>>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 49 <<<<<<<

1) Continuing, we read what many translations call "The Parable of the Talents."

Matthew 25:14–30(ESV)

The Parable of the Talents

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

2) This parable has a very similar theme to the ones that precede it.
   a) They all refer to the departure and absence of the central figure.
   b) He stays away for an unexpected length of time then returns.
   c) At his return, praise is given to those who are ready or had produced as they expected and judgment is prescribed against those who were not.
3) If this parable is metaphorically referring to Jesus' return, which in context, would make sense then the phrase "after a long time" could indicate that Jesus' return would be "after a long time."
4) Ok, let's begin with a question, keeping in mind that "talents" are not only what we do well but other things he expects us to use …

What does God give us for talents?

a) His word

b) Our talents (abilities)

c) Our wealth

What does he expect from us for each of these things that we have been given?

5) Does God expect different things from us depending on our abilities?

a) God recognizes each person as a unique individual with varied circumstances, abilities, and personality.

b) What he "gives" to each person is exactly what that person can handle.

c) In the case of this parable and in our lives, they and we cannot use the excuse that we are overwhelmed.

d) We must remember that whatever we have been given, God expects service with corresponding accountability.

e) Bottom line is God says, "invest your life for me" – "take up your cross and follow me."

i) As Paul says …

Colossians 3:17 (ESV)

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

6) We must realize that the Master knew the slave had abilities and he gave him according to those abilities.

a) While the English word "talent" has come to mean a natural ability, the Greek word *talanton* simply means in this context a sum of money.

b) Since the first two slaves had the ability to sell or trade to get the increase they and the master wanted, we must assume that the third did as well.

i) It might add some further perspective here also to realize that the first two slaves, though the amounts were different, they doubled the master's money.

c) But if the third did have the same ability, he obviously did not use it.

i) Even though he does not double the master's money, based on the master's response, the master would have settled for interest on the one talent he was given.

(1) The size of the increase for him really does not appear to be the issue.

(2) Instead, it is the application of the ability that the one talent man had that is lacking.

ii) However, in this case, if one considers the master's response, it could be said that by doing what the wicked and slothful servant did it actually cost the master money.

So, what could have been the real mistake of the one-talent slave?

a) Frozen with fear?

b) Lack of initiative?

c) Just not thinking? (effort to bury vs. effort to place in a bank).

d) **Lazy? (uses his supposed knowledge of the master's hardness as an excuse).** (he is called "Slothful")

7) If we use the talents given us in a responsible way we will be rewarded.

8) If we do not use the talents given us, we will be lost. ***Agree / Disagree?***

   a) The servant made excuses instead of realizing that, from the start, his responsibility was to serve his master to the best of his ability.

   b) To refuse to serve as we should, reveals a lack of love and shows that we do not really desire to do what we should for God. This is rebellion!

   c) We know that our time, abilities, and money are not really ours but we do sometimes forget that.

   d) The person who diligently prepares for it by investing his or her time and talent to serve God will be rewarded.

   e) The person who has no heart for the work of the kingdom will be punished.

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.

9) Now, I hasten to add, this does not mean we must quit our jobs in order to serve God.

   a) It means we are to use our time, abilities, and treasures diligently in order to serve God completely in whatever we do.

   b) For a few people, this may mean changing professions.

   c) For most of us however, it means doing our daily work out of love for God.

   d) Being faithful in using what we have been given.

10) Now, here is the last question for this passage.

Can we lose our salvation by not being the good servants God expects?

   a) If we consider this parable, it seems the answer would be ***yes***.

      i) A servant on the inside is thrown outside when judgment falls.

   b) We know that grace is going to cover sins that…

      i) We have truly repented of but have been unable to accomplish the completion of that repentance.

      ii) Sins we have unknowingly committed.

   c) But grace will not cover rebellion against God or God's word.

   d) To not evaluate our abilities and deliberately not use them for service to God as He says we should, I am not so sure that grace will cover that.

      i) We may not be great at what we do for God but we must do it to the best of our abilities – again, not the size of the increase but the effort to get there using the talents we have been given.

         (1) God provides the increase!

      ii) This servant made excuses and failed to use the ability that the master knew he had.

         (1) He was lost!!!

   e) I think we will see clearly Jesus' idea on this in our next passage.

1) Jesus has told the disciples that only the Father knows the time of His return but He does know what that final return will be like.

   a) This passage lays that out quite clearly…

Matthew 25:31–46(ESV)

The Final Judgment

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he
will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he
will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the
goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then
the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was
hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger
and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited
me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him,
saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you
drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe
you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King
will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my
brothers, you did it to me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the
eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave
me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did
not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did
not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you
hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to
you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it
to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into
eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

2) In the ancient near east, it was common for sheep and goats to graze together.

3) Yet, it was commonplace also for them to be separated at times as indicated by the introduction to the parable.

4) There were several reasons why this separation was necessary at times.

   a) One practical reason was that sheep and goats have different needs**,** particularly regarding shelter and temperature.

   b) Goats are generally more tolerant of cold and wet conditions, whereas sheep benefit from being protected from bad weather.

      i) At night, especially in cooler conditions, the animals could be separated and sheltered differently.

   c) There was also a difference in their behavior and management.

      i) Although both animals could graze together, the shepherd knew which animals were sheep and which were goats and could sort them when necessary.

d) Thus, Jesus' audience didn't need to imagine some elaborate process of identifying the different animals. They understood the basic concept:

i) One shepherd(Jesus) → one mixed flock(all the people of all the nations) → time of separation(when he comes) → two groups.

5) Now, Jesus proceeds to explain the groups – what defines characteristics of the one group (on the right) and the other group (on the left).

a) On the right:

i) Blessed of My Father and inheriting the kingdom.

(1) I was hungry and you gave me food.
(2) I was thirsty and you gave me drink.
(3) I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
(4) I was naked and you clothed me.
(5) I was sick and in prison and you visited me.

What are all these characteristics of?

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Do you think every person on the right did every one of these good things?

Probably not.

b) On the left:

i) Cursed and going into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

(1) I was hungry and you gave me **no** food.
(2) I was thirsty and you gave me **no** drink.
(3) I was a stranger and you did **not** welcome me.
(4) I was naked and you did **not** clothe me.
(5) I was sick and in prison and you did **not** visit me.

c) Obviously NOT loving you neighbor as yourself.

Do you think every person on the left was guilty of not doing all of these things?

Probably not.

6) This poses somewhat of a dilemma, beyond the sovereignty of God and Christ what differentiates these two groups that have the absolute fate?

7) The answer to this question might be in the question that each group asks.

a) Right:

‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?
38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?
39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

b) Left:

‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’

8) Oh, wait a minute, these are basically the same question.

So, what is the difference?

a) In truth, given the heart of the two groups, the difference probably begins with the reason that is likely behind the question.

   i) For the group on the right, the reason is likely one of surprise.

      (1) In other words, when they did all these things for others, they did not see Jesus so it was a surprise that that could be His answer.

      (2) Their focus was on the person, loving, and caring for them.

   ii) For the group on the left, the reason is likely an excuse like that of the slothful servant for not doing any of the things they should have.

      (1) In other words, if they had of known it was Jesus, they would have done what was required but anyone else they could not bother so they did nothing or truly little and probably for the wrong reason even then.

9) Obviously, we want to be in the group on the right – NOT the LEFT!!!

10) So, last two questions on this passage which are really application questions …

(multiple choice) To assure we are in the group on the right we must …

a) Do every one of the items Jesus lists?
b) Just do some of the things Jesus lists.
c) Do whatever we do from the list out of love for our neighbor?
d) All of the above?

Now, how do we make sure that we do what we do "out of love for our neighbor?"

11) As I thought about this, it occurred to me as a point of clarification; there would be some drastic consequences if we all decided to visit every sick person.

   a) The hospital room would be very crowded.

   b) We have to apply common sense and do what our heart for the Lord and our fellow man dictates – not try to make this a checklist that says I have to list everyone who sick today and go visit them.