

November 19, 2017

## **Parable of the Talents, How Do We Perceive God**

### PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee, O Lord our strength and our redeemer.

AMEN

### SERMON

Anytime I would study the parables of Jesus, you find that there are different levels to the parables. Certainly, if you've been studying them for a long time and preaching on them for a long time, you find many different aspects of the parables to preach on. This particular parable of the servants and the talents, no different. Different levels. Certainly, one can use this parable as a good stewardship sermon material. Would've been helpful to have had that five weeks ago when I was trying to preach a stewardship sermon. Would've fit right in there.

We also can look at the different servants and what they received, they weren't all the same. They were given according to their abilities. A good way to look at, we are not all the same. We've all been given different abilities, and that's part of God's plan. We are not all meant to be equal and the same in that way. We are equal and the same in the way that God loves and cares for us. But that doesn't mean that we all have to have the same gifts and talents.

It's important to remember as we look at the parable, what's the purpose? What is Jesus trying to teach? What is he trying to show? Sometimes it's about how people are obeying the law. In this one Jesus is very clear and specific according to Matthew, what the kingdom of Heaven is like. So this is a teaching on the kingdom of Heaven, the very center point of Jesus' ministry. Trying to get the people to hear and

understand and to see in him what the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of God is about. And to extend an invitation to his listeners, to become a part of that kingdom.

Now as we get into the parable, different abilities, different amounts, what's the outcome? What goes on? The master leaves for an extended period. When he comes back, the one who receives five talents has put his trust in a good master. He tries to do his best to honor the master with the trust that he showed him in giving the talents, leaving him on his own. And so, he worked hard, I've traded to increase that to ten. And he has been accepted. Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been good about this little bit, trustworthy, enter into the joy of your master.

And the second, same thing. He trusted the goodness of the master. The trust that the master had put in him, in giving him the two talents, now he has worked hard as well. It's what he wants to do to honor the one who had put trust in him. And so, he comes forward and has also doubled what he has received. He has increased that. And again, he is received into the joy of his master.

Then we have the third, this one has a whole different perspective on the master. Well master I knew you to be a harsh man. That you reap where you don't sow. Bring in where you haven't scattered the seed. And I was afraid, didn't want to disappoint you because I figured you would punish me severely. And so, I took what you gave me, I hid it away. I dug it up here, it's yours again. We're all square.

Master isn't very happy with that. He doesn't say yes or no about how he is perceived by that servant. He simply repeats what has been said to him. So, you knew that I was a harsh master. You knew that I received where I didn't scatter, where I didn't sow but got the produce. You should have at least done this, at the very least, to appease the

master even if you are afraid. Even if you think the master is harsh and he is asking something of you that he has no right to ask. You should have at least put it with the bankers and I could have at least gotten what was my own with interest. But you wouldn't even do that. And so, he is punished. Perception. This parable is about how we perceive God as much as it is about how God trusts and loves us.

Now, I've been in ordained ministry for a long time. And certainly, have come across a number of people who think about God the same way that the last servant thought about the master. They're afraid of God. There's a fear of God. They have a perception that God has put them in a situation that they can't possibly win. Put us in this world and then demands things of us without any proof that he loves us or cares for us. Simply tells us, thou shalt do this or thou shalt not do that. And there is built up in some people a fear of who this God might be. And so instead of trying to live and love and honor this God, they hide away. They draw away. They even sometimes believe that there is no God. That it's safer to do that.

That if I ignore the fact or the idea that there is a God that has created, redeemed, sustains life in creation. Then maybe I can be ignored by God. I can live my life on my own. I can bury my treasure in the ground. And if there happens to be a God, God will get what God gave. And has no right to expect anything more. That's one way of you and God and I've seen it many times. People who are afraid that there might be God. And that God is watching, waiting for the individual to step out of the lines. To not fulfill the law, to not do all that God demands. Not ask but demands all that we do and is just waiting to punish us.

We even get some of that in the Old Testament. I don't know how many times I've heard over the years. You know there's the God in the Old Testament and he's wrathful and he's unhappy with humanity. It's

amazing that any of us survives. You get a sense of that in Zephaniah, the prophet, who says why are you looking forward to the day of the Lord. It's not all light and happiness, it's a day of darkness and gloom. But not for everybody. For those who turn away from God, for those who sin and make that their life. Make that their focus if you will. To be apart from God, even when God invites them to come home, invites them to be a part. The very same kind of invitation that Jesus is offering to his listeners.

This is about the kingdom of God. What God wants is not for you to be afraid. But to understand and trust God. To love God in just a reflection of how God loves you. To recognize that God has given us who we are and what we are with the hope that we can become even more. With the hope that we can so share the gifts that God has given us. So that everyone might come to that perception of God not as one to fear but one to love, to embrace, to understand and trust. To live a life that reflects what God has given to us. The justice, the mercy, the love, the compassion that God has shown to creation, and to humanity wants us to receive and accept that as the talents given to the servants. And then use that, make that part of who we are. We can then share that with one another. So that the perceptions of others who have come to fear God, might come to love God. Because that's what God's kingdom is about. That's what it is to be a part of God's kingdom.

To trust the master that loves us and puts so much trust in us. Here I've given you according to your abilities. And all I ask is that you go out and you use those abilities. The gifts that I've given you to share that good news, that gospel. To show people the love of God so that they can put aside the idea of fear. And embrace that understanding of love and caring. That invitation to come and be a part. To come and share in the joy of your master in this world and in the world to come.

Is that an imposition? Is that a demand of a master who is harsh? Is that a demand of one who reaps where he doesn't sow? He brings in where he hasn't scattered seeds. He has scattered all the seed, he has made all of it possible. He simply asks us to live according to that understanding of creation where each is given life. And life is redeemed, and life is sustained so that we can live together in a peace and a joy that only God can offer. That only God can make real as it becomes real in each one of us and shared with one another. As citizens of God's kingdom, we are called not to be afraid, not to fear the one who loves us and cares for us. To go out and multiply the invitation. To go out and multiply the seed. To go out and multiply the joy, the understanding of God is love so that God may say to each of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been trustworthy in a little, come into the joy of your master."

Father Gregory Hein – Rector

Renee' Evans – Transcriber