



# WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT?

**BY SHAUN HICKEY**

## THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (Matthew 25:14-30 – NKJV)

*"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* The words every servant of Jesus Christ is looking forward to hearing when they pass from this world into eternal glory with Almighty God. Oh, the blessed reward awaiting those who have forsaken their lives and taken up their cross to follow Jesus (the True and Living God).

### *Are great rewards available to everyone?*

I remember a *good and faithful servant* of God (Salvation Army Major) saying to me, ***"Some people think the door to heaven is dying."***

Many assume this is true. I did not come from a Christian background, and have attended many funerals of unbelievers, and of those who deliberately detest Christ through their lives and actions. But a common phrase shared by fellow unbelievers in attendance is, *"We will see you in heaven soon."*

Now for those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ will know that such an assumption is incorrect; that dying is not the door to heaven. As the *word of God* tells us the only door into heaven is Jesus Christ, who said, ***"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved..."*** (John 10:9).

Jesus Christ is the eternal door of salvation, and we are saved by grace, through faith in the blood Jesus shed on the cross to wash away our sin. There are no *works* that can earn our way into heaven, our salvation is a *pure gift* from God:

- *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8)
- *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:23-24).

Through Jesus Christ we are blessed with immense grace and mercy, but we cannot be like the unbeliever who sits back *assuming* heaven awaits *anyone*, and carry a similar assumption that every believer will automatically receive a blessed ***"Well done, good and faithful servant!"*** when they go home to be with Jesus. The Scriptures say something quite different...

## **The Parable of the Talents...**

Let us look at the *Parable of the Talents*. A parable given to illustrate the Gospel dispensation; the time between Jesus' ascension and His glorious second coming:

**MATTHEW 25:14** ~ *"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."*

- The *man* in this verse is Jesus Christ
- The *far country* is heaven
- *His own servants* are those who have been called, commissioned, ordained, qualified, and sent by Christ
- *His goods* are the treasures of heaven; the Gospel, divine truths, revelation, authority, power, and spiritual gifts; *"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."* (Ephesians 4:8)

**MATTHEW 25:15-18** ~ *"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. <sup>16</sup> Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. <sup>17</sup> And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup> But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money."*

- A *talent* was a unit of weight, weighing approximately 35-36kg. When used as a unit of currency, a talent was an extraordinary amount of money, believed to be equal to 6,000 denarii. We read in Matthew 20:2 that one day's wage was equal to one denarius. So, one talent was equal to 16 years wages.

The *talents* in this parable refer to the value in the goods (gifts) that had been committed to their trust. These *talents* are ministerial gifts (*goods*) that qualify men to be preachers of the Gospel of Christ.

The *talents* were not distributed evenly among these three people, but at the discretion of the giver (Jesus Christ). Each person received a specific portion that Jesus knew would best serve and glorify the Kingdom of God. It was then up to the receiver to produce fruit from the investment (talent).

As servants of God, we have all been given a portion of His *talents* (goods). Today we could associate them with the *gifts of the Spirit* and the *five-fold ministry gifts*. The *gifts of the Spirit* are resident in the Holy Spirit, and He distributes to each individual as He wills (See 1 Corinthians 12:11).

### **Gifts of the Spirit:**

- Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of healings, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues (See 1 Corinthians 12:4-10)

### **Five-Fold Ministry Gifts:**

- Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers (See Ephesians 4:11)

**Also note 1 Corinthians 12:28** ~ *"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues"*

Based on the *Parable of the Talents*, these gifts have immense value, and it is up to the servant to do what they can to produce fruit from what they have received. Because this parable also describes a day coming when every person will be held to account for what they had been trusted with:

- *“After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them”* (Matthew 25:19).

**After a long time...** God has given plenty of time for those genuine in their labor, to exercise their gifts and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. All while giving plenty of time to those who are lazy and lukewarm with their gifts to be void of any excuse before Him; they have been given time to do the work.

- *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8).

Let us see what happens when the lord of the servants returns...

#### ***The man who was given five talents:***

**MATTHEW 25:20-21** ~ *“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.’<sup>21</sup> 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.’”*

- This man was given the greatest of talents (gifts)
- He labored hard to ensure fruit was produced
- He had confidence in his service when the lord of the servants returned
- He knew what he had been given (he owned his gift), and knew what he had produced; he was fruitful with what he had been given
- The lord was pleased with the *return* made through the assigned talents
- He received commendation from the lord: *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*
- He was promised greater responsibility and authority.

#### ***The man who was given two talents:***

**MATTHEW 25:22-23** ~ *“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.’<sup>23</sup> His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

- This man had received less talents (gifts)
- He still brought increase to what he had been given – no lesser increase than the man who had been given more
- He too had confidence in his service when the lord returned
- He received the same commendation from the lord: *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*
- He too was promised greater responsibility and authority.

*SIDE NOTE: We are all graced in different way. Some may have received greater gifts, some lesser gifts. But we all have received the grace and opportunity to bear fruit with what we have been given. The good news is, we are judged according to the fruit produced from what Jesus has given us. Like*

the testimony of “The Widows Mite” (See Mark 12:41-44), Jesus saw that she had given more out of her poverty, than those from their wealth.

### **The man who was given one talent:**

**MATTHEW 25:24-30** ~ “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. <sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

<sup>26</sup> “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. <sup>27</sup> So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

- This man received the less of all the talents; but he was still accountable for them
- He neglected his talent; he did not value his talent
- He pretended he knew the Lord, but had a corrupted view of the character of the Lord
- He was living in disobedience.
- There was no conviction in his heart, and was full of excuses
- He was earthbound, lazy, lukewarm, even cold in his service to the Lord
- His lack of fruit proved he was not a true servant
- He received no reward and was cast out into darkness – whereas the faithful servants entered the joy of their lord.

This man was given *one talent*. Like the other two he was to be judged on what he produced from what he was given. He was not going to be judged on five or two talents; only the *one talent* he had received. Unfortunately, unlike the two men who used their *talents* to produce great fruit for the kingdom, this man took his one and only talent and buried it in the earth.

Now, If he took the same amount of time and effort required to *bury his talent* in the earth, and applied it to digging a bit deeper into the things of God, then he would have produced a return on what he was given, and would be in a position to enjoy the blessings that would have come with it; as the others did.

### **How can we relate to this today?**

- Everyone in Christ have been given at least one *talent* (gift)
- Some have an intimate relationship with Jesus, using their gift to serve Him; they have a Kingdom focused heart with a desire to please Him
- Others are void of passion and bury their gift in the ground. Having a fleshly focus, they have been caught-up in serving their selfish worldly desires. They refuse to serve the Lord, and in doing so have ultimately denied Him, and are living in disobedience.
- Some people are *in the house*, but do not actually *know the Lord of the house*, who is the Giver of good gifts (See James 1:17), otherwise *they would* have a heart to serve Him
- We will all be judged accordingly – not by what others are given, but by what we are given.

### ***Additional attributes of being a good and faithful servant:***

#### ***Being a **good** servant is someone who:***

- Loves the Lord with all their heart (See Matthew 22:37)
- Overcomes evil by doing good (See Romans 12:21)
- Trusts in the Lord (See Psalm 37:3)
- Loves kindness and walks humbly (See Micah 6:8)

#### ***Being a **faithful** servant is someone who:***

- Can be trusted with what God has trusted them with (See Luke 16:10-12)
- Is loyal and reliable - God knows who He can rely on
- Preaches Christ (See 1 Corinthians 2:2)
- Is obedient (See Luke 6:46; John 14:15)
- Walks in faith (See Hebrews 11:6)

#### ***A **servant** is someone who:***

- Serves God, not money (See Luke 16:13)
- Follows Jesus anywhere (See John 12:26)
- Is humble and looks out for the interest of others (See Philippians 2:3-11)
- Puts others first (See Mark 9:35)

### ***Producing fruit:***

People who produce fruit for the Kingdom of God are those who take what they have been given and invest their time and efforts into them. Their hearts are for the Kingdom and have a heart to please the Lord, who gave the *gift* in the first place.

- *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”* (Ephesians 4:7)

#### ***People who are fruitful for the Lord are those who:***

- Seek first His Kingdom (See Matthew 6:33)
- Deny themselves of fleshly desires and follow the Lord (See Matthew 16:24)
- Walk in a manner worthy of God (See Colossians 1:10)
- Have an intimate relationship with Jesus (See Jeremiah 17:7-8)
- Walk in faith (See Hebrews 11:6)
- Let their light shine before men (See Matthew 5:16)
- Are generous towards others (See Proverbs 19:17; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:7)

#### ***Those who actively serve Christ will be rewarded:***

- *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”* (Colossians 3:23-24)
- *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”* (Galatians 6:9)

- *“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.’” (Matthew 25:21)*

***Those who are called, yet refuse to serve and produce fruit for Christ, will suffer the consequences:***

- *“Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:24-30)*

***A challenging parable...***

I find the *Parable of the Talents* really confronting. Many people assume they will receive a *“Well done, good and faithful servant”* when they come before the Lord Jesus Christ, but this parable clearly describes quite a different picture, and we need to take what Jesus said very seriously.

For those of us who are in Christ, we have all been given at least one *talent* from the Lord, and in respects to this parable, the questions I ask myself are:

- Am I using my *talent* (gift) for the growth of the Kingdom?
- Have I drifted off track and my true focus is building bigger barns for myself?
- Have I fallen into assumption?
- Do I have a distorted view of Christ?
- Am I *in the house*, yet far from *serving the Lord of the House*?
- Am I in a good place with Jesus?
- Am I earthbound, or Kingdom focused?

If you have joined me in answering these questions truthfully and feel a conviction from the answers of your heart, then it is not too late to make some changes and get back on track.

***It is not too late...***

***Turn and repent from self-centeredness:***

- *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)*

***No longer neglect the gift God has given you:***

- *“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” (1 Timothy 4:14)*
- *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Timothy 1:6)*

***Start using what God has given, to serve others:***

- *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10)*

- *“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17)*

***Know by faith that when you focus on Christ and serve His Kingdom, God will supply all your needs:***

- *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)*

***It is time to Go forth and bear the fruit you were called for:***

- *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)*

### ***Closing...***

A few points to enforce...

***We are not saved by our works; it is through the perfect loving grace of God that we have been saved:***

- *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8)*

***Saving grace is only available through Jesus Christ (the True and Living God), and the blood He shed on the cross:***

***When we receive new life in Jesus Christ, we receive forgiveness of our sins, eternal hope, and deep love that releases overwhelming joy in a person. To be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ is a miraculous transformation.***

- *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14)*
- *“...there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)*

***We are saved by the grace of God; our works cannot eternally save us! However, Scripture says that our faith should be backed up by works:***

- *“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20)*

We should not be driven by works, but if we have genuine faith and love for Jesus, we should naturally desire to serve, and please Him.

***It is through our works (the using of our talents) that we prove our faith and love for Jesus. We also prove our love for Jesus through obedience:***

- *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)*



- *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. <sup>24</sup>He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’”* (John 14:23-24)

**Do you love your family, partner, or children so deeply, that it generates a natural blessing to serve them?**

Well the same can be said for serving Jesus. If you are truly *born again* of His Spirit (See John 3:1-18) and carry the love of God in your heart, then your automatic response should be to serve Him, and produce fruit through the *talents* (gifts) He has given you. After all, He paid the ultimate price for your salvation and new life in Him. So why would you not want to serve Him?

**To put it bluntly, *if you refuse to serve Jesus, you must question your relationship with Him, and assess the state of your salvation:***

- Are you truly saved?
- Are you Kingdom focused, or self-focused?
- Are you only focused on earthly things, like the man with one *talent* who Jesus eventually called a *wicked and lazy servant*?

In reading the Parable of the Talents I am deeply challenged, and hope you are too, because everyone will be accountable for what they have been trusted with. You may not have received as much as the next person, but you will still be held to account for the portion you have received from Jesus Christ.

**EPHESIANS 2:10** ~ *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

**Additional Scriptures to consider:**

- *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup>“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”* (John 15:4-8)
- *“...the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)
- *“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”* (Matthew 7:20)
- *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21)

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