

Matthew 25:14-30 | “Good and Faithful Servants”

Preached on June 2, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 25, and we will be in verses 14-30 today. *[pause]*

We have been working through Matthew 24 and 25 recently, which are all about Christ’s 2nd coming.

And we learned about the signs of His coming, that His coming is certain, and that His coming will be at an unknown time, so we must be ready for it. *[pause]*

Well the text today continues talking about Jesus’ return by showing us what being ready for His return looks like. *[pauseeeee]*

As you think about Jesus’ return, how should we act and prepare for it? *[pause]*

For some people, Jesus’ coming is a fearful thing, so they live in fear everyday.

But is living in fear the correct response to Christ’s 2nd coming? *[pause]*

For others, they think, “Well if Jesus is coming soon, why not just sit back and cruise to the finish line?”

But is sitting idle and doing nothing what we are called to do as we await the revelation of Jesus Christ? *[pauseee]*

Related to that, are we supposed to hunker down in a bunker, and just wait for His arrival? *[pause]*

Growing up, one of my youth leaders pointed out that he didn’t really like the hymn called, “Hold the Fort.”¹

The refrain goes like this: “‘Hold the fort, for I am coming,’ Jesus signals still; Wave the answer back to heaven, ‘By Thy grace we will.’” *[pauseeee]*

The question is, as we await Christ’s return are we *only* supposed to be “holding the fort” until He gets back? Or is there more? *[pause]*

Are we only supposed to be on the defensive, or is there advancing the kingdom through the proclamation of the gospel, and living lives of active obedience and faith? *[pauseeee]*

In the passage before us, Christ shows us how we are to live as we await His return...

It’s not living in fear, it’s not turning on the cruise control, and it’s not hunkering down.

¹ “Hold the Fort” by Philip P. Bliss (1870).

But rather than passively waiting, Jesus will teach us in this parable that our lives should be characterized by active obedience, making the most of the opportunities before us. *[pause]*

Let's READ the passage to see what Jesus says. *[READ]*

So the basic storyline of this parable is pretty easy to grasp. *[pause]*

A master leaves for a journey and entrusts his money to 3 different servants. *[pause]*

The servant with 5 talents as well as the one with 2, each double it by the time the master returns.

But the man with only 1 talent just hides it in the ground. *[pause]*

The time finally arrives when the master returns and he wants to settle the accounts, that is, to see what they did with what they had. *[pause]*

The ones with 5 talents and 2 talents each present what they did, and get commended by the master for their good and faithful service.

But the one who hid his talent tries to excuse what he did, and even blames the master for his actions.

So the master gets upset at this servant, takes away his talent, and casts him into outer darkness. *[pause]*

That's the basic story summarized, but what does it mean? *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is teaching us first that...

I. We are servants entrusted with our Master's resources.

In our American culture, being a servant is not seen in a good light at all.

Instead, American culture often pushes for being independent, self-reliant, and for having people serve *you* as you simply pay *them*. *[pauseeee]*

Think about it: in our country, do many people really embrace servanthood? *[pause]*

Do many Christians even understand and see themselves as servants of God, who is their Master? *[pause]*

Consider this...

When someone hears about a command or instruction from God in the Bible, do they readily say, "Yes, I will do that because I am a servant of God."? *[pause]*

Many times people balk at the idea of following a command or instruction of God, and sometimes try to lighten it and say, “Well, we all have our own special circumstances. So if you’re able to, then good.”

Yet throughout the Bible, and very clearly here, the Bible talks about us as *servants* of Christ our Master. *[pausee]*

But what’s amazing is the kind of Master that we have, for He *entrusts* us with what is His! *[pause]*

He doesn’t treat us like the scum of the earth, but He actually hands over what is His into our care.

He gives us responsibility to steward His possessions. *[pauseee]*

A talent was a very large sum of money in that day, and some believe that it was the equivalent of 20 years worth of wages.

And yet, the Master entrusted talents with His servants, which signifies that what God gives us is valuable. *[pause]*

What He gives us is great, and to be stewarded rightly and not squandered! *[pauseee]*

So often we view the things that we have as *ours*, but it is not. *[pause]*

Who are we to think such a way?!

What we have is God’s, and we are simply stewards of it! *[pause]*

Our body is the Lord’s.

Our money is God’s.

Our gifts and talents are from God.

Like Paul reminds us, “What do you have that you did not receive?”² *[pauseee]*

Wouldn’t it change how you used things if you always remembered that it’s not truly yours, but God’s? *[pause]*

Wouldn’t it change things, if you constantly thought, “I am not the owner, I am the steward.”? *[pauseee]*

Imagine a manager acting like the company was theirs -- that’s what we act like when we act like things are our’s and not God’s. *[pauseee]*

² 1 Corinthians 4:7.

Now what do these ‘talents’ here represent? *[pause]*

They point to everything that God has given to us to steward. *[pause]*

So guess what?

You aren’t just a steward of only a tenth of your income, but you are called to steward everything you have!

Your life, your time, money, opportunities, possessions, talents, intelligence, spiritual gifts, and relationships - everything!

It’s all supposed to be used for the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

So many times we view God as having only a small slice of our time, our money, or our possessions, but it’s all really His. *[pauseeee]*

How do you view what is God’s?

Do you think, “Mine!” or do you think, “Lord, this is yours.”? *[pauseeee]*

There’s an intriguing detail in this parable when the master entrusts the talents with his servants.

For the master gave different amounts of talents to his servants “each according to his ability”. *[pauseeee]*

God doesn’t give us all the exact, same things.

Rather, He gives us what He deems best, according to our capabilities. *[pauseeee]*

You must realize that the Lord knows you best, even more than you know yourself.

And He knows that some of us can handle more than others. *[pause]*

He knows that we are all different, and there’s nothing wrong with that!

He didn’t fault the servants for how much they were entrusted with, but only with what they did with what they were given. *[pauseeee]*

In His infinite wisdom, He knows what we are capable of, and gives us what we handle.

So do not be ashamed that you are not someone else, or that you don’t have what that other person has.

Rather, be content and thankful for who you are and what you have from God, and just be faithful with it! *[pause]*

So don’t think, “If only I were a millionaire, I would do so much for the Lord.”

Instead, think, “How am I using the amount of money that I have from the Lord now?” *[pause]*

Even as a church, we need to remember this.

We can't be constantly thinking, “If only we had more resources, if only we had more people, if only we had what *they* have.” *[pause]*

No, we need to be faithful here in Clearfield with what God has given to us as a church right now. *[pause]*

Do we use the resources we have *now* faithfully? Do we love the people we have *right now* well? *[pauseeee]*

What we see in this parable is that the Lord wants us to be faithful with what we have been given. *[pause]*

He commends the 5 talent and 2 talent servants for being faithful with what they were entrusted with.

And what does being faithful look like?

It means actually using and utilizing what God gives us, taking advantage of the opportunities in front of us. *[pauseeee]*

Listen up: you can't be faithful by doing nothing! *[pause]*

What God gives us is supposed to be *used*! *[pauseeee]*

Each of you have been given various and different things by the Lord.

You all have different gifts, different amounts of money and resources, and different amounts of time, abilities, and opportunities.

Yet there are some in this room who don't actually use what God has entrusted to you for His glory. *[pause]*

For some reason you are acting as if God said, “It's OK if you don't do anything with it, just return it back when it's all said and done.”

No, God has given you all that you have so that you would steward it wisely and faithfully!

So actually utilize what God has given to you! *[pauseeee]*

This takes time, effort, and wisdom.

And guess what? It takes *initiative*. *[pause]*

The 5 talent and 2 talent servants had to take initiative to do business and multiply what they had.

So you cannot sit back and expect to be faithful with the things that God has given to you.
[pause]

You need to be actively seeking out ways to serve, ways to help others, ways to invest in the kingdom.

And that means that really you all should be coming to us as elders and saying, “This is what I believe my gift is, so where can I be used?”

Or, “I have a passion for this thing, what do you think about me organizing and leading this ministry?”

Or even, “Hey, I saw that this thing around church is getting older and looks like it may break soon, could I repair it for you?” [pauseeee]

The Christian life is not a spectator sport.

In reality, this passage shows us that a large part of the Christian life is about *active obedience*, serving Him and using what we have been given for Him.

This is what God commands, this is what God expects. [pauseeee]

We are ALL given things to use.

Some more than others, but we are all given something, and we are called to multiply what we have been given by using and stewarding it. [pauseeee]

We multiply what has been given to us when we share the gospel and people come to saving faith.

It’s multiplied when we encourage someone with truth who is uplifted and grows in spiritual maturity.

It’s multiplied when we serve others using our spiritual gift, and people are cared for and needs are met.

It’s multiplied when we generously give our money, so His work and purposes can go forward.
[pause]

This is the beauty of simple obedience by ordinary, but faithful servants. [pauseeee]

And there’s something that I just love about the master’s response to the 5 talent and 2 talent servants. [pause]

Did you notice how He responded the same way to both of them? [pause]

He said the same exact thing, though the one servant made 5 more talents, and the other one made only 2. *[pause]*

He says to both of them, “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.” *[pauseeee]*

Listen closely to this: the Lord doesn’t expect the same exact results, but He does expect the same faithfulness. *[pause]*

What matters is not how much we have been given, but what we do with what we have been given. *[pause]*

He doesn’t care that you don’t have the same amount as the next guy, for He gave you what He wanted you to have.

Rather, He cares about faithfulness. *[pauseeee]*

Way too often we participate in the comparison game.

We think, “I didn’t have those results. I didn’t have that opportunity.”

But God just wants us to be faithful with the things we have. *[pause]*

You aren’t all going to be amazing public speakers. You aren’t all going to have mounds of cash to use for the Lord.

You aren’t all going to have the same exact opportunities or gifts.

But don’t worry, God won’t be looking for the same exact results, He will be looking whether you were faithful with the little you had. *[pauseeee]*

Are you a good steward of even the little things? *[pause]*

Do you steward that little money that you have?

What about that little opportunity? That little time? *[pauseeee]*

Just consider the commendation that the master gives to the faithful servants...

He says, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.” *[pauseeee]*

There’s nothing more joyous to the ears of a servant than those blessed words. *[pause]*

Hearing that you did a good job from your earthly parent or earthly boss pales in comparison to hearing it from your Heavenly Master. *[pause]*

It will thrill our hearts to hear that someday, don’t you want to hear it?

To know that He considers us good and faithful servants - there's nothing better! *[pauseeee]*

You see, the 5 talent and 2 talent servants show us that we are to serve for our Master's sake. *[pause]*

When they stand before the master, they simply say, "You delivered me this much, I have made this much more for you." *[pause]*

It's all for Him, His kingdom, His glory, His renown, His sake.

That's how we are to serve, as servants serving for our Master's kingdom and glory. *[pauseeee]*

Sadly, we don't always think that way. *[pause]*

Sometimes our service becomes more about us than Him.

We do it for our glory and for the spotlight to shine on us, but *we* are the servants, remember? *[pauseeee]*

As a church, this should challenge us, too. *[pause]*

Do we want more people and more impact in this community for God's kingdom and glory or for our's? *[pause]*

Do we want people to notice us or for people to notice and stand in awe of our great God? *[pause]*

Do we want people to say, "Those people at First Baptist are great," or do we truly want God to get glory alone? *[pauseeee]*

We serve for our Master's kingdom and glory, and we *long* to hear the phrase, "Well done." *[pauseeee]*

We are servants entrusted with our Master's resources, and...

II. We will have to give account for how we used our Master's resources.

We are used to being accountable for things...

If you take out a loan from the bank, you are accountable to the bank to pay it back. *[pause]*

If you work at a job, you are accountable to your boss to do your job well. *[pause]*

Well Scripture shows us that as servants of Christ, we are accountable to Him.

And there will be a day of reckoning, when He will come back, and we will have to give an account for how we used our Master's resources. *[pauseeee]*

Many modern day Christians don't think this way. *[pause]*

They think that it is their life to live, and God is a little beneficial “add-on” to their life.

But the Bible shows us that we are servants, who are accountable to our Lord for how we serve Him. *[pause]*

Do you think that way about your life? *[pause]*

The Lord commands and expects a return, and He knows how much return is to be expected *from you*. *[pauseeee]*

If we are faithful, we will be rewarded with more responsibility. *[pause]*

Now we don't know exactly what this looks like, but in Luke's parallel account,³ they are given authority over cities, which would most likely be in Christ's millennial kingdom.

But no matter what exactly it is, the image is one of something great, for He calls what they had as “little” compared to what they will get as “much”. *[pauseeee]*

Oh, what great things that are in store for us who trust in Him, and who faithfully serve Him!

What we have and received from God in this life cannot compare to what we will receive in eternity! *[pause]*

The sacrifice, the time, the effort are all worth it!

He is no stingy, unappeasable Master, but He rewards faithfulness! *[pause]*

Not only that, but those who are His get to enter into the joy of their master! *[pause]*

They get to experience eternal life in Heaven, which can only be described as “joy”. *[pause]*

It is eternal joy with the Master, experiencing the eternal joy of all that the Master has.

He shares His joy with us -- what a marvelous, gracious Master, who overflows with kindness towards His own! *[pauseeeee]*

Now if you noticed, we have only really touched on the good and faithful servants, and haven't talked about the wicked one. *[pause]*

The wicked servant is the one who received 1 talent, and all he had to do was make one more talent, and he would have been just as commended as the ones who made 5 and 2 more. *[pause]*

But he didn't, for he just hid it in the ground. *[pause]*

Basically, he did *nothing* with what God gave to him to steward.

And when the Master confronts him, he calls him both “wicked” and “slothful”. *[pauseee]*

³ See Luke 19:17.

Just think about that.

God is showing us that to do nothing with what He has given to you is to be both wicked and lazy. *[pause]*

It is wicked because you are directly disobeying your Master, who has commanded you to steward what was His.

And it is lazy because you sat back and didn't do anything, instead of getting out there and serving. *[pauseeee]*

The servant's true character was revealed, and his lame excuses were disclosed for what they were.

He was really just evil and lazy.

He was selfish, disobedient, and didn't want to do anything. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the 1 talent servant tried to make excuses.

And did you hear how he essentially blamed the master! *[pause]*

"It's because you are such a hard master that I did this!"

And then he basically highlighted his (quote-on-quote) wisdom of being cautious. *[pause]*

But the master cut through all of the excuses and blame shifting to reveal the truth hidden behind it all.

He was simply wicked and lazy. *[pauseeee]*

Dear ones, I want you to know that God sees through every illegitimate excuse, for He knows the truth.

He cuts through our excuses and lays our hearts bare -- you can't fool Him. *[pauseeee]*

Many people have become masters of excuses, instead of serving the master. *[pauseeee]*

What excuses do you try to use for why you don't serve? *[pause]*

If you say, "I can't do physical things, just look at my health," God will say, "I know this, but why didn't you do what you could do that isn't physical?" *[pause]*

If you say, "But I'm not gifted like that person," God will say, "I gifted you another way, so why didn't you use that gift, and not worry about what you can't do?" *[pause]*

If you say, "I've got no time," God will say, "OK, let's look at that schedule of yours, and let me show you your priorities." *[pauseee]*

No longer focus on what you can't do, but think about what you can do. *[pause]*

God has given you what He wants you to use, so steward *that!* *[pause]*

No more excuses, for God sees through them!

You don't think that He knows what you could be doing? *[pauseeeee]*

I want you to consider the outcome of the 1 talent servant, who did nothing -- there were severe consequences. *[pause]*

He was thrown into outer darkness, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

That is, he was thrown into Hell. *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus is showing us a weighty, yet so important truth here.

If you profess to be a Christian, yet do nothing with what He has given you, you prove that you are not truly one of His people.

You prove that you have not truly trusted in Christ. *[pause]*

That wicked servant showed that he truly wasn't a servant by his lack of doing anything. *[pauseeee]*

Listen to what Jesus says in John 15...

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

...By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so *prove* to be my disciples."⁴
[pauseeee]

It is our fruit bearing that proves that we are His disciples, and those who don't show any fruit are thrown into Hell. *[pause]*

This is serious!

It's not that our faithfulness saves us, but that our faithfulness proves our genuineness.

So if you want a "feel good" religion with no responsibility, Christianity is not it. *[pauseeee]*

Some of you have such gifts, such opportunities, and some of you even have such time, and you aren't using them!

⁴ John 15:5-6, 8 (italics is mine).

But God calls you to a responsibility of using what He has given to you, so will you step up and steward what God has given to you? *[pauseeee]*

Think through what it is that made the 1 talent servant different from the other good and faithful servants. *[pause]*

We see the difference in what he says. *[pause]*

He says, “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.” *[pauseeee]*

What led him to do nothing? His view of the master. *[pause]*

The wicked servant saw the master as a hard man, which means a harsh, rough, fierce, merciless man.

So the servant was implying that the master is cruel and uncompassionate! *[pause]*

He viewed the master as an unreasonable and unjust tyrant, who only cared about the bottom line.

And this led him to fear, which caused him to do nothing. *[pause]*

Instead of loving the master, and wanting to please him, he only lived in fear of him and obviously didn't respect him nor want to obey him. *[pauseeeee]*

It matters how you view God, for it will impact how you live. *[pause]*

How do you view God?

Ready to pounce on you and bring the hammer down for something you did? *[pause]*

As unreasonable or harsh? *[pause]*

This kind of thinking about God is so common.

Some think that He is not good, for they look at their hard circumstances, and say, “Look, God is not good!” *[pause]*

Some think that He is holding back good from them because they don't get what they want, and are bitter. *[pause]*

That kind of thinking about God will only lead to inactivity. *[pauseeee]*

Or maybe for you, you are worried like that man, thinking, “What if I mess up? What if I don’t know what to say? What if I’m bad at it?” *[pause]*

That fear only leads to idleness! [pause]

Don’t let fear hinder you from faithfulness!

But remember that God is truly good, wise, and loving. [pauseeee]

You see, the servant did not view his master according to who he truly was. *[pause]*

The master was generous, for he was willing to allow them to utilize his resources, willing to give them more responsibility, and desired for them to experience joy. [pause]

The master was understanding, for he only gave them what they could handle and only expected returns that were proportional with what they had been given. *[pause]*

And he was ready to commend a job well done.

Now that’s a good master! And that’s how God is! *[pause]*

He is overly generous, greatly understanding, and ready to commend the faithfulness of His servants.

But little do some people view Him that way, but view Him as mean, hard, and stingy. *[pauseeee]*

It’s your view of the Lord that impacts how you live for Him. [pause]

If you don’t view Him as your Master, you will not do much. *[pause]*

If you don’t view Him as kind, generous, and understanding, you will fearfully do nothing. [pause]

But if you view Him as your great Master, who abounds in love, generosity, and kindness, then you will faithfully serve Him with your life. *[pauseeeee]*

This parable teaches us to...

Faithfully serve Christ, for He will return, and you will have to give an account!

Jesus calls us to be faithful, as we await His return. *[pause]*

So we don’t live in fear and become idle.

We don’t push the cruise control button and wait it out.

And we don’t hunker down and merely ‘hold the fort’.

But we actively serve our Lord, making the most of the opportunities in front of us, for His kingdom and glory. *[pause]*

We do that, remembering that He is the Master, and we are His servants, tasked with a responsibility. *[pause]*

We do that, remembering that He cares about faithfulness, and will reward us accordingly. *[pause]*

And we do that, remembering that He is a good and generous Master. *[pauseeee]*

And to think that this great Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to this earth and died on the cross for us is amazing. *[pause]*

What better motivation is there to serve our Master, knowing that He served us by living and dying for us so that we can stand before God justified and declared righteous? *[pause]*

What better encouragement is there to serve our Master, knowing that He rewards faithfulness, and shares His eternal joy with us in Heaven? *[pause]*

And what better reward is there than to hear from Him the words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’?