

111923 Sermon "Enter into the Joy of Your Master" Matthew 25:14-30

1. Sharing Thanksgiving stories is a perfect way to end a busy day of cooking and feasting and spending time in the last, lovely days before winter. If you've ever sat down for a Thanksgiving dinner with your friends and family, I'm sure you have a few very memorable ones that you'll continue to tell for years.

While reading about Thanksgiving, I read the following someone wrote:
"My dad bought a Ron Popeil 'Set It and Forget It' rotisserie oven one year just so he could make our Thanksgiving turkey that way. He got SO excited and invited the whole family over, of course... But in his excitement, he forgot the weight limit of what can be cooked in one of those things, and he set the entire bird on fire. To make things worse, the only 'restaurant' in town that wasn't closed...was a 7-Eleven. That was the year my entire extended family had lukewarm hot dogs and microwave burritos for Thanksgiving." Well, how about your stories?

The Russia-Ukraine war and the war in the Middle East are still going on, and the world is in difficult economic times, but as I look back on 2023 ahead of Thanksgiving, I still have a lot to be thankful for to God, and I am thankful for each and every one of you. Thank you! Thank you for being here. Thank you for being faithful to God and to each other. You deserve to have a Happy Thanksgiving. I hope you have a very happy Thanksgiving this week.

2. The passage in Matthew 25 that we read today is well known as the Parable of the Talents. It tells of a master who was leaving his house to travel, and, before leaving, entrusted his property to his servants. According to the abilities of each person, one servant received five talents, the second had received two, and the third received only one. One of the most important concepts in this parable is "preparation." Rather than waiting vaguely or trembling in fear of when the end times will come, this parable is telling you how to be thankful for each day that God has entrusted to you and how you can enter into the joy of your master.

We need to look at the parable of the talents in context of the Bible. Jesus told five parables in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 that believers should always be alert to the sudden coming of the final judgment. The parable of the talents corresponds to the fourth lesson there.

First of all, a talent was originally a unit of weight. In the past, gold and silver were weighed on scales and used as currency, so a talent was both a unit of weight and a unit of currency. At that time, one talent was equivalent to 6,000 denarii, and a worker's daily wage was one denarius.

If we only look at the value of money, a person who received one talent received approximately 16 years' worth of salary at once. The person who received two talents received 32 years' worth of salary at once, and the person who received five talents received 80 years' worth of salary at once. I mean, if you look at it in terms of material possessions. If you really received that kind of money, you should study financial management or find a good fund manager.

But you already know that the meaning of the parable extends far beyond financial investments. God has given each person a wide variety of gifts, and God expects us to employ those gifts in his service. The gifts we receive from God include skills, abilities, family relationships, social status, education, and experience. The point of the parable is that we are to use all that has been given to us for God's purposes.

3. From a young age, I was confident that I was second to others in terms of talent. The fields in which I excelled were art, science, and music. I started off by winning a special prize at the World UNESCO Junior Drawing Contest when I was in the first year of elementary school, and when I was in middle school, I represented the school in the art department at the state and national art competition and won many awards. When I was in middle school, there was a radio assembly competition, and I won first place at school, so I went on to the state competition, where I took second place. Since I was in elementary school, I have been active in the school choir and participated in various competitions, winning many prizes.

At first, I was young and thought I was better than others because I had more talents than others and I became prideful. Well, but I don't see it that way anymore. Do not boast about what you have, but be thankful to God, your Lord, and remain faithful. This is the important message of the parable of the talents. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

In the Bible, the talents that are mentioned today are not mine. Originally, it belongs to the owner, God. It is something God has entrusted to me and each of you while living in this world. Whatever talents you have, the Bible reminds us that it is not yours, but ultimately God's. My time, passion, health, wealth, and talents can seem to be mine when living on this earth, but if God wants to recover it, then God can take it anytime. If so, we must become wise and utilize what God has entrusted to us to enter into the joy of the master.

As I've read today's story several times, the word "property" in particular caught my eyes. Look at verse 14: "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them.' Here, the Greek word used for property or master's possessions is the word [whisperconta]. It means 'things in the hand'. This word is derived from the verb [whipalko], which means 'to exist, to live'. It can also be interpreted as the master giving his servants what he owns, that is, what is in the hands of our Lord, what is alive, or imparts life. A wise life is to be thankful for the life God has given you every day. One day at a time! And participate in the things that please God.

Looking back to the Gospel of Matthew today, a person who has received five talents does not boast that he has received a lot. Also, the person who received the two talents was grateful for receiving it without any resentment or envy. An important expression is found in verse 16, which is indicated by the fact that they "go right away" and immediately obey the master's words.

In verse 21 the master said, "Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things." Also, he said, "enter into the joy of your master."

On the other hand, look at the one who has received one talent. The problem he has is not that he only has one talent. The biggest problem was that he was fundamentally wrong about the owner. In verse 24, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man," uses the Greek word "Screros" which means "a stubborn, harsh, cruel person." Now this servant considered his master to be very evil, cruel, and bad. That's why he goes on and says, "so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground."

That's not all. Verse 24 also includes, "reaping where you did not sow, and

gathering where you did not scatter seed." What does this mean? The servant misunderstood the master as an evil and cruel person who does not make any effort and tries to earn from others. In this way, the servant who received one talent in this story was completely distorted the good and fair appearance of his master.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, this talent parable says to prepare for the end times! We Christians are people who live in preparation for each day, keeping in mind that our Lord can come today. The Bible doesn't tell us to spend time with fear because the end is coming. Instead, if we focus on participating in the joy of the master today, to be faithful to the one who entrusts his ministry, we will surely enter into the joy of the Lord in the end as well! Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.