

11-12-13

14“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15“To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16“Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17“In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18“But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20“The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ 21“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

22“Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ 23“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

24“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’

26“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27‘Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28‘Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

29“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30“Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Lefty Ward used to tell a story about when he and his family were all in a station wagon heading to Prairie Bible Institute, and as the long hours passed, they noticed another family in a similar situation that seemed to be going the same way. They would pass each other and then the other would pass and after a while they began to wave at each other.

At length it turned out that both cars had pulled into a common rest area for a lunch break, and taking the opportunity to greet the other folks Lefty asked, "are you born again?" And the reply came back, "no, we're Presbyterians."

That was a rather light hearted attempt to introduce a far reaching and complex controversy within christendom that James Boice called the Dallas controversy and that later on became known as the Lordship Salvation controversy.

In 1983, when we first came to Tonopah and weighed our options as to where to land with other christians in faithful corporate worship, one of the options was a start up called Tonopah Bible church if I recall correctly.

Lefty Ward had started it and for us it seemed promising. A natural choice. Lefty had gone to PBI, a school I revered, and it was a non-denominational group which was also attractive to me.

Within that handful of christians was a man and his wife, Greg and Susan Knoll. And without ever questioning, indeed in pure ignorance that there was such a controversy, I found myself defending something called Lordship salvation, and indeed being accused of heretical beliefs.

It seems that no less than Lewis Sperry Chafer and Charles Ryrie and later, Zane Hodges, of Dallas Seminary fame had pressed the definition

of salvation to mean that a person can believe in Christ but really want no part of Him, as Lord, and still by that belief have salvation be a reality.

And these folks would argue that requiring repentance from sin, or accepting Jesus as Lord, or for that matter expecting anything at all to ever change as a result of being a christian, was adding works to salvation and therefore falling under the anathema's that Paul warns the Galatians who had been prey of the teachers dogging Paul's footsteps who added circumcision and Moses' Law to the salvation requirements.

In easier language, they taught that requiring repentance or acknowledging Lordship at salvation was a corruption of the pure gospel. Along with this belief and actually logical to it is the belief that anyone who ever makes any kind of ascent to being a christian, in any broad definition, and then falls away, never to be seen again, is indeed, fully saved and going to heaven.

The end results are sort of two seperate tribes of people claiming to be christians. Those for whom change is optional, following Jesus as Lord is optional, second tier, holy roller christianity, and the other tribe, those who believe that in fact Jesus **is** Lord **of everything** irregardless of where any individual may fall.

One group has fire insurance with anything beyond that, optional second tier stuff for the radically committed folks, but certainly not necessary to be equipped for heaven.

And the other opposing group sees christianity as something like a little cell of enemy combatants living in a war zone that Satan now rules, and who need to therefore follow their new commander, the Lord Jesus in all things.

Within that idea is the Book which is the definition of all things. The war manual that needs to be studied and learned and followed. A book that explains that things in this world aren't as they first seem, and that also claims to have authority over our lives. Visible evidence of conversion. A new life. Different from the world's culture.

Which group do you think is more popular in the United States?

I chuckle sometimes that you folks didn't really have a clue what you were getting yourselves into when you called me to fill this pulpit. You figured, he's harmless and he seems willing.

I am definitely in that other group. The one that sees christianity as those who, fully understanding the beauty and value of the redemption purchased in Christs blood for us, for our lostness and slavery to sin, and who have consequently seperated ourselves from Satans kingdom by repentance from sin, and we have been transferred into Christs authority. The question of Lordship is almost laughable. It defines who christians are.

In fact we'll see in this parable that the No-Lordship salvation people have it exactly backwards. Jesus can be Lord and not saviour, but He can never be saviour and not Lord. Indeed, He owns all three slaves in this narrative.

The gospel, the good news is that by the blood of Jesus, shed for you, you can be redeemed, bought out of Satan's authority, and enjoy being under God's loving authority and care by forgiveness of sin. Lordship, either of Satan, or of God, IS the issue. It defines real christianity.

Otherwise you're like a person who says, thank you very much for the blood, I'd really like to not go to hell, but just now, I think I'd prefer to keep launching rockets against Jesus. I prefer to live in satan's kingdom, but, thanks for the fire insurance. I'll sign up for that!

It becomes non-sensical. And yet, look around you at this giant tree called christendom. Folks that a pew researcher would lump together in a group that they would say is 2.1 billion people.

How do the numbers reflect against what Jesus has been warning His hearers about in these 3 parables regarding being ready? Do His warnings mean anything?

If you believe in a two tiered christianity where everybody that believes Jesus even was, is going to heaven, what do you do with this stuff.

These warnings are severe. The people in each case who are rejected, go to hell. Forever. What did He mean? It seems like there are parallel universes between what Jesus says here, and what we see paraded around us as identifying somehow with christianity.

And with those thoughts fresh in our minds, let's take a look at this third of three parables that all have a common theme. That theme is that those who are ready when Jesus returns from His journey, will go into the joy of the Kingdom, with Him, forever.

And those who are not ready, will perish and spend eternal torment in hell.

Therefore, we had better get this right. We need to understand what Jesus means when He says "ready". Heaven and hell hang in suspension over this word.

It's so important that He has labored to tell three different parables that illustrate what it means when He says, you must be ready. This is the third.

If you missed #1 or #2 the manuscripts are available on our web pages. tonopahchurch.org. Click on studies in Matthew. I recommend opening the .pdf files which are just easier to read.

On one of my trips to Southern Cal. I was meeting some of my very oldest friends at Grace Community Church to enjoy a morning of worship shared with them. Bruce and Nancy. And as we were walking from the cars to the worship center, Nancy said, "this'll be another Who's in and Who's out sermon." And it was. And there was a note of weariness about that . . but . . Thank God for faithful preachers who keep beating on this drum over and over.

We are deaf. We're all deaf. And Jesus keeps talking about who's in and who's out, over and over and over, and so will we, as often as He

brings it up in this book.

14“For it is just like a man . . .

What is. This pronoun, IT, refers back to the previous parable where He began with The Kingdom of heaven can be compared to . . .

This parable and the others, are about the authority to reign of God. I can't say it often enough. And some of you are like, oh, you're definitely saying it often enough.

The kingdom of God, or as Matthew likes to say in deference to his audience, the jews who were nervous about even saying God, the kingdom of heaven, is what Jesus is defining, and by the very word definitions, destroy's forever the Lordship controversy.

This is nonsense if that is true. The authority of God to reign, but of course, it's not necessary for Him to reign in order for you to go to heaven . . . what balderdash. The whole discussion supposes a picture of those who have come out of Satan's rule and come under God's rule. Otherwise the parable is meaningless. Readyness is meaningless. The parable becomes a moot point.

14“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.

He called His own slaves. Doulos. There's our word again. The kind of slaves who belong to another person. Not employees. Slaves. An easy reality for the hearers to understand. Dis-tasteful to us, now, but you really need to understand this master. Trust me, you want to be His slave.

And there is an extra little word in front of slaves that powerfully in the greek describes His unique ownership. His own slaves. *idious* It's a strong possessive word. Like you would say if you were talking about your family members. My own family. These are mine.

15“To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one,

each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

The word **discrimination** is in the news these days. And it carries a lot of baggage for us. Discrimination is evil. Or so the media juxtaposes the word.

Guess what. Jesus discriminates. He portioned out the amounts according to criteria. Each according to their ability. Jesus gives more to the slave who has proved he has the ability to accomplish the master's desired goal. Less to a second, and again less to a third. According to their ability.

Another interesting original word. dynamis. We get our word dynamic. A person's dynamic is a person's powers. Their personality. Their gifts. Their abilities because of natural gifts and talents plus learning plus work ethic. All kinds of considerations go into this idea.

Like a person who is in a position to hire people. You try to ascertain as much as possible about the dynamic of the people you have to choose from before you hire them. Can they get the job done? Interesting word.

And that carries true for us today. He gives us all different gifts and He requires something different from you than He does from me. We don't judge each other on how much we're doing for the kingdom, but the other side of that coin is every one of us has gifts that the master **does** expect us to be using to further the cause of His kingdom. Kingdom work. To every slave, a portion. Every slave will answer to the master.

A talent, assuming this is gold, would be worth about 1.5 million dollars. We'll return to this later and I'll parable push. I'm accused of parable pushing, assigning unnecessary meanings that stretch the original desired intent beyond the goal. I want you to know I have prayed over this because I don't want any more or any less than what the Lord Jesus intended for this parable to mean.

In any case, this isn't chump change. The master is wildly rich, and he entrusts some of his treasure to be invested by his slaves. \$7.5 million

dollars. Here, go invest this for me.

16“Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17“In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18“But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

And here the story gets interesting. Two of the slaves go out and trade and double the masters money. One digs a hole and buries it.

Notice the word immediately. I read these biography's of the great notable saints and in almost every case, they are saved and they immediately are at work for the King. My one sorrow is that I did not do that. I wandered in the desert for about 40 years before I knuckled down and got to steady work. Don't follow my example. Go immediately, like these 2 slaves.

So then, we'll pause here for a moment and revisit something we said last week and the week before that. If we work from the back to the front in these three parables, we can state that the issue here is salvation.

Saved people are ready. Saved people go into the joy of the Master in His kingdom. The cast out people are; unsaved. Salvation is causal. Salvation is the difference that causes wise virgins to act wisely.

Salvation is the difference that causes some slaves to treat the sheep better than they treat themselves year in and year out, while other slaves chop up the sheep and eat them and sell the wool.

Salvation is what causes 2 slaves to go and work hard for their master's best interest with no profit for their own, and a third slave to tell the master he's a thief to expect people to do that.

So, again, working backwards from that conclusion we're going to look at the different evidence in the slaves lives and say, this is what saved people do, and this is what non-saved people do. Simple Simon.

I hope everyone agrees with that simple logic. Because the end result of these parables is that we need to apply this to our lives. And if our lives look like the un-saved slaves, we need to flee to Jesus. We need to take action and not be like the unsaved slave. So, the story deepens;

19 “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20“The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ 21“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22“Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ 23“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

I see a couple of things here to remark on. *Now after a long time* Another subtle hint. Luke's similar but not identical account of probably another re-telling of this same lesson - I believe Jesus probably preached the same lessons over and over in different circumstances, different places, different hearers, but largely similar lessons, which is why we get similar stories with different values - Lukes (19:11) account begins with *While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.*

They think the Kingdom is going to happen later this week. Not going to worry too much about being ready, because it's imminent. Why worry about being ready. Jesus is here. The kingdom is happening now.

Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

I remember a sermon illustration from my youth. It goes something like this; There was a farmer who was obstinant to christians and church and religion in general. A proclaimed atheist. And he would plow his field

directly across from the church house on Sunday mornings during worship service time, making just as much noise and dust and inconvenience for the saints as he possibly could.

One day he was speaking to the pastor and said something to the effect; "that proves there is no God. Nothing has happened to me as a result of my insolence to people who claim to belong to God. Therefore there is no God."

And the pastor simply reflected, "there is a God, and your actions only prove that He doesn't necessarily settle all of His accounts on the day they become due."

Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

Wait for it. Judgement is coming. For everyone. Jesus is **Lord of all**. The insolent and rebellious, as well as those who love Him. Think about the previous discussion of His **own** slaves. He owns everyone. Even the wicked are owned and will be judged by this master.

OK, now I'm going to parable push and give you what I believe is the answer to the question, what was the talent. What was the treasure entrusted to us.

*2 Cor. 4:6,7 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have **this treasure** in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;*

*2 Tim. 1:13,14 Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching you have heard from me, with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14Guard the **good treasure entrusted to you**, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*

The treasure is the gospel that frees us from enslavement to satan and sin. The treasure is the word of God which sets us free. We guard that

treasure. We fight for *the once for all delivered to the saints faith*.

These slaves, no. 1 and no. 2 invested that treasure and it brought a huge return.

Every life rescued from Satan and won for the Kingdom and the King is of inestimable value.

Vs. 20 *“The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’* 21 *“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.*

These are the words we long to hear. Well done, good and faithful slaves. Enter into the joy of your master. And so also for the 2nd slave.

24 *“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 ‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’*

Oh! This is different. This slave's attitude is that his master is unrealistic in his expectations and actually wickedly so. His tone is accusatory. *I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed*

You expect me to work for you. You expect gain, but you expect me to provide the labor. Who do you think you are. That's a hard saying.

He not only rejects this person as being in authority over him, he accuses him of wickedly looking for profit for which he did not labor.

We've come full circle back to where I started with the Dallas controversy. The lordship salvation controversy. Does Christ have any right to require and expect His people to take the treasure He's entrusted to them and invest it in order to provide a return for Him?

Can you accept Jesus as saviour, but reject His lordship? Is that not what we're looking at in this parable?

25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

He was afraid. He had a dread of this master.

This is the person who receives the gospel, dreads turning his life over to any other master than the one he perceives, himself, and buries the gospel in the ground.

Dead end street. He remains dead. He hates this master. On judgement day he says, why did you expect me to go and make a profit for you? That's hard.

This is MY life. I live it for ME, not you. Thanks for the gospel, here, you have it back again. Just the way you gave it to me.

Brian Borgman points out something interesting and I'll insert it here. Notice that in Salvation and judgement, salvation has zero to do with our works. God accomplishes it all. God gets the glory for our salvation. But judgement on the other hand always rotates around works. What you did. You will be judged for what you do.

Salvation, not of works. Judgement, all of works.

We could push this idea even further. The talent is what doubled. The slave doesn't have any hope of going and making 1.5 million dollars. The money worked. It multiplied. The slave was just the steward. And yet when it's time for rewards, the good and faithful slave gets the praise as if he earned that money.

That's how the gospel works. We have no control over how it multiplies. Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes . . . Paul doesn't have that power. The gospel does

But if you bury the talent in the ground, it can't multiply. So this slave paces some steps off of his barn that he can recall, stands on a spot where he can look straight down two rooflines. X marks the spot. And he buries the talent and then he goes on about his life as he had it planned, not the master's business.

He has no love for this master. It's all about him. But now it's accounting day.

26“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27‘Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.

As I was reflecting on this passage it occurs to me that what we have here is an example of one of the most mis-quoted verses in the entire Bible, in action form.

If you were to poll America on what is the most often quoted verse in the Bible, you'd be surprised to find out it isn't John 3:16. It's Matthew 7:1

1“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Jesus takes the guys own words of judgement and uses them AS judgement against him.

The talent has the magic in it. All you had to do was put it in the bank and the magic would happen. It wouldn't be 100% return like the other 2 slaves got, but it'd be something. Burying it in the ground sealed the deal. No magic. No power. No multiplication possible.

You wicked, lazy slave At the end of the day, a slave is a slave. And a slave that won't work for the master is a thief. This slave won't work. He refuses to do anything that would advance his master's interests.

It's like the somewhat common expression from the south. That dog won't hunt. If you're a lion hunter, you don't keep a dog that won't hunt. What good is it? This isn't about keeping pets.

The master expects His slaves to be good stewards of His interests. The talent has the power to reproduce itself. All we have to do is be stewards of it. Invest it. Don't throw it to the swines. Don't mix up your metaphor's Jim.

28 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29 'For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 'Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I said at the beginning, this is a salvation issue. Like the virgins, we see the same phenomenon. Some have. Some do not have.

Those that have, will find that this master is magnanimous. He piles on more so they have an abundance. But those who don't have, even what they thought they had, is taken away and given to someone already rich.

Good works do not produce salvation. But salvation always produces good works. x2

Is it too much for us to end this morning by asking ourselves, is there evidence in my life. Are the talents, the gifts that God has given me, are they reproducing Kingdom bounty? Am I seeing God at work accomplishing Kingdom goals, eternal things, and somehow He's using me somewhere in the process?

Those are things we expect to see that accompany salvation.