

**Saints Triumphant Sunday**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of End Time**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

**Sermon #1200**

**November 13, 2022**

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<sup>14</sup> “You see, the kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey. He called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to still another one talent, each according to his own ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The servant who had received the five talents immediately put them to work and gained five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the servant who had received the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the servant who had received one talent went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The servant who received the five talents came and brought five more talents. He said, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’

<sup>21</sup> “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’

<sup>22</sup> “The servant who received the two talents came and said, ‘Master, you entrusted me with two talents. See, I have gained two more talents.’

<sup>23</sup> “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the servant who received one talent came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter seed. <sup>25</sup> Since I was afraid, I went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’

<sup>26</sup> “His master answered him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers so that when I came I would get my money back with interest. <sup>28</sup> Take the talent away from him and give it to the servant who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> Because everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>30</sup> Throw that worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Dear Friends and Fellow Redeemed in our Coming Savior,

Do you have any hidden talents? That always makes for an interesting conversation, and it is part of the fun of getting to know other people. I can

remember going to visit a member of one of my former churches in his apartment, and as soon as I walked in the door, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful paintings that hung on the walls. When I asked about them, he pointed out that he was the artist who had painted them all! Maybe you've had similar experiences, when you've known someone for a long time before you found out about a hidden talent they had, and you come away appreciating them just a little bit more than before because you found out what else they can do.

Hidden talents can often be interesting to discover, but today our focus is on the words of Jesus that serve as a warning against a different kind of hidden talent. It's a parable—in other words, a made-up story—that Jesus uses to point out the reality that we all need to be reminded of on a regular basis. So, let's look at these carefully chosen words and learn what Jesus wants to teach us.

We see an important truth already in the very first verse. <sup>14</sup> **“You see, the kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey. He called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.** Let's all approach this parable the same way because Jesus is talking to each one of us. He is reminding us of a key truth with a detail we don't want to skip over or look past. Whose property are we going to be discussing today? Not that of three servants, but one master. Yes, they will have it for a while, but it all still belongs to him. He is the owner; they are the servants, the managers of what is his, the stewards of his talents. So that's a key term in our church language: a steward is a manager, and stewardship is management of what belongs to someone else. Jesus wants us to see ourselves not as the owners of what we call ours, but as the managers of what belongs to God. Psalm 24 reminds us so clearly, **“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”** Our bank accounts, all our possessions, even our lives belong to God. Does that affect the way we use them? It ought to, especially as we read on.

<sup>15</sup> **To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to still another one talent, each according to his own ability. Then he went on his journey.** In this original context, a talent is an amount of money equal to 6000 days' wages. Even though this master is handing out piles of money that are not insignificant, the dollar amount isn't the most important thing. What we do notice is that he gives a different amount to each servant. We don't hear the servants bickering about

whether this is fair or not, because they know that the master doesn't owe them anything. They are his talents, and he can do with them what he pleases. As we read on, the wise servants realize that their job is to manage what they've been entrusted with until the master returns.

**<sup>16</sup> The servant who had received the five talents immediately put them to work and gained five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the servant who had received the two talents gained two more.** They didn't waste any time. They put his talents to work... **<sup>18</sup> But the servant who had received one talent went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.** There it is...the hidden talent. I suppose we could sympathize with the third servant and make excuses for him. He didn't have as much to work with. He didn't want to lose it, so he kept it in a safe place. But what he forgot, or better yet, what he failed to keep in mind, is that the talent wasn't his to hide. And we see that in the conclusion.

**<sup>26</sup> "His master answered him, 'You wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers so that when I came I would get my money back with interest.**

Let me ask again: do you have any hidden talents? In other words, have you been so concerned about yourself that you have forgotten whose property you are managing? Have you been so concerned about what you are earning and spending and saving and investing that you've lost sight of whom you are serving? It's so easy to lose sight of the big picture, isn't it? It's so easy to look at what others have and we don't have, what we want and what we are working toward, and forget all about the one who has entrusted us with his property until he comes back. Now, maybe some of us have come around to the idea that a portion of our money belongs to God, but that isn't enough, is it? Once more, **"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."** It's all his: our money, our property, our time, our abilities... our entire lives belong to God, and we are to be managers who are faithful and responsible to him.

So it seems that the first thing we owe him today is our humble repentance, our honest admission that our natural selfishness so often gets the best of us, and so many of our choices reveal that we have not considered his will for our lives as

much as we have focused on our own. We have sinned, and God would be entirely fair to take every gift away from us and give it to someone else.

We may have wasted talents, but let's not waste the opportunity to hear good news today, and let's not ever waste the forgiveness that God gives us through Christ. Jesus came to earth because God is so much more faithful than we are; he keeps every promise. Jesus lived his entire life keeping God's will, doing God's work, and then he gave his perfect life as the one payment that would set us free from slavery to sin, deliver us from death, and secure our eternal salvation.

Jesus is God's gift to you, and me, and all who receive him by faith. Jesus is the reason we could read that list of names earlier, and we could be fully confident that they are safely home with the Lord, having been rescued from every earthly trial and temptation. Jesus is the reason we are moved to consider what God has entrusted to us, and we are motivated to use it faithfully until our Lord returns.

What does that mean? Some of God's money is meant to take care of our needs, our food, clothing, and shelter. Some of God's money is meant to be shared with others in need. Some of God's money will be set aside for taxes (for the benefit of society), and he wants us to be honest in paying what is due. Some of his money is meant to be gathered and used among us for the work of his church.

Let's use our congregation as an example of the way it works. Just think. Many of us don't remember this church being built. We walked in when it was already here. But realize this: if we would read the names of all the people God used to lay the foundations of this ministry, we'd be here all day. But on this Saints Triumphant weekend, we thank God for the faithful stewardship of all who came before us, and we rejoice in the eternal victory that they are now enjoying. Why did they do it? They gave because they loved hearing they were forgiven, and they wanted others to hear it, too. They gave offerings because through faith in Jesus, they knew where they were going, and they didn't need a dime to pay for it.

Friends, it's up to us now. Perhaps the best way for us to honor the memory of those who have gone before us is to carry on the ministry that they have handed down to us. Let's not hide any talents as we consider what God has given us to use for his purposes. If you have money to give, give generously for the work of the gospel. If you have time, give time. If you can share your abilities for God's

glory, serve one another joyfully. Trust that God has equipped us to carry out this ministry right here, right now, and into the future if he allows it.

The ending is already written. Again, that's why we are so joyful today. We remember those who have finished their work and now rest from their labors. And we look forward to joining them, all thanks to Jesus. The only question is this: how many more will come with us? Today, let's renew our partnership in this gospel ministry, until the time comes when we get to hear those words of grace and eternal blessing, **'Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master!' AMEN.**