

“5 heads & 10 hands” Mat 25:14-30

For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Mat 25:14-30)

Today we read the parable of the talents. This is one more parable that deals with the final judgment, with the return of the King, and with how to be ready for it.

Or we can say that this parable helps us once more to receive God's answers to questions like - what does this mean to be a Christian? What is the purpose of our life? These are the questions we'll look at today.

I have to emphasize that this parable is particularly important for us, Christians, for it speaks about how those who are already servants of the Master are supposed to conduct themselves.

We need to be clear - this parable doesn't teach about salvation. [2x] When it comes to salvation, it is sound and clear Biblical message that you are saved not by what you do, or what kind of person you are, but solely by God's grace, when you trust the message that you are accepted as God's children through Jesus Christ.

Salvation as rescue for sin and death, acceptance into God's own family is God's gift to you. It is offered to anyone who desires to receive it. We don't merit it, and we don't deserve it, but we can gladly receive it, and rejoice in it.

Once we have received it, we get to the next stage where we ask this question – what does this mean to be a Christian – and this is what today's parable is about. What does this mean to be a Christian, what is the purpose of our lives?

First, let's take a quick look at what is our culture's answer to the question – what is the purpose of our lives? I dare to say that the most popular answer probably would be – to be happy. The pursuit of happiness. To do everything and to strive for everything that makes you happy.

This is so widespread in our western culture. This is what so many people are after. And if they succeed in reaching what they believe is enough for their happiness, that's it. They have reached their paradise. Whatever small it is.

It's funny. For many this feeling of having enough, being happy has become even like a criteria to evaluate others. If I feel good about myself, about my life, then I'm a better person and more accomplished than those, who still strive to achieve something else, more money, more fame, more power, more sex.

So, if I feel OK about myself, I have fulfilled the purpose of my life, and I can almost look with compassion to those who are still trying to find their happiness. I'm already there. Nothing else is needed.

Many see the Church as one more place where people can pursue their happiness. As one of options. If you need some religious ceremonies, rituals, fellowship to make you happy, if this works for you, that's fine. Go for it. We don't need it.

Now to the parable, what does it teach us? The Triune God is described in this parable as the Master, and we as His servants. To every servant certain responsibility is entrusted. To one five talents, to others two and one talent. We can see that God doesn't have a one-size-fits all approach.

To every person a different task is given. Different degrees of responsibilities, different gifts, different opportunities. As we can see it in a real life as well.

There is the first important thing to notice. Who is the Giver? Who gives everything to all these 'servants'? Yes, the Triune God gives us everything. Every single person receives everything from Him. Each of us.

Through parents, through environment, through people in our lives, through opportunities and so on. There are many gifts, but there is only one Giver. God the Creator. Besides, to whom then everything belongs?

Often we imagine that what we have is ours. This parable tells that everything is only lent to us, and it will be required back. The same idea is seen in the Bible again and again.

We are God's servant, He put us here to take care for what is His. This has to be our mindset – we are God's servant, that's a great honour, but everything belongs to him. In fact, we belong to Him, and these are good news... for we have this Master who cares for us more than for Himself.

Then we can see another thing. God as our Master expects that we will use all these gifts not only for our own benefit, but sharing and participating in His care for this world.

The first servant went right away and put his five talents into trade. And he made five more. The second one did the same with his two talents and made two more. And the third one just took his talents and dug them into ground.

Then the Master came back and begun to settle accounts with them. This is what we are all waiting for. This is what is going to happen. We'll all have to give an account for our lives.

The Master said to the first one: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." Pay attention to these words. You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much.

Five talents is anything but a little. One talent was equal to 6000 denarii. If denary was usually a salary for one day, one talent would be equal to an amount that a man can earn in 20 years.

How does it sound, that you were faithful over little, which is about what a man can earn in 100 years, and now I'll set you over much. Our God doesn't do small things.

We can see in these words that reward for our faithfulness in this life will be something that we struggle to comprehend. Satan wants us to settle for a little. Just be happy. God, on the other hand, doesn't want our happiness and joy to be small. He wants them to be huge, enormously great, mind-blowing.

We can also see that the kingdom of Heaven is not an idle place, where people are bored. Sometimes we have these comical pictures where the heaven is portrayed as boring place, where everyone wears white, nothing happens, only harps are being played. While the hell is the place of fun and activities.

If we know anything about the heaven, then we know that this is going to be place of never ceasing joy and happiness. No joy, fun or feasting in the hell, though. But from this parable we can also see, that the heaven will not be a place of idleness.

If we are God's faithful servants here, then we'll be involved in much more activities in the age to come. You will share God's authority and you will be in active cooperation with the Triune God caring for His creation.

Besides, this activity will not be like toiling. Not like "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." This activity will be joy: "Enter into your Masters joy." Joy of doing things together with God.

But then the third one came. It is interesting. He gives this picture of his Master as 'a hard man'. He said that he was afraid of failure and therefore hid his talent in the ground. But his own words accuse him.

If he knew that His master is 'a hard man' why didn't he do at least something? Why didn't he give the money to bankers. Of course, it would be risky, once you get involved in commerce there is always a risk of losing.

We can see that the third servant in a sense was a reasonable man. Like so many in our world. If he had invested his energy into trading this talent, gains wouldn't go to him. These would be his Master's gains.

So why to waste your energy? Why not just lay back and feel happy? Why to get involved in something that would benefit only others, and not you?

This is the answer - because we are not created and are not redeemed to live only for our own sake. We are not here for our own happiness only. We are here so that God the Creator can provide talents for us, and so that we can use them serving others.

Where to do it? Exactly where we are. In all our relationships, in all our vocations, as children to parents, as sibling, as spouses, as parents, as friends, in our workplace and in our community.

Martin Luther used to say that for every Christian there are so many opportunities to serve our neighbours that even if we had five heads and ten hands it wouldn't be enough. This is so true.

You see, to use our talents of others is not optional. We can't just sit back and enjoy our Master's blessing. Sure, our activities will not earn us salvation. But as we can see, the lack of faithfulness can lead to condemnation.

We are not made servant and children of the Triune God by what we do. We are made His children and also His co-workers through Jesus Christ. Remember this analogy about parents and children.

When do we become children of our parents? When we do something good? No. We become their children when we are created, when we are born. There is nothing we contribute to it. Nothing.

Our life is pure gift of our parents. The same way it is with our relationships with the Triune God. He makes us His children through Christ. That's His work. For us it is God's gift. Undeserved and infinitely precious gift.

Sometimes people are able to ask weird questions? For example. Ok, if you are already a child of God, why to worry about anything? Just be happy. This is a very strange position, if we think about it.

If you are a child of your parents, then of course, your life is their gift to you. But, do they expect you to live like their child? Of course, they teach you what is good and what is not, and they want you to walk accordingly. This is so obvious.

The same way also our Father, who is in heaven, wants us to live as He teaches us. He created and redeemed us for the specific purpose, and as our Creator and Redeemer He expects us to fulfil this purpose. To live as Christian.

If we don't fulfil this purpose, we have failed. It is clear from this parable that we can't neglect our mission. If we have talents given, and if we fail to use them according to God's will, we'll be left outside, in darkness... when others are welcomed into God's joy.

To summarize once more – what does it mean to be a Christian? What is the purpose of our lives? To be fully human. That is, to be in relationships with the Triune God, to live in trust, to rely upon Him and to receive everything from Him.

But also it means, that we are not to live idle and complacent lives. We are not here to pursue our own happiness only. We are here to use all our talents, all that we have received from God in service to our neighbours.

To be a Christian means never be bored, and always have infinite opportunities for service. Another thing - do we use them? Do we always want to use our talents for the sake of others? You know the answer. We don't. We fail. All of us. So often.

That's why our Father and our Redeemer Jesus Christ is here every week, He invites us to come for encouragement, to remind that you are His children not because of what you do, but because He loves you as you are.

He invites you to receive the forgiveness for what we have failed to do, and the Holy Spirit, the Helper, who helps us to remain faithful.

And remember, when you try to live as Christians, if you are faithful here over a little, there will be much prepared for you in God's Kingdom. Much not according our standards, much according God's standards.

Amen.