

14 *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

In the parable that is before us, Jesus deals with stewardship and His expectations for those whom He has entrusted with certain talents. Now I want you to understand that the parable is about more than money. Many people view this story in Matthew only through the lens of finance, but there are more important things in life than money. **Money is important, but money will not buy your way into heaven.**

I want you to look with me, for a few minutes, at the symbolism in this text. In the "BIBLE STORY" the Master (or the man traveling) is Christ, who is the absolute Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, and especially His church. Into his hands all things are and must be delivered.

The servants in the "BIBLE STORY" are Christians, (You and I, or at least we call ourselves Christians, which means we're supposed to be Christ like.) In any case, we're supposed to be His servants because we are born in His house, bought with His money, and redeemed by His blood. Therefore, we are to be devoted to His praise, and employed in His work.

Now, the "BIBLE STORY" says that the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who calls his own servant, and delivers unto them His goods. Christ is really painting a picture for His disciples and giving them a sneak preview of His ascension back to heaven - because you know it wouldn't be long now (in the context of this passage) that Jesus would be tried and crucified, but three days later would fulfill the prophecy spoken about Him and get up from the grave and ascend to His father in heaven.

Yes, when Christ went to heaven, he was as a man traveling into a far country; that is, he went with a purpose to be away a great while. And when he went, he took care to furnish his church with all things necessary for it during His absence. He committed to His church truths, laws, promises and powers: the parakatatheke, or the great depositum as it's called. In other words, Jesus left His Spirit to enable His servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe those laws, to improve and apply those promises, and to exercise and employ those powers, ordinary or extraordinary - Christ, at his ascension, left His goods to His church. He didn't have to do it, but He did - and I'm so glad He did!

And the thing about it is that Jesus (the Master) committed all of this to us "in trust!" He appointed us to work, for Christ doesn't keep any idle servants! NO. . . He left us something to work on. And when He comes back He's going to want to know:

- *"What did you do with the goods I left you?"*
- *Were you FAITHFUL with them?*
- *What's your ACCOUNT of it?*
- *And can I TRUST you with anything better than what I left you?*

In other words, Jesus is going to want to know, "Have you been **"Faithful, Accountable, and Trustworthy?"** I'm using an acronym for it: **"F"** for **"Faithful"**, **"A"** for **Accountable** and **"T"** for **Trustworthy** . . . **F-A-T: "Fat!"** That's why I've come to tell you that **God Loves US "F-A-T"**

My brothers and sisters, we must understand that we have been given 'TALENTS' from God to get the increase with. Our talents are the scriptures; the Holy Bible. Now know this: If we take the Word of God and harvest it, we'll have an increase. Remember what the Lord said in **Luke 9:26.** *"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory."*

So, I ask you right now, have you been ashamed of His words, have you taken the 'talents' He's given you and used them to make an increase around you? Whether it be cleaning the toilet at the church or taking care of the church grounds, or helping a neighbor in need. **When the Lord comes back He's going to look at how we handled the task He set before us!**

The parable of the talents not only speaks of future judgment, but it also speaks of our CURRENT STEWARDSHIP- **How We Use the Gifts He Gives Us!!** Whether you realize it or not, you are a MANAGER. YES, each one of us have been entrusted with resources from God's storehouse.

So many of us think that because we own a large portfolio of land, houses, stocks, and bonds, we're more than we really are - **but in reality we are only "MANAGERS."**

One hundred years from now, it won't matter what kind of car I drove, or what kind of house I lived in, or what my clothes looked like or how much I had in the bank. All of my stuff will be in the hands of somebody else or in the landfill somewhere. **"Naked WE come from OUR mother's womb, and naked WE are when WE die!"**

Jesus is really trying to encourage us to be good stewards of what we have been given!

So many of us in the church take a laid-back, lackadaisical approach to kingdom building because we don't serve in a high-profile possession in the church. **But I want you to notice here that the Master only gives His servants what He already knows they can handle.**

The reason God hasn't promoted some of us into the places in the church we think we ought to be is because He already knows **"We can't handle it!"** Many of us can hardly handle what we have now! You're probably not doing so hot with what He's already trusted you with and if He gave you any more (right now) you'd mess it up! You ought to thank God that you're where you are and that He Only Gives You What You Can Handle.

There is a little story that comes from a book called the **Star Fisher**. Picture if you will an early morning along a California beach. An elderly man is walking along the edge of the water and stops occasionally, picks up something, and then tosses it into the ocean. He then walks a few steps more, picks up something, and tosses it into the ocean. A young jogger is running along and has been watching the man. Finally his curiosity gets the best of him and he stops and goes over to the old gentleman and asks: ***"Excuse me, what are you doing?"*** The man answered: Well, I am saving the life of these star fish. The storm washed them ashore last night, the sun will be up in thirty minutes, and then they will all die. I am throwing them back into the water to save their lives.

The jogger was a bit astounded. Old man, he said, don't you know that you have thirty miles of beach ahead of you and that millions of those star fish were washed ashore last night. What possible difference do you think that you are going to make. The old man took another step picked up a star fish, and with all his might hurled it into the ocean, then turned to the jogger and said: ***"Well, son, I guess I made a difference in that one's life."*** You see, on his simple walk...**HE COULD HANDLE SAVING LIVES!!**

Henry Crowell contracted tuberculosis when a boy and couldn't go to school. After hearing a sermon by Dwight L. Moody, young Crowell prayed, "I can't be a preacher, but I can be a good businessman. **God, if you will let me make money, I will use it in your service.**" Under the doctor's advice Crowell worked outdoors for seven years and regained his health. He then bought a little run-down Quaker Mill in southern Ohio. Within ten years Quaker Oats was a household word to millions. Henry Crowell faithfully gave 60 to 70 percent of his income to God's causes, having advanced from an initial 10 percent. **Yes, Henry was given a 2nd chance at life, and with the blessings God gave him, he blessed others.**

NOW LOOK AT THE "BIBLE STORY" WITH ME AGAIN: In the STORY three servants are given talents from their master to take care of while he is away. To one he gave five talents, to one he gave two talents and to another he gave one. **All of these was given to the servants according to their ability. And after the Master gave the servants these talents he went on a long journey.**

Now... while the master was gone these men were suppose to use these talents to get an increase. First we have the servant with 5 talents. He had the most of all the three and had a great deal of responsibility. He took what he was given and used it and produced an increase.

The next had only two talents, he had a considerable amount less than the others, but was still expected to use them and get an increase.

Finally we have the third man who only had one talent. This man, though given a little task, took and hid the talent. He buried it. And when the master returned, He saw that the other two had an increase in what he had trusted them with and made them “ruler over many things.”

. . . But He discovered that the one servant had been lazy and had nothing to show for his stewardship. Therefore, He then took what little he had trusted to this servant and gave it to the others and cast this servant into outer darkness.

Well . . . my brothers and sisters, I don't know about you TODAY, but when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back I don't want to be cast into darkness, but I want hear Him say ***"Well done, thou good and faith-ful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter though into the joy of thy lord."***

Not only that, but if people are busy using their talents, they won't have any time to be getting into trouble. My grandmother used to say to both my brother and I when we were young, ***"Idle hands are Devil's playground!"***

The truth is you may never be a five talent person, but I stopped by to tell you that everyone has some talent or ability that they can use to serve God. **The lesson is, use what you have and the Lord will richly bless you for it!**

REMEMBER... **"God Loves You F-A-T"** - ONE who is ***Faithful***, ONE who is ***Accountable*** and One who is ***Trustworthy***.

In other words, He loves folk who have eaten so much of HIM--they're ready to explode FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS!

I wonder THIS MORNING are there any "Fat Folk" in here? If you're FAT (I'm not talking about your weight) but I'm talking about your worship. If you know you're "FAT" – WAVE to three people and tell them **"I'm Fat and I'm Proud!"**

Jesus used this STORY to teach people the importance of using what they have been given and to remind them that one day they would stand before God and give an account of their one and only life. Those who squander their opportunities will be separated from God for eternity.

Listen, brothers and sisters, we are not all called to preach from the Word of God, but there is something we can do that will be useful to the kingdom of God. We are Witnesses of Christ yet many times we will avoid any contact with people we are suppose to witness to!

OFTEN... we have extra time to clean the church or serve in the church or mow the lawn for a neighbor, yet instead we indulge in ourselves and waste our times. And then, many of us who are called to preach run from our calling until we have ran so far from God we may not find our way back.

The bottom line is, we cannot bury our resources in the ground and expect God's Blessing. We must use what we have for GOOD—AND WE MUST USE THEM NOW. God has given us abundant resources in order to make a difference in our world. **You have been made "F-A-T" to make a difference.**

We must use what we have or we will lose it. When the MASTER returned, he said, ***"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents."*** When we fail to use OUR talents, we are in danger of losing what we have been given. **When Jesus concluded this story, it was evident that the moral of the story was more than financial management; IT WAS ABOUT 'SOUL' MANAGEMENT. It is about the fact that... GOD LOVES THOSE WHO ARE..."F-A-T" Faithful, Accountable and Trustworthy to his calling!!**

What will you do with the GIFTS He Entrusts you with? AMEN.