

Will You be Found Faithful? (The Parable of the Talents)

During our last cornerstone devotional I asked a very important question, “Are you ready for the day when you come face to face with Jesus Christ and have to give an account for how you have lived your life?” I then tried to encourage you to strive to be ready for the day when you will meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

The section of the Bible we covered during our last devotional, [Luke 12:35-48](#), is titled ‘You Must Be Ready’ in the English Standard Version (ESV), while the New International Version (NIV) titles it ‘Watchfulness’. Both titles convey the same message of being ready and watchful for the day when we meet the Lord. To help bring things back into context, allow me to read sections of our last devotional, [Luke 12:35-40, 41-44, 48](#).

You Must Be Ready (Luke 12:35-48) [Watchfulness – NIV]

³⁵ ^a “Stay dressed for action⁴ and keep your lamps burning,³⁶ and be like men who are ^cwaiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.³⁷ ^eBlessed are those servants⁵ whom the master finds awake⁵ when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!³⁹ ^hBut know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour ⁱthe thief was coming, he⁶ would not have left his house to be broken into.⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

⁴¹ Peter said, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” ⁴² And the Lord said, **“Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?”** ⁴³ **“Blessed is that servant⁷ whom his master will find so doing when he comes.”** ⁴⁴ **Truly, I say to you,^h he will set him over all his possessions.** ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. **Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.**

This chapter in Luke has been titled “Lessons along the way” by a greatly respected theologian called John MacArthur. He subtitled the section from verses 35 to 48 “*Against Unfaithfulness*”. This idea of faithfulness is illustrated in how well the servant/steward managed the spiritual riches God had put in his care for the benefit of others, and the careful management of the master’s (Lord’s) estate.⁸ The master in this story is Jesus Christ and the servants represent both Christians & non-Christians. MacArthur states that, “Faithful expression of the duty of such spiritual stewardship will result in honour and reward (v. 42-44).”⁹ The Bible tells us to be ready, to “**stay dressed for action**” (v.1), and to be faithful, diligent managers of our spiritual duties and responsibilities. By obeying in faith, we will enjoy further spiritual blessings and joyful company with the Lord.

Today, we will build on this idea of being ready and faithful. Let us turn to a parable that I hope is familiar to many of you, **The Parable of the Talents** (Matthew 25:14-30). For those of you with Bibles, please turn with me to [Matthew 25:14-30](#).

a [Eph. 6:14] ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

[1 Pet. 1:13] ¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

4 Greek *Let your loins stay girded*; compare [Ex 12:11] ¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. Speaks of preparedness.

c [2 Pet. 3:12a] ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God

e See [Matt. 24:42, 46] ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming...⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

5 Greek *bondservants*

⁵ [Matthew 12:37a – NIV] ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them **watching** when he comes.

h For ver. 39-46, [Matt. 24:43-51]; **No One Knows That Day and Hour** [Matthew 24:36-51]

i [1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3]

6 Some manuscripts add *would have stayed awake and*

n [1 Pet. 4:10-11] ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

o [John 13:17] ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

[Rev. 16:15] ¹⁵ (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)

7 Greek *bondservant*; also verses 45, 46, 47

p Matt. 25:21, 23

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2007), 211-3.

⁹ John MacArthur, 213.

Will You be Found Faithful?
(The Parable of the Talents)

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

¹⁴“For ^qit will be like a man ^rgoing on a journey, who called his servants⁵ and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents,⁶ to another two, to another one, **to each according to his ability**. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And 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.’ ²¹His 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 ^qthe joy of your master.’** ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ ²³His 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.’** ²⁴He 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, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed?’ ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For 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. ³⁰**And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’**

As you may have noticed there are many similarities between this parable, **The Parable of the Talents**, and the one read in **Luke 12:35-48, You Must Be Ready [Watchfulness]**: (potential interactive opportunity)

You Must Be Ready [Watchfulness] (Luke 12:35-48)	The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master = Jesus Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Away at wedding feast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man/Master = Jesus Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Away on a journey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servants = Christians/Non-Christians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People professing to being Christians - Task: wait with burning torches, open the door & serve/wait on master when he returns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servants = Christians/Non-Christians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People professing to being Christians - Task: entrusted with capital/property (5, 2 & 1 talents)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faithful servant: awake when master returns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steward of spiritual duties - Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Served by the master himself o Blessed w/ masters household o honour & reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faithful servant: 5 talents, 2 talents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steward of one’s natural gifts - Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Enter into joy of master o More talents o Immeasurable blessings in addition to eternal life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfaithful servant: wicked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beats other servants - Eats, drinks & gets drunk - Wicked behaviour = unfaithfulness/unbelieving heart - Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Cut to pieces & put w/ the unfaithful o Final judgement of unbelievers (hell) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfaithful servant: 1 talent servant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slothful/lazy servant, worthless servant - Despises riches of God’s goodness & clings to the utterly worthless transient goods of the world - Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Case into outer darkness (In the place where there is weeping & gnashing of teeth – hell)

The parable of the talents illustrates the tragedy of wasted opportunity. The man who goes on the journey represents Jesus Christ, and the servants represent professing believers given different levels of responsibility. It is important to note that we are all tasked in accordance to our abilities, “each according to his ability”.

q [Mark 13:32-37] ³²“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

r [Matthew 7:16-20]

5 Greek *bondservants*; also verse 19

6 A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years’ wages for a laborer

t [Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11]

7 Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

a [John 15:11] ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Will You be Found Faithful? (The Parable of the Talents)

In the Lord's infinity sovereignty He has blessed us with different abilities – He knows the abilities we have and the abilities we will develop in the future – and we are called to faithfully use our abilities for God's glory as members of His family.

- **Romans 12:4-8:** ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

God has blessed each of us each with abilities that we are to use for His glory.

- **1 Peter 4:10-11:** ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- **Colossians 3:23-24:** ²³Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Faithfulness is what the man in the parable (representing Christ), demands of the servants (representing each of us), and the parable suggests that all who are faithful will be fruitful to some degree. The good and fruitful person pleases the Lord and is blessed, while the fruitless person is unmasked as a hypocrite and destroyed (v. 21, 23 & 30).

The Bible teaches that we can recognize Christians by their fruits and obedient services to the Lord. In the same way we can testify where we are in our relationship with the Lord by evaluation our own fruits.

- **Matthew 7:16-20:** ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.
- **Matther 12:33-37: A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit** ³³“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

In *The Parable of the Talents*, the man with five talents and the man with two talents receive the exact same reward, indicating that the reward is based on faithfulness, not results. At the same time the parable warns us of the impending doom and punishment in hell for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour of their sins, “**In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**”

Through God's sovereign mercy and grace He provides everyone with opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour, as their messiah. The recipients of this divine grace inherit immeasurable blessings in addition to eternal life and favour of God (cf. **Romans 8:32:** “³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”). But those who despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long suffering (**Romans 2:4-5**), burying them in the ground and clinging instead to the temporary, insignificant and transient goods of this world will ultimately lose everything they have (cf. **Matthew 6:19-21**; ; **John 12:25-26**).

We are warned repeatedly in the Bible not to take for granted God's kindness, love and mercy.

- **Romans 2:4-5:** “⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

As a loving master and father, the Lord encourages us to store for ourselves everlasting treasure in heaven not to waste our time chasing after the petty temporal things for the world.

- **Matthew 6:19-21:** ¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This requires a sincere joyful sacrifice and faithful obedience to the Lord that brings God glory.

- **John 12:25-26:** ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

Will You be Found Faithful?

(The Parable of the Talents)

I want to clarify that this is not simply attending service on Sundays, or trying to please the Lord through good works. There is nothing we can do that can earn our salvation or is deserving of God's grace except for the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and saviour. ⁶ Jesus said..., "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him..."¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:6-7,12-14)

Lessons/Applications:

- Are we ready for when we come face to face with Jesus Christ, when we have to give an account for how we have lived our lives? Have we been faithful with the talents (natural gifts) that the Lord has blessed us with?
 - God's love and mercy is beyond understanding and comprehension.
 - **John 3:16-21:** ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."
 - How can we truly reject such love? Why?
 - **Romans 8:31-32:** ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"
- I urge each of you to strive to be ready for the Lord, Jesus Christ, to be faithful to God in your spiritual duties.
- 1) For those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, this means striving to glorify God in all that we do; living a Christ-centered life.
 - **Matthew 22:37-38:** ³⁷ ... You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.
 - **Mark 12:30:** ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
- 2) For those of you who are still seeking answers (**non-Christians**) – not knowing God and the true joy of being a Christian, a part of God's family – I **urge** you to find out more about what it means to be a Christian and to seek out the answers to the questions you have about Christianity. What an **amazing investment** of your time and energy if it leads to obtaining the most precious, and valuable treasure in life! (The Lord's forgiveness of your sin through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary).
- **Let us all strive to be ready for that day! Let us strive to be faithful to the Lord!**