

“God’s Expectations”
Matthew 25:14–30
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September 6, 2015 – Evening Sermon

Prayer:

I pray that You would bless us with Your presence for we do not gather primarily to see one another but we gather to hear from You. We do not gather to hear from me but from You through Your Word so that You would fill me with Your Spirit to teach and rightfully divide the Word but I pray for those who are reading this, that You would soften and make our spirits in tune with Your Spirit O Lord. Sharpen our minds to listen and pay attention to what You might be trying to say to us and may our hearts be soft and pliable as You mold us into the image of Christ for I pray in Christ’s Name, Amen.

I will start by reading through the whole passage and then we’ll talk about it. This is a parable that many of you will be very familiar with. Matthew 25:14–30 says [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.’*

Let’s think about when Jesus told this parable. It is very soon before He is about to go to the cross. He is preparing His disciples for that and He is using this as a picture of a master entrusting things to his servants, leaving on a long journey and one day he’ll return to settle his accounts. We find ourselves in a very similar situation. The Lord

Jesus has gone to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He has given us gifts.

When it talks about talents here it can represent many different things. It can represent anything in our life that we can use for the glory of God. It could be mental capacity, physical energy, financial resources or other resources, musical gifts, business acumen, Scripture knowledge or anything. The first point I want to make is that God gives much for He is a lavish Giver. If you're reading this God has given you much. You are very blessed and some of you might be thinking, 'how can you know that for sure and you don't even know who I am.' For those sitting in Briarwood Presbyterian church on a Sunday night over Labor Day weekend in the 21st century you essentially live in the belt buckle of the Bible Belt. Think about all the blessings that must imply about your life. So many of the good things in our life we didn't choose but God has given them to us.

Imagine if you had been born in the 14th century as a slave in Nepal. Imagine how different your life would be regardless of how hard a worker you are. If you are sitting here this day then we have been blessed lavishly. There may have been people in your life that have been blessed a little more but we shouldn't primarily look at them and whine and complain for there should be a sense of gratitude of how much God has richly blessed us. Let me take another angle on this. Think about it corporately. How much have we been blessed as a church? Briarwood is not a perfect church but it's a great church, an amazing church and so many other churches are capitulating to the culture of the times and leaving God's Word. How faithful this church has remained and it is a blessing.

Part of the way we need to think when we read this parable individually is what has God blessed me with, what has He given me and what does He expect from me, but also as a church what has He invested in this church, the great legacy of others who have gone before us that have passed down this church as a stewardship. What are we going to do with it for the next 55 years? I want us to think that way as we go ahead. God gives much for He is a lavish Giver.

Matthew 25:14 says [14] *For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.* Anything good and right that you have in your life, ultimately is not yours. You are a steward and it belongs to the Lord. You are an investment manager and He expects a return on His investment. In this parable He gives them talents. People debate exactly how much a talent was, but the smallest is said to be 20 years wages for a working man. Some say one talent was enough to build an entire war ship. The bottom line though is that it probably represents millions of dollars in the currency of our day. So for someone to get five talents probably was more than they ever would make in a life time. If we started neutrally could we work to get all the blessings that we have? No, as the phrase says most of us started with a silver spoon in our mouth, for we started with the blessings of God. We have been given so much that we need to take an account of that but that is not all this parable has to say.

Matthew 25:16–18 says [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.* We know what's coming. A reckoning is coming, a settling of accounts is coming but why do you think the first two servants were

so eager to get busy? Let's put this parable in today's sense. Let's say you're part owner in a business and the senior partner says "I'm going to take a pretty large portion of my business, sell it and give you all the money for I want you to go start your own business and see what you can do." That would be similar to what this parable is saying. Immediately there was this sense of urgency for these two to go get busy. They didn't say 'Look at what God has given me, I want to throw a party, rejoice and have fun.' These two went out and took some type a business venture and took a risk. That is part of what the Lord is trying to say to us in this parable.

When you start to notice all the good things that God has given you in your life, the natural tendency of our hearts can sometimes say 'It looks pretty scary out there in the world so I want to protect me and mine. I want to circle the wagons and hang onto the few good things I have. I probably can't do much with the rest of the world anyway.' That is not the mindset the Lord is after, to circle the wagons and hang on to the bare minimums. The one who did that, it doesn't end very well for him, does it? God says "I'm a Giver." Think about the Lord for He left comfort and security. John Piper said 'Christianity is about moving from security into places of need.' That is what the Lord Jesus did for us so God wants us to follow His example. When God invests in your life He expects you to go take risks for Him. Go out there and think through the things He has given you in your life.

Often times my mind immediately wants to think I don't have much 'blank.' Maybe you work in an industry where people around you make a lot more money so it's easy to hear a parable like this and think you don't have very much money. If I was making as much as those other guys I'd give crazy amounts of money but I don't have that much money. Maybe that's not what the Lord is after in your life. You should still give, tithe and probably more but maybe you have a gift of relationships. You are great at making friends, with people on an airplane in five seconds, where you can make them feel cozy and warm and they want to open up to you and spill their guts. That's a gift for that doesn't happen for everybody. You may not be able to invest a lot of money in the Kingdom but you can invest your time and energy into relationships. We need to be praying 'where has God invested in us? Where has He given me much and where does He expect much from me?'

Matthew 25:19a starts off, *[19] Now after a long time...* Some of you are with me on the fact that God has given us a lot but it seems like what is happening in our world God is withdrawing a sense of His presence. Do you think His disciples ever felt that way when they were being persecuted? There is a sense where the Lord has gone on a long journey but He will come back one day. Things may get really dark in the meantime. The point is to be faithful and don't be looking for a reward in your life. Sometimes He does reward us in life. I'm sure some of you could tell stories when you gave charitably and sometime later it came back to you. Some of you could probably tell stories of how you shared the Gospel with someone who initially got mad and turned away but then sometime later they came to know Jesus, repented and came back to say you were their best friend. So sometimes we do get rewarded but many times you have to wait until the next life to see the rewards.

The big picture of the parable here is the Lord Jesus is going to come back one day and He will settle all the accounts. If you have been living faithfully for Him, not perfectly but trying to fumble forward by His grace, you won't be disappointed on that

day. You will be excited just like these first two guys to come and say ‘Look what I’ve done.’ That’s a good response.

Matthew 25:19–21 says [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.’*

There are at least two rewards here, do you see them? One of them is more ministry, business and relationship opportunities. Some of you have dreams in your heart but think you don’t have enough opportunities to invest your gifts. The Bible would say to you if you feel limited is to have present faithfulness. Put your nose to the grindstone right where you are because when God sees that you are being faithful in a little then He will give you more. That is the way He does it so don’t talk about what you might do one day if only you had more opportunities. Be radically faithful where you are now in this small hidden place and in the right time and right way He knows best for He will exalt you at the proper time. He will give you the opportunities He wants you to have. If you are faithful in a little He will make you faithful in much.

That is a big reward. You should not view ministry or giving opportunities primarily as a burdensome duty that is sacrificial and it costs you. Now it is that sometimes and it’s not wrong to be honest about that but that shouldn’t be your primary view. I’m not saying it’s always going to be easy but your attitude should not primarily be that you look at opportunities as a burden. It is just a duty that I do out of rote obedience. You should readily look at it as you are happy to serve the King. I’m just happy I get to be on His team. I can’t believe He wants to use me. That seems to be the attitude of the first two in this parable.

The most important reward was not extra opportunities but this is to show how lavish God is for its not just that He gives you much in the beginning and rewards much, but He also says the best reward is the joy of the master. That has to be the main thing that drives you. There is a scary teaching today, mostly in reformed circles unfortunately, that I call the hyper grace movement. It basically says that once you’re saved, God loves you so much that what you do doesn’t matter so much. It doesn’t matter if you sin and it won’t affect the way God feels about you at all. At first glance this sounds a little bit Biblical because it is true that if you’re a Christian and covered with the righteousness of Christ, His love and commitment to you never goes up or down or waxes or wanes.

As much as that is true it is equally true that He loves you like a child and so His pleasure in you can certainly go up and down. When you sin you can grieve His heart because He loves you so much and when you obey you can bring pleasure to Him. Matthew Henry said if you don’t believe you can please God with your obedience (not earn anything) as a Christian then you’ll never do anything for the Lord. You’ll just have an attitude to sit around and abuse grace. I want to pause here and make sure we understand this.

The way that God takes pleasure in us when we are trying to serve Him is the same way you take pleasure in your kids’ refrigerator art. As a parent you have this sense of excitement when your kids draw something because they tried and it was from their

heart and their intention. It's not Picasso but they tried. You may have been working with your son on tee-ball in the backyard even though there wasn't much coordination but the first game comes and he steps up to the plate, the ball comes, he swings, hits the tee but the ball goes backwards. If you're a good parent then you know this intuitively that he tried his best even though it was a disaster, then you stand up and cheer. You might give him a few coaching tips afterwards but that's the way the Lord looks at us. He is not looking for perfection. He is looking for a heart that is willing to get out there and take risks for Him. If I really believe how good He is, how lavish He is, how generous He is and how gracious He is, it frees me to take risks like these two servants did.

Here is my last point before I start to wrap it up. God forgives much. So where do I get this from this text? Matthew 25:24–26 says [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?'* I want to stop here and comment on this servant.

There is really no nice way to interpret what happened here. This man proves himself not to be a Christian. It seemed like he had some investment from the Lord but when the accounts were reckoned it turns out he didn't. He was not a true believer. He says in Matthew 25:30 to cast this worthless servant into the outer darkness for in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There is no way to say that was just a time of pruning and refinement. When Jesus talks that way it always means hell. He is not a true Christian.

Let's look at his sin and think about what he did. He was fearful. He was lazy. He might have said that he was just being cautious. There is a place for caution in ministry, opportunity, investment and business but caution is not the thing in this parable that is highly prized by the King. He over did it. He doesn't repent. He doesn't come and say he is sorry, please forgive me. He tries to blame the master. This is your fault for you are such a harsh master. You are such a cruel master. You haven't given me enough. This is your fault. I wish this type of mindset was unique to this person in this parable but it's not.

Can you think of any other place in the Bible that this rings your bell or sounds the same way? Think about Genesis 3. God says 'Adam where are you? What happened?' You see it was Eve, this woman You gave me. I was doing fine on my own with the animals until You gave me this woman. It's Your fault God. Isn't that what a lot of us do? You made me this way God. You gave me these desires, feelings and temper problem. Why did You make me this way? We are very slow to take responsibility for our own sin. This servant doesn't repent.

It is important to look at the sin behind the sin. What drove him to be so lazy and blame the master at the deepest level? He didn't really understand the good heart of the Father. He did not think of the Master as a loving, gracious, giving, lavishly rewarding Father. He thought of the Father like this task master. He totally didn't understand Him or get Him. When you don't understand the heart of the Father you can't live the

Christian life. God's heart toward you is good, loving and gracious. The heart of God is not to take but to give. That is the Gospel.

Why does He want us to go out there and be faithful with what He gives us? It is because He knows it is going to bless us more, just so that you can come back and He can reward you more. You can never out give God because anytime you're serving Him you're using the grace that He provides and in one sense it just makes you more indebted to Him. If this servant really understood the gracious heart of God he wouldn't have responded this way. So where do I get this idea of forgiveness from this parable?

Look at what God says after He has rebuked the servant. When He says 'if you knew I was this way' He is basically saying He is going to hold him accountable to his own words. People will be judged based on the truth that they had and God will say if that is really you're excuse then I'll judge you based on your words. Your excuse doesn't work because if you really believed that then at minimum you should have taken some baby step of faith to show that you trusted Me. You should have at least put the money in the bank and I would have been happy with the interest that I would have received back on it. That is how merciful and forgiving God is. If we can take the smallest step of faith toward Him by His grace then there is mercy and forgiveness to cover our fears and failings.

It makes me think when the prodigal came to his senses and he was coming back to the Father. I can just see the prodigal walking slowly back, barefoot, covered in pig slop and rehearsing the speech he is going to say to the Father. The Dad sprints towards him and in a sense that is the heart of our Father God when we blow it, sin, are afraid and haven't been faithful. If we can just take some small baby step back towards Him then He'll sprint towards us with mercy but this servant refused to do it. There was no repentance and no admission of his sin. He took no responsibility for his sin and all there was, was blaming.

I want to close with two or three thoughts. The first is why can God be forgiving? Why could the master say if you had just taken the smallest step of faith? Why could He be so merciful to cover the other ways we're fearful? It is because of what this story doesn't mention. The story teller, the Lord Jesus Christ was the ultimate ten talent guy for He had it all. He didn't just have a piece of the Father's business but He had the whole thing. He literally had all of creation at His feet but He was willing to take a real risk. He was willing to leave His Father's throne above to empty Himself (so great His love) and bleed for all this helpless race. He came into this world a poor man, a lowly man, live the perfect life we're supposed to live, die the death under the wrath of God that we deserved to die and that's the greatest risk there is.

We don't really take any risk compared to the risk that He took for us. Philippians 2 says that He was rewarded and hyper exalted for He got the Name that is above every Name. So that is how the Lord can look at us and expect us to be faithful and He knows we won't be perfect at it but take the risk because the greatest risk has already been taken for you.

I want to share one more thought. For years, I would read this parable and think that it is missing something. Have you ever read the Bible and thought that a certain part was missing something? There is something good and bad about thinking that way. One, anytime you think that way you're always wrong, right? God's right and you're wrong for you have to know that going in. So how can it be healthy? It can be healthy if that's

a form of meditation. I'm reading Your Word God and it doesn't seem to totally jive so it seems there is something missing, so why is it not there?

For years as I read this parable I basically thought that the story would seem more realistic to me if you didn't have just the five talent, two talent and one talent guy but maybe if you had a three and a half talent guy. The three and a half talent guy would go out and invest his talents in business but his business investment would be a disaster. He would be the business idiot. He just loses it all and so when the master comes back he would tell the master, 'I went out and risked for you but 2008 wiped me out and I lost it all' then we would get to see how God would respond. So I prayed about this, talked to different people about this and then one day it hit me that any time you take a risk for the Lord in this life you never lose. It may look that on this side of heaven you lose but anytime you take a faithful risk for the Lord in this life you always get rewarded in the next life. So you may not see it in this life and often times you won't see it in this life.

All faithfulness produces some fruitfulness and maybe not as much fruit as I would like or the kind that I want but all faithfulness in the long run will produce some fruitfulness. Doesn't that encourage you? That is the blood bought gift, because Christ took the one ultimate risk, the risk of losing the love of the Father, now if I'm in Him that is guaranteed and I can risk like crazy with the things God has given me. In the long run I may not get rewarded in this life but I will get rewarded in the next life. To whom much is given much is required. Matthew Henry says the more we do for God the more we are indebted to Him for making use of us. We can never take credit or boast in it. The more you do for the Lord the more you have to turn around and praise and give Him thanks.

So let me close with a point of application. Sometime in the next 24 hours take a little extra time with God, more time than you usually would and pray and meditate over what you're reading and ask the Lord what all the talents, gifts and abilities that He has invested in you and where you are not risking enough that God would want you to risk. Where are places in my life that I am playing it too safe because I'm acting like You're a tyrant who might get me if I screw up? Where in my life do I need to have the mental grasp that You're a good, gracious and giving God at a heart level so it would motivate me to take more risks for You? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus we do look up to You with a lot of gratitude in our heart. We're not as grateful as we ought to be but we do love to think about You – the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. We have been chosen in You. We have infinite grace – grace to cover all of our sins, grace to get us into heaven, grace to secure us no matter what we do if we're in You, because You took such a great risk. I pray as we worship You that we would want to imitate You and that we would not be moved to safety or primarily to ease, comfort and circling the wagons but rather we would say that You have risked so much for me, where can I faithfully risk for Him? Would You please speak to us in the coming days through Your Word. Give us wisdom and make us faithful in Christ's Name, Amen.

Power Point

I. GOD GIVES MUCH (14–15)

II. GOD EXPECTS MUCH (16–18)

III. GOD REWARDS MUCH (19–23)

Two rewards are mentioned

1. More ministry opportunities
2. Enter the joy of your master

IV. GOD FORGIVES MUCH (24–30)

CONCLUSION (26)

Matthew Henry - “the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to Him for making use of us.”

Luke 12:48b - "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."