

A Call to a Faithful Service

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 25:14-30
Preached on: Sunday, January 1, 2017

As we come to our time in the word this morning, I would invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25, and we are going to be looking at one of Jesus' parables in verses 14 through 30. Matthew 25.

Every new year many people make New Year's resolutions they believe are important for their well-being and perhaps you are among them. Typically they are resolutions like, "This year I'm going to stop smoking. Or I'm going to lose weight. I'm going to get in shape. Or I am going to begin to live within my means and get out of debt. Perhaps I'm going to go back to school or find another job or spend more time with my family," etc. Well, all of those things are good, perhaps even noble things to do, but I'm going to challenge you this morning, those of you who know and love Christ, to examine your heart and perhaps make another kind of resolution, one that has eternal benefit, one that will yield a magnificent return. I'm going to challenge you this morning to commit yourself to a higher level of personal sacrifice and service for our glorious Savior and King. And in order to help you understand not only the importance of this but the immeasurable blessings that this will yield for your life and for your family, I want to exposit and apply Jesus' parable of the talents here in Matthew 25.

Now, before I even read it, I want to give you the context here. This is very important. Following Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he manifested his regal claims as Israel's King and his divine authority. You will recall that he cleansed the temple, ran the moneychangers out. He taught. He healed the sick. And the religious rulers of the nation made no attempt to forcibly stop him or eject him even from the building. They obviously experienced his divine power and his regal authority which restrained them. All they could do was challenge his authority verbally which they did. Of course his authority was indisputable. They saw all of his miracles, all of his signs, his wonders. The people were completely dumbfounded when they heard him teach, it was so forceful, so compelling, so clear. So they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?" Of course they wanted him to say, "Well, my authority is from God the Father," and then they could accuse him of blasphemy and kill him.

Well, Jesus knew that they knew that his authority was from God but they rejected it so the time for explanation was over. It was time for judgment and part of that judgment included the Lord resorting primarily to the parabolic method of teaching. From the time the leaders accused Christ of being empowered by Satan in Matthew 12, the offer of the immediate establishment of the kingdom upon the earth was withdrawn and Jesus'

Website: otcr.org
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ministry began to focus more on his death, the death of the King and his second coming. So if we look at the Gospels, we see that beginning in Matthew 13, Christ sets forth the mystery form of the kingdom through a new series of parables whereby he deliberately confused those who were hardhearted, those who had rejected him, the unbelieving multitudes. He deliberately confused them as an act of judicial hardening, however, it's interesting he did explain the parables in great detail with expositions that he gave to his disciples.

In Matthew 21 through 25, we see that the Lord presents essentially seven parables to drive home certain facts concerning his messianic kingdom. The first three of them are found in Matthew 21 and they were focused primarily on the ecclesiastical rulers who had challenged his divine authority: the parables of the two sons, of the wicked husbandman, the king's marriage feast. And then the other four are found in Matthew 24 and 25 and they were given to the disciples: you have the parable of the budding fig tree, of the faithful and the unfaithful servants, of the 10 virgins, and the talents that we will look at this morning. And these parables basically gave a composite picture of the kingdom as something that is definitely future, something that is associated with the glorious return of the King in power and in judgment. In fact, at the end of Matthew 25, he unfolds in detail a picture of the messianic judgment on living nations on earth which will take place, he says when, "the Son of Man comes in his glory and all of the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne."

Now, in Matthew 25, and I'm getting to my point here so bear with me, this is very important, in Matthew 25, he emphasizes the profound importance of readiness, being ready for Jesus coming to establish his earthly kingdom at his second coming, and we see that readiness, for example, in the parable of the virgins in chapter 25, verses 1 through 13. And that readiness was manifested by their waiting and their watching for the bridegroom to come, whereas in the text that we're going to look at this morning, readiness in the parable of the talents is manifested by working. Not watching and waiting but by working; exhibiting a life dedicated to serving our coming King. And what we're going to see is that true and mature believers will manifest this in their life. They will live certainly in a constant state of exhilarating anticipation, ever watching and waiting for the Lord's return, but they will also prepare for his coming through faithful service. So genuine mature believers will always be waiting, watching and working, and it's the latter that we will be looking at this morning and, frankly, if this is not true in your life, if you really have nothing in your heart that makes it a priority to serve Christ the King, then you probably do not know or love the Master, or maybe you do but you're distracted by the fleeting pleasures of this world and you're just downright lazy.

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So let's examine this issue of spiritual preparedness for the kingdom of heaven. Verse 14, Matthew 25.

14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29 For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If God were to evaluate your job performance, what would he have to say? Would he describe you as one that is industrious or one that is indolent? One that is a tireless worker, a self-starter, one that is faithful and trustworthy, devoted, using your talent and your gifts and your possessions, taking advantage of every opportunity for his glory? Or would he describe you as kind of a lazy, unmotivated, unfaithful, untrustworthy type of

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servant? You give up easy. You're a poor steward of the gifts, the talents, the possessions that you have. You are basically self-indulgent, self-promoting, critical, complainer, bear little fruit if any. Well, this parable draws a distinction between those two types of people that are associated with the church so I want to examine this issue of faithful service under three headings. We're going to look at the responsibility, the reckoning and the reward that Jesus describes in this parable.

First of all: the responsibility. Notice what he says beginning in verse 14, "For it." Now let's stop there. "It" refers to the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the sphere of God's spiritual dominion and sometimes this refers to the invisible mystical body of Christ encompassing all of the saints down through redemptive history and sometimes, as in this case, it refers to the visible observable body of Christ, the church, the organized church. So he says, "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey."

Now, in this kingdom parable, the man is obviously a reference to Christ, the king. The journey illustrates that period of his earthly departure between his first and his second coming, and the slaves represent those who profess Christ. They may not all possess Christ but they profess Christ, members of the visible church on earth, each of which have been entrusted with unique responsibilities based upon varying levels of ability. And the slaves in Jesus' day, we must understand, were basically estate managers, overseers of wealthy households. They owned nothing but they were very often very well educated individuals. They were skilled in certain crafts. They were stewards of all their master's property and all of the possessions and so forth. In fact, the master had the power to even terminate their life.

Now, the talent, the term "talent" that is used here does not refer to a special ability like we would think of with our English word "talent." Somebody that is talented. That's not what it's referring to. A talent was a measure of weight that determined the value of various coins. Gold coins weighed the most and then you would have silver, copper and bronze, etc., decreasing weight meant decreasing value. And as we look at the concept of a talent, there was in that day what was called an attic talent which referred to an Athenian talent and that basically was a measure of weight that would be almost 60 pounds for us. And then there was also the Hebrew talent that weighed more, it was about 75 pounds. And this would have been about the amount that would be tantamount to about 6,000 denari, and they would make about a denari in a day so a talent would be, or the amount that you have here, it would be more than a laborer could earn in 20 years. So this is a lot of money that they were given and in this parable the talent represents the priceless value of the stewardship responsibility that God entrusts to his servants in his

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church based upon their abilities, opportunities that we all have to glorify God by serving him.

Now, it's important for us to understand that God knows we have varying abilities. We're all made very different, variety being yet another testimony of God's glory. Some stars are brighter than others. Some trees are taller than others. The eagle is more beautiful than the buzzard, right? The dolphin is more intelligent than the carp. And likewise, God does not give to all men equally. God has not cast us all with the same mold and we should accept this as a marvelous manifestation of beauty revealed in this diversity made possible by our sovereign Creator. With respect to natural abilities, we're all very different. Some people have greater intellects than others. Some have superior genetics. Not all children are born precocious and not all men are capable of learning or of teaching; though education can help, there will be limits based upon innate abilities. And some of us are more gifted than others spiritually. That's just how God has designed us. We can look at Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and we see how there is a variety of spiritual gifts. Paul says there are diversities of gifts, there are different kinds of ministries. And then also with respect to opportunity, some people have more than others. Some have no opportunity for education. I interact with a number of them around the world through the internet every week, especially some of our brothers in Africa. They may be the only believer in a family. They may not have access to good preaching and teaching in a church. There are people that we probably all know that live in an area where they don't have any access to anything that would really help them grow apart from maybe the internet or the radio. Some people live in an environment of great persecution and poverty and even poor health.

Well, God only knows why this is so but we must understand and we will see this as this parable unfolds, that God is not looking for success, he's looking for faithfulness, tireless commitment in doing our best with the abilities and the opportunities that he has given us. You see, he rewards us on the basis of effort, not achievement. The uneducated mother with modest ability who works hard to train her children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord will receive the same reward as the most eminent Bible professor at a seminary who has taught thousands. You see, our reward is not based upon results but upon our faithfulness. The faithful pastor will receive no greater reward than the faithful layman that cleaned the church or the sickly widow that spent her life praying for souls. But whatever our abilities, whatever our gifts, whatever our opportunities whether they are great or small, we must remember that they are gifts from God for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, James says, and comes down from the Father of lights. As Spurgeon said, "No man hath anything of his own except his sins." So whatever our lot, whatever our gifts, whatever our abilities, we should be content with them, we should

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make the most of them. However humble our charge, however meager our estate, we will be judged according to our management of it.

Now, let's look closely at the text. We have three slaves and the master entrusted one with five talents, one with two and one with one, and they were given to them based upon the master's understanding of their abilities and the question is what will they do with what they were given in the master's absence. In verse 16 we see, "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more." I want you to notice the word "immediately." There was a sense of urgency, a sense of dedication. There was an eagerness to do whatever one could do to please the master. And folks, this is a picture of the dedicated saint in the church consumed with the purposes of God. Serving the Master will be their priority. They are excited about the confidence that the Lord has placed in them with the opportunities and abilities that they have. So they will be industrious. They are unwilling to waste any time or any of the resources. They will take full advantage of every opportunity to multiply what the Master has given to them, fully aware that they will one day have to give an account.

I want you to notice that two slaves were industrious, both of them doubling the talents they received. Likewise, each one of us have been given different abilities, different opportunities and circumstances. We see many opportunities here at Calvary Bible Church and we should strive to maximize the sacred trust that the Lord has given us. This is our responsibility before the Lord. We are under obligation, shall we say, to be about his business, not to do it out of duty but to do it out of desire, passionate to live up to our potential. And the primary context for our labor as we see here and other passages in the New Testament, is in and through the local church; the body of Christ; this mystical organism of which Christ is head, of which we are all members; and we must serve one another within this body, responding to the head. As the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 10, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "always be abounding in the work of the Lord." Always be abounding in the work of the Lord, "knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Ephesians 5, Paul says in verse 15, "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." And of course, the will of the Lord can include many things but certainly fundamentally we see that it is God's will for us to be saved, it is his will for us to be sanctified, it is his will for us to sacrifice, to suffer and to serve. How's that for five "S's"? That's what the will of the Lord is.

Website: otcr.org
Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1497/A_Call_to_a_Faithful_Service.html

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Now, while our results are going to vary, God is concerned about us maximizing our effort, exerting the maximum effort, if you will. In fact, the Lord has promised in 1 Corinthians 3:8 that "each will receive his own reward according to his own labor." And this is what we see in the loyalty of the first two slaves but notice the third slave. Although his master gave him fewer talents to begin with, he expected the same kind of exertion, the same kind of loyalty, the same kind of devotion but notice in verse 18, "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money." Now, we should understand that out of necessity it was customary in those days for people to do this kind of thing, to hide valuables in secret holes in the ground, under rocks in little caves and so forth, but one would never do this if they had a concern for their master in terms of wise investing to make a profit. You would never do something like this so the point here is this servant didn't want to be bothered with the task assigned to him. He just blew it off. He was preoccupied with his own personal agenda, with his own life issues, and he gave no thought about an inevitable day of reckoning when his master would return and ask him to give an account.

Now I want you to notice the ridiculous excuses that he invents to shift the blame from himself to the master. Notice in verse 24, he said, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours." Folks, this is a picture of a false professor, one who outwardly claims to be a servant of Christ but two things say otherwise: 1. his lack of service; 2. his phony ridiculous excuses.

Notice the issue of his lack of service. He had an utter disregard for his stewardship responsibility to honor the Lord by rendering faithful and fruitful service and this proves that he is not regenerate. He doesn't know and love Christ. You see, those who love Christ will serve Christ in and through his church. False professors won't do that. False professors will just live for themselves. Their lives will be characterized by wasted opportunity. I see this all the time. People attach themselves to the church, they profess to be a Christian but they want nothing to do with the family of God. They have no appetite for the word, no desire to grow in Christ, to serve Christ except maybe on their own terms. They hate accountability. They just serve themselves, not the Master and as a result they bear no spiritual fruit. You just don't see much of Christ in them at all. Worse yet like this wicked slave, phony Christians invent very creative but ridiculous excuses to justify their behavior and to shift the blame onto others. They simply will not admit their own guilt.

This slave falsely accused his master and even insulted him. Notice in verse 24, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you

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scattered no seed." In other words, "I know that you're just kind of a cruel, uncaring, crafty, crooked kind of a character so I can't really trust you." I mean, folks, this is what selfish wicked people do, they deliberately misrepresent the truth, they misrepresent Christ, they misrepresent themselves and they even misrepresent other believers and this is the attitude of someone who is a stranger to Christ. This is the attitude of someone that knows nothing of Christ's love and his mercy and his grace. This is a person that is at enmity with God. As the New Testament says, this describes a person who is a son of disobedience, whose mind and heart is utterly depraved. They have no conception of who the Master really is. This is a person who is blind to who the Lord really is. They bear no spiritual fruit in their life and they have no love of Christ in their heart.

And sadly this kind of selfishness is all too common in the church. I see it even in this church, professing Christians who deliberately misrepresent themselves in order to promote their own selfish agenda. They invent false and groundless accusations. They concoct ridiculous explanations and excuses in order to shift the blame away from themselves onto other people. And when it comes to serving Christ, there are far too many who are content to let others do all the work. I've been around quite a few years now as a pastor and I've heard all of the excuses. "Oh yes, but pastor, you don't understand, I'm just too busy." That's usually the big one. "I'm just too busy," translated, "I have no time or energy to serve Christ because my agenda is the priority in my life." Or, "Well, pastor, I give financially to the church. I write a check. I don't think God expects me to do anything else." Translated it means, "I will purchase an exemption from all of the one anothering passages of Scripture. Those types of things don't apply to me." Or, "Well, there are just so many others in the church that are more gifted than me. If God wanted me to serve, he would have given me more abilities." Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Translated, "I am self-centered, jealous, lazy. I want reward without responsibility. I'm like many of the people in my culture who feel like they are entitled and so I've concocted this ridiculous rationalization to justify my sin. That's my story and I'm sticking to it," right?

I was reminded of something that I read in the second part of Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress" that really illustrates this third slave and, by the way, here Christian is describing his wife's spiritual pilgrimage, actually it was Bunyan describing his wife. Christiana and her friend Mercy encounter similar professors of Christ and their names are, catch this: Simple, Sloth and Presumption, and of course, their names betray their character. Here's what he said.

"Now I saw further in my dream, that they went on until they came to the place where Simple, Sloth and Presumption lay sleeping when Christian went by on his pilgrimage and they were still there a little ways off the

Website: otcr.org
Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1497/A_Call_to_a_Faithful_Service.html

A Call to a Faithful Service

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Bible Text: Matthew 25:14-30
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other side of the road but their hands and feet had been cuffed in chains and they were hanging dead."

Not a very pretty picture.

"But Mercy asked their guide, 'Who are these three men? Why are they left hanging there?'"

"These three were men who had some very bad qualities," answered Great Heart. "Not only had they no intention of becoming pilgrims themselves, but they also hindered everyone else they could. They were slothful and foolish themselves and they sought to persuade others to be like them, promising that in the end they would all do quite well. When Christian went by, they were asleep and now when you are going by they have been hanged."

"Were they actually able to persuade some to think like them?" asked Mercy.

"Yes," answered Great Heart, "they turned several out of the way. There was one whose name was Slow Pace who they were able to persuade. They also prevailed upon Short Wind, No Heart, Linger After Lust and Sleepy Head and a young woman whose name was Dull. As if this were not bad enough, they also gave a bad report of your Lord, persuading others that he was a taskmaster. They also spread around an evil report of the Good Land saying it was not half as good as some pretend it to be. Worse yet, they slandered his servants saying the best of them were meddling and troublemaking busybodies. Further, they called the bread of God mere husks, the comforts of his children mere imaginations, and the travel and labor of pilgrims things of no promise."

"My," said Christiana, "if they were like this, I won't grieve for them. They have only gotten what they deserved. I think it is a good thing that they are hanging so close to the highway so that others can see them and be warned."

Well, let's return to the parable. We've seen the responsibility now let's notice the reckoning beginning in verse 19. "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them." By the way, here again Jesus gives a hint that he was

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1497/A_Call_to_a_Faithful_Service.html

A Call to a Faithful Service

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Bible Text: Matthew 25:14-30
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going to be away for a long time and he is going to return unexpectedly, return to settle accounts.

He goes on, "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" And he said the same to the slave who had been entrusted with the two talents. I want you to notice, by the way, that the slave with the two talents approached the master with the same confident joy as his fellow slave who had five talents and we want to remember the principle here: at the judgment seat of Christ, the Master is not going to be concerned with how many talents we were given but with the degree of faithfulness in using them. That's the issue, that's the basis of our reward, and like these slaves we are going to be judged relative to our effort according to our ability and our opportunity, not our return on investment.

I want you to think of all of the people down through redemptive history who have given themselves for Christ in churches, in mission fields, but they saw very little if any harvest of souls. Most people never even knew they existed. They worked in complete obscurity. Think of Jesus himself. Despite all of the signs and wonders and the marvelous teaching that astounded the crowds, at the end of his earthly ministry it is estimated that there were only about 500 believers. Would that we all give ourselves to the Master, dedicating ourselves to his service so that some day like Paul we can say, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come," 2 Timothy 4. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day."

But I want you to notice the reckoning of the third slave who violated the master's trust and maligned his character. He said, "I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours." Now, seeing through his hypocrisy and his deliberate misrepresentation, the master answers in verse 26 and 27, he says, "You wicked, lazy slave." Let me pause there for a moment. It has been my observation that laziness and wickedness are always allies in the flesh, both rooted in selfishness and pride, both producing the poisonous fruits of slander and strife.

"You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed." In other words, "You're saying that? Well, if that's the case, Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest." By the way, the banks in those days, they were called

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benches. It's kind of a long story but they paid interest. Obviously like our banks, you know, they are going to charge you more if you borrow from them but they're going to give you some simple interest. Well, this slave didn't do that and so basically what the master is saying is, "You're a man here that has just invented these excuses. These are ridiculous rationalizations. In fact, you even contradict yourself. If you really thought that I was a hard man and demanded things on my return that I didn't deserve, then you would have been even more motivated to invest my money so that I would receive at least some simple interest upon what was mine. But, no, you are utterly indifferent towards me. You wasted all of your opportunities that I gave you and instead you just chose to live for yourself, then you have the audacity to malign my character to justify your own selfishness, your own laziness, and shift the blame for your sin onto me rather than owning it yourself." My, folks, what a picture of the deceitfulness of sin and the devastating consequences of it.

Then he concludes by describing finally: the reward. Notice verse 28, "Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away." Folks, the principle is this: those who devote themselves in sacrificial service to the King, taking advantage of all of the opportunities that the Lord gives them will greatly enrich themselves even more abundantly. But those who refuse, who never give of themselves, they do not love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, therefore they do not love their neighbor as themselves etc., those people will have whatever little they had taken away from them. If I can put it a little bit differently, faithful Christians bear fruit, phony Christians don't. Real simple. And sadly, sometimes even genuine believers squander what God has given them, wasting their lives on things of no eternal benefit. It's so sad to see people who claim they love Christ but they are living as if he hasn't entrusted them with anything; as if he's not going to return; as if he doesn't care how they spend their life; as if how we handle his resources is really no big deal. This is the great tragedy that burdens my heart as a pastor. I know that some of you are going to hear these things and you will do nothing.

And of course, this begs the question: how are you different therefore from this third slave? Doesn't your selfish neglect prove that you are unregenerate? Therefore will you not also share his eternal fate which Jesus described in verse 30, "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness." By the way, this refers to the darkness that is furthest from the light. We cannot imagine that kind of darkness. He says, "that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Folks, hell will be a place of inconsolable grief and unrelenting torment. What a warning.

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Now, as we look at this, we know that there will always exist within the church both true and false believers, genuine believers and spurious believers. Tares will always grow up amongst the wheat but we can't really tell who truly knows Christ and who doesn't. Both can be actively involved in ministry. Both can show some measure of concern about advancing the purposes of God but they will do all of this with radically different motives when only the true believer will bear fruit, only the true believer will be productive. Those who are unproductive simply do not belong to him. That's what Jesus is saying. They are not merely unfaithful, they are faithless is the point, and one day their true character will be revealed when the Lord says to them, according to Matthew 7:23, "I never knew you. Depart from Me you who practice lawlessness."

Well, for those of you who truly know and love Christ but maybe you're lazy, boy, have I been there before. You know, I fight that myself. My flesh many times doesn't want to do a lot of the things that I know the Lord has on my platter during the week. I'll confess that. My goodness, we're all that way, aren't we? We have a battle with that but, boy, if we allow the flesh to rule our lives, we can begin to just devote ourselves to nothing but things on our agenda and we can become very similar to this lazy slave. And if that's you, can I gently but forthrightly call you to repentance? Knock off the excuses, will you? They are ridiculous. The Lord sees right through them. And please remember on the day of final reckoning, God is not going to judge us on the curve, okay? The Lord is going to basically reward us based solely upon what he has specifically entrusted to us individually and according to our ability.

And think of the reward that belongs to those who take full advantage of all of the opportunities the Lord gives them. He is going to say as he says here, "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things." You ask, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, simply this: God will increase your charge on earth and in heaven based upon your faithfulness. Let me explain that for a moment biblically. Remember again the context, we're living in this period between Christ's departure and his return when he will establish his millennial kingdom. And we see this, by the way, even more explicitly in Luke 19 that we read earlier which really is a different parable. These are not one and the same. Remember with the nobleman, he had 10 servants and he gave each one of them a mina to invest and he goes away to a far country and then he returns and he rewards each servant based upon their level of faithfulness and after the nobleman established his kingdom, he rewarded them. Remember, one servant turned his mina into 10 and he was placed over 10 cities. Another had a fivefold increase, he was made ruler over five cities and so forth. And here in the parable of the talents, we see the same general theme and that's this: faithful service on earth is the basis for kingdom rewards. It's an exciting concept. We know both in the millennial kingdom as well as in the eternal state of heaven, faithful saints are going to be rewarded with varying opportunities and

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A Call to a Faithful Service

By David Harrell

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levels of service commensurate with their level of devotion on earth. "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things."

Well, that's another whole topic that we've examined before and we will do it again but I want to leave you with this this morning, I want you to ask yourself: what about me? Am I making the best use of that which God has entrusted to me? Am I maximizing my abilities, my spiritual gifts, my opportunities to serve Christ? Am I taking advantage of those things? Is my labor for the Master worthy of praise or am I just living beneath my potential, just rendering a token service? Or worse yet, do I have any service at all? Is it nonexistent betraying the fact that I'm just indifferent to the Master? Folks, may I warn you a day of reckoning is coming. That's Jesus' point so let's make it our New Year's resolution this year to commit ourselves to a higher level of personal sacrifice and service to our glorious Savior and King who is coming again and I believe it could be very very soon. By the way, if you're not sure how to serve, if you're not sure about some of these things, please give me a call. Come and talk to me or some of the elders. We would love to sit down and help you think this through. Can you imagine what this church could do if everybody grabbed an oar and started pulling their weight? Can you imagine? I mean, if everybody just gave financially, not to mention get involved. That's my prayer and I will have to say that in comparison to many churches, we have a very high percentage of people that do just that. But, boy, we could all do better, couldn't we? I can and I hope you will as well.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these great truths. I pray that by the power of your Spirit you will cause them to bear much fruit in each heart to the praise of your glory. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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