

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 20

Jesus teaches the parable of the talents

Matthew 25:14–30



DAY 1

Jesus is the Master • Matthew 25:14a

READ

Matthew 25:14–30

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 25:14a

To teach the disciples to faithfully work while He was away, Jesus told a parable. A **parable** is a simple word picture that illustrates a profound spiritual truth. This parable is about how to live while waiting for Jesus' personal and glorious reign on earth when He returns (Matt 24:30; 25:1). The master in this story trusted three slaves with a total of eight talents of silver. This was an enormous amount of money. It would take an unskilled laborer four lifetimes to earn that much money! Yet in those days, it was normal for wealthy owners to trust their slaves with important jobs. Even though slaves were the property of their owners, certain slaves were well-educated and highly-skilled, and they could act with the master's authority. Like the master in this story, Jesus was about to go away for a long time, and during that time He would entrust His work on earth to believers. He would give them rich resources—abilities, gifts, and opportunities—which they were to use as His **slaves**, as people who belong to their Master, live for their Master, and exist to serve their Master (2 Cor 5:14–15).

ASK

1. What is a parable?
A simple story that teaches spiritual truth.
2. What is this parable about?
It is about how to live while waiting for the kingdom of heaven.
3. Who does the master in this story represent?
Jesus.
4. Who do the slaves in this story represent?
Professing Christians.

DISCUSS

1. What kind of master is Jesus (Matt 11:28–30)?
2. Why did Jesus often speak in parables (Matt 13:10–17)?

DAY 2

Jesus gives gifts to use for Him • Matthew 25:14b–18

READ

Matthew 25:14–30

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 25:14b–18

Like the master in the parable, Jesus distributes His gifts unequally. Not only does every person differ in natural abilities and opportunities in life, but God also gives spiritual gifts in proportion to the faith He assigns to each person (Rom 12:3). This may seem unfair, but only if we are thinking selfishly. It is actually a great blessing, for it shows that God knows us and does not burden us with more responsibility than we can handle. As soon as the master left, the first two slaves immediately began investing and trading for their master's benefit. The third slave did not work. He buried his one talent, which at that time was the best way to keep money safe. Motivated by fear, he would not take risks for the sake of his master. He is like so-called Christians who only care about **sins of commission**: they want to avoid doing bad things. But in the process, they commit terrible **sins of omission**: they are not doing good things. They do not realize that one who fails to do good is just as wicked as one who commits obvious sins (25:41–46; Jas 4:17).

ASK

1. How much money did the master give to each slave?
Five talents, two talents, and one talent.
2. Why did the master give the slaves different amounts?
He knew what each slave was able to take care of.
3. What did the slaves with five talents and two talents do?
The first earned five more, the second earned two more.
4. What did the third slave do with his one talent?
He buried it.

DISCUSS

1. What was wrong with just burying the money to keep it safe?
2. How do sins of omission differ from sins of commission? Provide an example of each type of sin.

DAY 3

Jesus rewards faithful slaves • Matthew 25:19–23

READ

Matthew 25:14–30

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 25:19–23

When the master returned, he rewarded the two faithful slaves. Even though one slave earned more money than the second, both were equally praised because they were equally faithful. God judges not by results but by faithfulness. It is not about how much we have accomplished for God, but about whether we are devoted to God and have faithfully used what He has given us for Him. He loves this, because He loves to

see His faithfulness reflected in His slaves (Deut 7:9). The master gave two rewards. First, He gave greater authority, resources, and responsibility in working for God. The second reward was to share in the master's joy. But how is His joy a reward for them? Because His joy is their joy. Nothing makes a Christian happier than seeing Jesus happy, because he loves nothing more than his Master. This is why they obey Him—they enjoy giving pleasure to their Master (John 15:11). They also love being with their Master (Ps 16:11; 27:4; Phil 1:23). So Jesus gives the best gift ever: He welcomes the faithful into His joyful presence (John 14:3; 17:24).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How long was the master away?
A long time.
2. Why did the first two slaves get the same reward, even though they earned different amounts of money?
They were both faithful. God judges us by our faithfulness, not by results.
3. What were the two rewards?
(1) Greater authority to serve. (2) Sharing in the master's joy.
4. How are these rewards?
(1) Humans were made to work for God, so that is what brings the most joy. (2) True believers love God most, so they are most happy when they see His happiness.

DISCUSS 

1. God judges not by results but by faithfulness. How does this motivate you to persevere in serving Christ when there seems to be little to show for all your work?
2. What do you think about the rewards God promises? What does this show about what you really treasure in your heart?

DAY 4*Jesus punishes unfaithful slaves • Matthew 25:24–30***READ** 

Matthew 25:14–30

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 25:24–30**

The third slave was not faithful. He neither loved nor served his master. Instead of delighting in the master's joy, he thought his master was an unjust and difficult man, someone impossible to please. As a result, the slave was also *slothful* and *lazy*. By not even investing the money, the slave proved he simply did not want to benefit his master. He saw no personal benefit in it for himself, so he did not work. This slave didn't just get a smaller reward. Instead, he received exactly the opposite. Instead of greater authority and service, he lost even the opportunity he had. Instead of joy in the master's presence, he wept outside the master's presence. This is just, for he never wanted the reward anyway. He did not like to serve the master, and he did not enjoy the master's presence. Many professing believers are like that slave. They do the minimum only out of fear, for they have no joy in the real reward—serving God and enjoying His presence. As a result, they will suffer away from God forever (Matt 25:46).

ASK 

1. Why was the third slave wicked?
Instead of loving his master, he was afraid of him. He dishonored his master by thinking that he was unjust and cruel.
2. Why was the third slave lazy?
He did not work for his master.
3. What did the master do to the third slave?
He took away his talent and punished him

DISCUSS 

1. How did the unfaithful slave show that he never truly belonged to the master?
2. Why do you serve Jesus? Do you enjoy doing it, or do you do it only out of fear? Do you love to do it, or do it only because you have to?

DAY 5

Jesus is coming back • 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

READ

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

EXPLAIN

The truth of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Believers often wonder, “How long, O LORD?” (Ps 13:1). Unbelievers often mock, saying that Christ will not return because the world seems to go on forever without change (2 Pet 3:4). But let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Gal 6:9). Christ will return. Even if you die before then, you can have hope, because one day you will enter His kingdom. This is what Paul told the Thessalonians in order to comfort them. They need not grieve about believers who had died, for these believers would one day return with the Lord. They will receive their new, resurrected bodies, and after that, the Christians still living on earth will be snatched up with them to meet the Lord in the air. This event, “the rapture” of the church, is not to be confused with Jesus’ second coming, an event featuring the judgment of Christ (Rev 19:11–21). In contrast, the rapture is meant to be a source of comfort: no Christian, dead or alive, will miss the Lord’s glorious return.

ASK

1. What event did Paul describe?
The rapture.
2. Why did Paul deliver this message to the Thessalonians?
They were sad. They thought that Christians who had died would miss the Lord’s return.
3. Are the rapture and Jesus’ second coming the same event?
No. Jesus’ second coming describes His judgment of unbelievers. In contrast, the rapture encourages believers that they will not miss the Lord’s return.

DISCUSS

1. How is Jesus’ return a comfort believers? How is it a terror to unbelievers?
2. How are you using your time while Jesus (the Master) is away?

NEXT WEEK

Jesus prepares for His death

Matthew 26:1–56

