

**The Tragedy of a Wasted Life
Matthew 25:14-30**

Intro: In his poem *Maud Muller*, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the well-known lines, ***“For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’”***

Scripture is full of warnings to take advantage of opportunity while it is available. Solomon wrote, ***“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”*** and, ***“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”*** (Eccles. 11:1, 6). That same man of wisdom wrote, ***“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.”*** (Prov. 10:5). His father, David, had written, ***“But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time:”*** (Ps. 69:13).

Isaiah exhorted, ***“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:”*** (Isa. 55:6). Jeremiah reminded his readers that ***“the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.”*** (Jer. 8:7). Paraphrasing his preceding quotation from Isaiah, Paul admonished the Corinthian believers, ***“Behold, now is ‘the acceptable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation’”*** (2 Cor. 6:2).

Jesus repeatedly called on men to make the most of spiritual opportunities. ***“Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. ³⁶While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”*** (John 12:35-36).

The tragedy of wasted opportunity is the theme of Jesus’ parable of the talents, the second of two parables relating to the kingdom of heaven and, in particular, to men’s readiness for Jesus’ coming to establish the kingdom at His second coming (see Matt. 25:1).

Explain the text in the context of the question in Matt. 24:3

What we see in this parable is reason we should give of our self, our talents, those gifts God has given each of us for the express purpose of using them to build and enlarge His Church.

[Read Matt. 25:14-18/Pray/Dismiss Jr. Church]

The parable of the virgins (vv. 1-13) focuses on readiness in waiting, whereas the parable of the talents focuses on readiness in working. **The five virgins who had oil for their lamps represent believers who possess saving grace; the two faithful servants who invested their talents represent believers who exhibit the serving life.** Together the two parables depict the balance of believers’ looking forward to His coming with anticipation while living in preparedness for His coming through faithful service.

Frequently one or the other of those precepts either is lost or overemphasized. Although believers are to rejoice continually in the prospect of their Lord’s coming again, they are not to sit back in idleness and do nothing. Saving faith is serving faith. On the other hand, they are not to become so caught up in serving the Lord that they forget to contemplate and rejoice in His return. It was perhaps because they thought the Lord was coming momentarily that some of the believers at Thessalonica fell into undisciplined, careless living and decided to do no work at all. Consequently they became busybodies who did nothing productive and even disrupted the church. Paul rebuked them and commanded them ***“with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”*** He then admonished the whole church to ***“be not weary in well doing.”*** (2 Thess. 3:10-13).

Though the parable of the talents has relevance to every generation, the Lord was still speaking directly about the generation that will be living just before His return in glory (24:34), the exact time of which will not be known in advance but the imminence of which will be manifested by spectacular and unmistakable signs (24:3-29).

The parable of the talents illustrates three basic aspects of spiritual opportunity: and give us our motive for giving of our self and talents.

Why should we give of our talents? Why should we make our selves a living sacrifice and give of ourselves?

BECAUSE OF...

1. THE RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE V. 14-18

A. **We are given certain talents, or resources** v. 15

B. Master = Jesus; servants = Believer

C. **These resources are distributed...**

1) According to the Masters desires

(a) Matt. 14-15

(b) 1 Cor 12:11 **"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."**

2) For a purpose.

(a) These gifts are God given abilities given to believers so they are able to serve Him.

(b) Every Christian has at least one **"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."** 1 Peter 4:10

(c) Each Christian is expected to use that gift **"...even so minister the same one to another..."**

(d) 1 Cor 12:7 **"...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."**

(e) Gifts are distributed so we can minister to one another.

(f) We are expected to use those gifts, "

3) According to our ability.

(a) V. 15, **"...according to his several ability..."**

(b) Some are given the responsibility to:

(1) To prophecy – to forth tell God's Word – this is your preacher

(2) To serve – This can define all of us

(3) To teaching – not all preachers are teacher any more than all teachers are preachers

(4) To export – comfort or consol

(5) To give – finically

(6) To lead – rule with diligence or be careful

(7) To show mercy – have compassion

(8) To evangelize – this is the more formal act of evangelizing that goes beyond that which all of us is called to.

D. **We have the responsibility to use those resources wisely - What Are You Doing With What You Have Been Given?**

1) Investing God's resources for greater return

(a) Serving others

(b) Supporting God's work with your time and money

(c) Building up others

2) Squandering God's resources

(a) Sitting and soaking

(b) Failing to use your gifts and abilities

3) It would be a tragedy to reach the end of our lives only to find that we had wasted all that God had given us.

4) The truth is that most Christians today live a life as a saved soul but with a wasted life.

E. **Why should we give of our talents? We should give our talents because of the RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE, ...**

BECAUSE OF...

2. THE RECKONING WE FACE Vv. 19-27

A. The exact length of time the master was gone is not mentioned and is irrelevant, except that it was a **long time.**

1) When the master returned he held them to account, **"...reckoneth with them."**

2) The same thing is true with you and me.

- B. We will be held accountable and you can be sure of that...Jesus said, ***“...I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; ...”***(John 14:2)
- 1) When he returns it will be without warning
 - 2) It will be unexpected, that is what is meant by ***“After a long time...”*** there is no indication in the text that the servants had any idea as to when he would come back only that he would.
 - 3) There is a day coming when Jesus will come and reckon with us
 - 4) 2 Cor. 5:9-10 ***“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”***
- C. Notice that when the master called his servants together to settle accounts that the first two came with their report, “you gave me 5 or 2 and I have gained you 5 more or 2 more.
- 1) There was not hint of boasting or self-congratulations
 - 2) They knew that everything that had been entrusted to them had been used to the fullest extent possible and now they stood before their master with no apology necessary.
 - 3) They are in a sense saying, “I have used what you gave me to the fullest and as a result I have increased your kingdom 10 fold.
 - 4) They both understood that they had only done what was expected of them – it was the masters resources after all.
 - 5) They demonstrated the attitude Jesus said every obedient disciple should have: ***“...when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”*** (Lk 17:10)
 - 6) Near the end of his life, Paul wrote Timothy, ***“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*** (2 Tim 4:6-8)
 - 7) Paul wasn't boasting but simply stating the joy of his heart knowing that he had used what the Lord had given him to bring his Lord glory with his life.
- D. Notice the masters response
- 1) When the master said, ***“...Well done, thou good and faithful servant...”*** he was commending the slave's attitude more than just his accomplishment.
 - (a) He first of all commended the man's excellent character, which expressed itself in excellent service.
 - (b) Since the master represents the Lord Jesus Christ it is remarkable to contemplate that the holy just, perfect Lord of the universe will stoop to praise His true disciples for their faithfulness, imperfect as it will have been.
 - 2) The master not only praised him but he also rewarded him, ***“...thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”***
 - 3) Not only will the Lord entrust greater earthly tasks to those who prove themselves faithful, but their heavenly reward will be opportunity for greater service to Him throughout eternity.
- E. The other servant was also called one of his therefore he was owned by the master so he may represent someone who was saved
- 1) Since all three are being judged at the same time it is important to point out that the saved will be judged by the master at the judgment seat of Christ according to 2 Cor 5:10 and the lost will stand judgment at the Great White Throne judgment according to Rve 20:11-15.
 - 2) This servant was being judged as a servant and what is being judged is not him personally but his service.
 - 3) When we stand before that Judgment seat we are not going to be judged but our service will be; what we did with the talent the Master gave us.
 - 4) Our service will be judged not our sonship.
 - 5) All three men were judged on the basis of their performance, not their person.
 - 6) Not unlike most of us when he comes before the master he tries to make an excuse **Vv. 24-25**
 - 7) Excuses won't work.

8) Here the master calls him **"...wicked and slothful servant..."** he is equating laziness with wickedness.

F. **WHY SHOULD WE GIVE OF OUR TALENTS? WE SHOULD GIVE OUR TALENTS BECAUSE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE, THE RECKONING WE FACE ...**

BECAUSE OF...

3. THE REWARD THAT AWAITS US Vv. 28-30

A. Before we move on I want to point out one more thing.

1) The wicked and slothful servant is **"cast...into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** V.30

2) There are only two ways to understand this verse:

(a) If this servant truly represents someone who was saved then does this mean he lost his salvation?

(1) No, we know that the Bible clearly teaches us that once one is saved he is saved for eternity; that is the meaning of eternal life, therefore it must mean something else.

(2) It either means that while those of us who are told well done and rewarded with the honor and privilege of serving with our Lord for 1000 years this worthless servant, the one who had a saved soul and wasted life will stand and watch and hear all those souls in hell.

(3) He will have to watch as all the souls he may have reached for Christ had he just used the resources the Master had given him.

(b) The other possibility is that this servant represents the tare for the parable of the wheat and tare.

(1) In that parable the wheat represents the truly saved and the tares represent those who are not saved but simply live like it among the wheat.

(2) In that parable the Master tells the servants to leave the tares mixed in with the wheat to be cleaned out with the judgment comes.

3) Regardless of which one is the real understanding of this servant this one thing is for sure; I cannot think of a single person who wants to live their life in such away as to come to the end of it only to be cast out to watch all those they failed to reach because they were unfaithful with the talents and resources their master gave them.

(a) Those who use their resources wisely will be rewarded by being given even more and greater responsibility in the millennial kingdom.

(b) If this third servant represents someone who is saved then his reward is that of one who will, according to 1 Cor. 3:12-15, **"...saved; yet as by fire,"** and, at least for the millennial age suffer loss but be rewarded eternal life.

4) On the other hand if this third servant represents the tare then he will be cast into outer darkness.

(a) Outer darkness represents the place without the Lord since John tells us **"... that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."**

(b) The presence of light signifies God's presence and darkness signifies His absence.

Conclusion: Why should we give our talents? Because they were first given to us by our master and we are to be stewards of them using them for His glory to build His Church to enlarge His kingdom.

Challenge – come and sign your name and tell us what talent you have that you are willing to give to the Lord.