

## **“If only we would get it.” Mt 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.'

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! We just don't get it. We just don't. But if we would get it... if only we would... It is hard for us to get the message of this parable, because we live in a very different time. Society functions so differently. So much has changed since Jesus time.

The Gospel has changed the world. But... we are not going to give up. We will try. Today we will reflect on [1] what picture does this parable paint for us and then, [2] how can we possibly live up to the expectation of our Master.

**First about the picture of this parable.** Why is this parable so hard to grasp for us? Because we have no idea how it is to be someone's slave. To belong to your master as he has a full control over everything in your life. Everything...

See, in this parable not only the talents belonged to the master, but also these servants in the original Greek are called slaves. They were the property of their master, meaning – they fully belonged to him.

As we sometimes say “everything who I am and everything that I have”. All of that was the property of their master. Therefore, they were fully accountable for what they did and how they did it. Fully accountable... we don't know what it means.

We may know the meaning of this phrase, but we cannot relate it to our experience, to how it feels. Fully accountable. Today we live in this society where often even reasonable responsibilities are neglected and ever sluggards are protected by the law.

You can hear the stories where someone who is too lazy to do what they are paid for, but impudent and smart enough to use the law for their benefit, may run to “Fair-Work” and complain that they are being harassed in their workplace, meaning – they are asked to do what they have agreed to do... and they may get protection...

And continue to live as parasites, with no accountability. No accountability... today even if we really mess things up, the consequences are not that dramatic. Surely there may be some consequences, but usually there are some organizations or people that are happy to intervene and mediate the situation.

The same applies to us Christians. We know quite well what our Master’s will for our lives is, but how serious are we about listening to Him? How accountable do we feel? Now let’s just try to imagine that you are fully in someone’s hands.

They have total authority over you. They can demand whatever they deem fitting, they can decide whether you live or die. There is no one who can intervene on your behalf, no one where you could turn for help. It’s just you and your master.

That, in fact, is our situation before our God. We are His. He created us, we belong to Him with everything we are and everything we have. His is totally in charge. And we are fully accountable to Him for what we have done with what belongs to Him.

In the parable the master went away for a long time. That is also our situation. Our Master is kind of gone for a while, we do not see Him around these days, and whichever way we live, according to His instructions or ignoring them, there are no immediate consequences for us. Just as it was for the servants in the parable.

But then the master returns... just as expected. He calls his servants to him and holds them fully accountable. “What have you done with what I entrusted you?” This is our human situation as well.

We all will be called to stand before someone, who has absolute authority over our lives and our fates, life and death, He can reward us if we are faithful, or He can throw us into the outer darkness if we are worthless.

The questions for us is this – how can we be more faithful with the talents that our Master has entrusted us? It applies to us both as individuals and also as a congregation. What have I done with all the talents – my body with all its abilities and my life, with God given time, skills, knowledge, and valuables that my Master has entrusted to me?

Have I used them according to His instructions, trying to please Him, working for His purposes, have I even listened to His instructions? Or have I assumed, as so many these days do, that I am my own master, that I am accountable to no one, and I can do whatever I choose with what is in mine?

What have we as congregation done with what is entrusted to us? Have we looked at everything as belonging to our Master and meant to be used for His purposes according our best knowledge? Or have we treated our talents as our own, mostly using them to improve our comfort?

I would guess that even the most committed Christians still are somewhere in between these two opposites. **Now we get to our second question – how can we possibly live up to the expectation of our Master?** How can we be more faithful? What can help us? What can motivate us?

Perhaps, we need to meditate on the fate of the third servant? What do you think? Fear is a great motivator, a great force that can make people do things that they otherwise don't want to do and also keep them from doing the wrong things that they would want to do. We all know it works...

Fear is a powerful tool, indeed, but it is not all powerful ... for it cannot change our hearts. It can force us to do or not to do something, but it cannot make us to desire to joyfully do what our Master wants for us.

So, who can provide us better motivation? And the answer is... our God Himself. He is our best motivator. His unchanging attitude towards His human creatures, His undeserved grace and care, His faithfulness and love, His self-sacrificial commitment to us, an ungrateful and rebellious bunch.

Jesus Christ is our Master. To Him belongs all authority, absolute authority in heavens and on earth. But He doesn't come to us demanding our obedience or service. He comes to us and does something that doesn't fit with how we are accustomed to think about masters.

He gives Himself to us first with all that He is and all that He has. He comes in full obedience to His Father will. And His Father will is – that everyone would come to the knowledge of truth and would be restored into the wonderful fellowship with God the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

Jesus comes as a perfect servant. A Suffering Servant. He leaves His divine glory for our sake. He comes speaking the words of His Father and doing the works of His Father. He fully entrusts Himself into His Father's hands.

He becomes poor so that we can become rich in God. Even as He is equal with the Father, He “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Phil 2:6-8) For you... for you...

He faithfully stood in all temptations, He didn't use His power and influence for Himself, even when people wanted to make Him a king. He kept giving Himself until He was exhausted. He was gentle even with those who plotted to kill Him.

Do you think this faithfulness was easy for Jesus? How many times He cried out to the Father, how many times He prayed Him? “How long do I need to be with this twisted generation?” Then: “Father, if that is your will, let this cup pass from me!”

He was sweating blood in fear of what was to come, He was praying fervently for His deliverance, but nevertheless – He didn’t stray from His course. After inhumane beatings and shameful mocking, He was left hanging on the cross alone: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!”

Jesus Christ, your Master, He gave Himself, everything who He was and everything He had for His friends, that is – for you. He did it when we were still His enemies. He was the perfect servant, the Suffering Servant. Now, He has received His reward.

“God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2:9-11)

That is Him... your Master ... who now hopes that the Good News about what He has done for you will transform you. He prays that you would not reject what He has done for you, that instead these Good News would motivate you to loving response.

Think about what Jesus, the Son of God, has done for you. Read the gospel accounts, and read them again ... and again. Share and discuss them. Marvel at the incredible grace of your Master, marvel at the beauty and attractiveness of His personality, meditate about this wonderful Master days and nights.

And as we do this, the Spirit of Jesus will continue to replace our old hearts of stone with new hearts of flesh. We will not be able to remain the same. When the Spirit of Jesus convinces us of the great sacrifice of love that Jesus has made for us, when the blood of Jesus runs through our veins and empowers our new hearts, we are changed. From enemies to friends. From mockers to followers.

His undeserved grace and commitment to us now motivates us. How can we not respond to what Jesus has done? How can we not devote ourselves to Him? How can we not bring ourselves as living sacrifices to our Master, how can we not use all that we have to advance His purposes?

Jesus is our great motivation, He is our great inspiration and if only we get what He has done and does for us, then our response and service to Him is not a burden anymore. Then it is our grateful hearts of flesh seeking new and new ways to thank and please our Master and to glorify His name in all the earth.

I pray that sooner or later, with the help of the Spirit, we would all get it.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever!

Amen.