nor anywhere else in the New Testament do we find this “bare minimum” approach to life in Christ detailed or advocated. Rather, as has always been true of those who would love God, we are to love Him with all that we are, have and do. (see Mt. 22:37) In the end, the master (who represents Christ) says, “Take the talent [the treasure that is Christ and God] from him, and give it to him who has ten talents...and cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt. 25:28, 30) Whatever quantity of the light and life of Christ this third type receives, he, the servant, is held responsible for making it increase and grow – if he does not do so, he will be summarily and eternally dismissed. It would not be wise, to say the least, to gamble that any half-hearted approach to life in Christ will equate to having “deposited the money with the bankers so as to at least gain interest” on the Lord’s investment! Quibble all you want or apply all the “theological” spins you wish – but this *is* what Jesus said.

Two Bible scholars wrote:

“The study of the parables with the aid of insights from modern linguistics and semantics has shown that [the parables] are not simply ways of conveying information in an attractive form. They have a variety of logical forms and functions. Very often their aim is to jolt the audience into seeing things from a new point of view and to be the actual means of bringing them into a new situation. The parables were meant to force people to *decide* about their attitude to Jesus and His message and thus to bring them into a new relationship with Him. They have been described as ‘language-events’: *i.e.* they are the form which the kingdom of God takes in the sphere of language. Through the parables the kingly rule of God comes to men with its promises, judgments, demands and gifts.” (T.V.G. Tasker and I.H. Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* 1985, p. 878)

The idea that we ought not even attempt to say “this means that” because “the Lord did not give us the right to say so” is completely unscriptural. Jesus said that those who build on rock or sand were like those who heard His words and *did* or *did not* do what He said. (Mt. 7:24-27) Further Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:31-32) And He told His disciples that the Spirit of truth would lead them into *all* truth. (Jn. 14:26, 16:13) If anyone abides in (remains, dwells, lives in and according to) Christ’s word (doctrine, teaching) instead of some man’s word (whether that be a “theologian” of Calvin or Luther’s caliber or just one’s own preferred set of “doctrines” and “theology”), such a one would know the truth and the truth would make him free. Our only other option is that we must dismiss Jesus as a liar.

It is not enough to believe that the parables only lead us to some “moral of the story” that illustrates some principle that will improve our life. This way of interpreting any of Christ’s parables cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament - but we do find that being led into *all*

truth by the Spirit of truth is! (Note well that He does not say “some” nor “most” nor “little” but *all* truth – and He certainly does not say we will be led by His Spirit into the contradictory doctrines and traditions and “theologies” of mere men! – Jn. 16:13) Or was Jesus just kidding? Why do we cling to any methodology that comes from some “pastor” school or some carnal “church”?

The parables are not meant to be misunderstood any more than they are meant to be understood by men pursuing truth by carnal means. If we don’t understand the parables as was intended in the mind of Christ but we have instead bought into some man’s teachings and we know only this carnal method of “interpretation,” then we do not and even *cannot* know the truth and we are not free. We are bound by the doctrines of men and will always be unable to participate in the unity of the Spirit. (Eph. 4:3) We are doomed to have a false and counterfeit “fellowship” with Nicolaitans, Pharisees, Laodiceans, etc. and we will call that “Christianity” and we will wonder why so many flee from the putrid smell of death that surrounds us. But we will not have the sweet savor of the life of Christ attending us. At best, we will have dual streams of power – fleshly, even demonic, elements as well as divine elements – coming forth from our lives.

The lesson of the parables of the minas and talents is not a story of the “haves” and the “have-nots.” Each servant was initially given a portion of the lord’s resources. And Jesus clearly says, “*even what he has* [however much or little that may be in comparison to other men] will be taken from him.” (Mt. 25:29) The story is about *everyone* who has been given something from the Lord and those who have added more of Him to their life and the lives of those around them will receive even more from the Lord. But from him who has not added more fruit and increase, *even what he has* will be taken from him. We must be careful that we are not mistaken about what even “the moral of the story” is!

Those who would say that the Lord Jesus is addressing those who are outside and have never even entered in at the gate, those who have never come to Christ at all even though they heard His teachings, are mistaken. Whether they know it or not, it is precisely here that they add their own interpretation, using a methodology gleaned largely from Calvin who “institutionalized” the Christian religion and who, in so doing, departed, to some degree, from the way of personally following the Spirit of truth by creating doctrines (its) that reduce and even remove our need for *Him*, Christ’s Spirit of truth – and this is done simply to bolster their false notions about “eternal security.” Calvin held that “the elect can never finally fall from grace,” building off of Augustine who believed that anyone who was baptized was regenerated – but even Augustine also recognized that many of those who were physically baptized became ultimately lost eternally. Augustine preached a “grace of perseverance” which one must also receive and practice or be lost eternally. It was Calvin who perfected the arrogant, untouchable elitism of “the elect.” The New Testament is simply too full of evidence of our ability to resist, quench, lie to and reject the Spirit of God (Acts 7:51, 1 Ths. 5:19, Acts 5:3, Mk. 7:9) to blindly write off and dismiss our innate and ingrained ability to neglect and walk away from the great treasure that God has given us in Christ. Even Judas Iscariot received of the grace of God – he too believed that Christ was the Messiah – but in the end was doomed to perdition. (Jn. 17:12)

Peter warned, “By whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But

it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” (2 Pet. 2:19-22) Failure to properly recognize the meaning of these verses to our own lives can encourage the negligence and carelessness that will cause us to return to our condition before we received life and light from Christ. If we have escaped the pollutions of this world by coming to know Christ but are then again entangled and overcome, it will be worse for us than if we never knew Christ. This is what the New Testament says and it will not do us any good to pretend that it says otherwise. It is our responsibility to make the life and light of Christ that He gives us increase – to pretend otherwise is to bury His light and life in the very ground He originally cursed and to demand that He receive the works of our hands as if they were holy and sacred instead of cursed and abominable. This is the way of Cain! (Jude 11) If we persist in dismissing Christ’s plain truths as set forth in His parables, excusing them away as unexplainable and unknowable (which they are when one uses carnal and merely intellectual means to grasp truth but they are not at all unreachable when one submits to God’s spiritual power and grace), then we run great risk of burying His great treasure under our own flesh (that very thing He came to kill and destroy) and requalifying ourselves for His judgment. And if we carelessly and negligently squander that great treasure that Christ has placed within us on our own lusts and desires, then we ought not be surprised that He summarily dismisses us on the last day. That many will be surprised (see Mt. 7:21-23) simply shows the depth of depravity that is the result of the fall of man. This is the ultimate message put forth in the parable of the talents: with great treasure comes great responsibility.

Let he who has ears hear.

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