

## Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

### Parable #45 — Matthew 25:14-30 — Three servants given talents

<sup>14</sup>“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup>So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

<sup>19</sup>“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>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.’

<sup>21</sup>“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!’

<sup>22</sup>“The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup>“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!’

<sup>24</sup>“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. <sup>25</sup>So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup>“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? <sup>27</sup>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.

<sup>28</sup>“ ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Parable #45 — Matthew 25:14-30 — Three servants given talents

1. What are your five best traits or greatest attributes?
2. In Verse 25:14, the word “it” refers to the kingdom of heaven. To what did Jesus liken it in this parable?
3. On what basis did the master decide to give different amounts of money to each of the three servants? What was a talent worth? How did the word “talent” come to mean an ability, skill, or aptitude?
4. We looked at a similar parable (#37) of the servants and minas in Luke 19:12-27 a few weeks ago. What are the similarities and the differences?
5. There are four important elements in this parable: time, money, work, and profit. That seems pretty worldly. What can we say about each element?
6. The master says three things to reward each of the first two servants. They are:
7. What is the main characteristic of the third servant that differentiates him from the first two?
8. What was the third servant’s excuse for not investing his talent? How did the master respond to his explanation? (25:24-28)
9. What was the ultimate outcome of the third servant?
10. God rejoices in his servants making a profit. What does a *profit* mean to God?
11. Is it important to God how much talent you have? (2 Corinthians 8:10-12)
12. Where are you able to invest your talents (money and abilities)? What people can benefit most from the talents you have?
13. Can you summarize this parable *as to what it means to you today* in a sentence or two?

3. The talents were apportioned to them on the basis of their abilities. There is no agreement among Biblical scholars as to the worth of a talent. Nave says in 1 Kings 9 and 10 it is a weight equal to 3,000 shekels, about 125 pounds. In Exodus 38 it seems to be worth 6,000 pounds of gold (\$29,000 in 1974, \$81 million in 2009), while in Matthew it is 400 pounds (\$1,940 in 1974 or \$5.4 million in 2009). The NIV study Bible puts it at 75 pounds (about \$1 million). Bob Deffinbaugh of Bible.org, Richard J. Krejcir, and others value it as 20 years wages for a common laborer. SermonCentral says a talent was worth more than \$1,000. Rabbi Eliezer Posner (AskThe Rabbi) says it is worth 3,000 shekels or \$30,000. Okay, so a talent is worth something between \$1,000 and \$81 million; let's just say a very large amount of money. And note, in Jesus' parable the word "talent" referred to money and not a talent (aptitude, ability, skill) or spiritual gift, although that may well be the parallel for us today.

The word "talent" is derived from the Greek word *talanton*, which means "balance, sum, weight." So, in fact, the basic root of the word talent as used today to denote the capacity of achievement, success, or ability was originally a unit of weight or money for the payment for goods and services in the ancient world.

4. The similarities between the parable in Matthew 25 and this parable in Luke's Gospel are easily seen:

- \* Man goes to another country, stays a long time, and then returns.
- \* Man gives resources to servants, expecting them to make a profit in his absence.
- \* First two servants are faithful; they are praised by their master and are given greater authority.
- \* Third servant hides what was entrusted to him.
- \* Third servant seeks to excuse himself by accusing his master of being harsh.
- \* Third servant claims that he was afraid of his master.
- \* Third servant does not make a profit for his master.
- \* First two servants are commended and go to heaven; the third is condemned and goes to hell.
- \* Master tells unfaithful servant that he should have put the money in the bank.
- \* Money that was given to the third (unfaithful) servant is taken away and given to the faithful servant who gained the most for his master.

While the parable in Luke is similar to our parable in Matthew 25, there are some significant differences:

- \* Parable in Luke is told when Jesus was near Jerusalem, before His triumphal entry; in Matthew, Jesus tells the parable in Jerusalem, a few days later.
- \* In Luke there are ten servants; in Matthew, there are only three.

\* In Luke, the man who went away is a nobleman who leaves to obtain a kingdom; in Matthew, no such information is given.

\* In Luke, the master gives each servant the same amount of money (one mina); in Matthew, talents are given to the three servants according to their ability.

\* In Luke, the slaves are instructed to “do business” with the money; no such statement is found in Matthew (though we can rightly make this inference).

\* In Luke is there another group, in addition to the master’s servants – those who don’t want this man to become their king, and who send a message asking him not to return. These rebels are slaughtered.

\* In Luke, we are told that the reason for the parable was to correct the misconception that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately; no such reason is stated in Matthew.

5. *Time* has been a significant factor in Jesus’ teaching concerning His coming and the end of the age, beginning in chapter 24. Jesus made it clear that His return would not be immediate, but after much trouble and the passing of a considerable period of time. While there would be signs to discern the general “season” of His return, neither the day nor the hour would be known. Beyond this, His return would come at a time when it was not expected

*Money.* This parable tells us that both believers and unbelievers are entrusted with certain things, and that they must give account for their stewardship. Basically all men are accountable to God for how they use (or do not use) those resources which God has entrusted to them.

*Work.* Both the first and second servants immediately set to work with the master’s money. It is not the money that goes to work, as such, but the worker. When the third servant’s excuses are set aside, it becomes evident that this man is lazy – he didn’t do any work.

*Profit.* Those who work with what they are entrusted, in order to make a profit for their master, are rewarded for their faithfulness. Those who are unfaithful lose not only their reward, but their stewardship. Interestingly, we find this same principle stated in connection with the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18). The soil which produces no grain (in other instances, no fruit, or no profit) is bad soil. Only the soil that produces a crop is “good” soil.

6. First, they receive their master’s commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Second, because they have proven themselves to be faithful with the few things entrusted to them, they are now given even greater responsibilities by their master. Third, they are invited to “enter into the joy of your master,” which would seem to be the salvation of lost sinners.

7. In a word, the third slave is *lazy*, and thus useless, as opposed to being hard-working, and therefore useful. He does not “go to work” with his master’s money, over a lengthy period of time, and thus make a profit. He does no work for a lengthy period of time and thus is useless.

10. If we were to make an equation of this parable, it would probably go like this:

Resources (talents) + Labor (work) + Time = Profit

Just as a businessman expects to make a profit, and rejoices when his employees increase his wealth, so God expects a profit and rejoices in it. He has granted the time and the resources for men to make a profit for the kingdom of heaven, until He returns. The question for us to consider is this: Just how do we measure “spiritual profit”?

I think we could all agree that the salvation of lost souls is a profit for the kingdom. Thus, *evangelism* is one form of spiritual profit.

Ephesians 4:11-13 says <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Thus, we can safely conclude that *edification or spiritual growth* is also profitable for the kingdom of heaven.

Most importantly, bringing glory to God is profitable. Let’s call this aspect of profit *exaltation*. “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

11. It is not how much talent one has, but how one uses it that is important to God. It is not how many gifts that God gives to a person, it is what one does with them.

13. This parable insists that watchfulness must not lead to passivity, but to doing one’s God-given duties. Everyone has received gifts according to their ability and what they make of these gifts is what counts in the end. We must be learning, growing, carrying out our responsibilities and developing the resources that God entrusts to us until He returns and settles accounts. As in the earlier parables, we see a progression in the theme of being prepared for Christ’s return, with each parable having a different nuance in its lesson.

Some of the above commentary is by Bob Deffinbaugh of [www.Bible.org](http://www.Bible.org).