

“Easter: Giving Back... Control of My Life”

The Reflection Series

Scripture: Matthew 25:24-30 (NIV)

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¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

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²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ ²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ²² “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ ²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ ²⁶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Subject Question: What five life observations does Jesus teach concerning God’s Control over and in our lives in the parable of the Talents?

Compliment answer: God has entrusted Blessings to us, God’s Gifts are not equally given, People respond differently to what God has given them, All of us will be accountable for what God has given us, and All of us will be rewarded for how we developed God’s blessings...

Big Idea: The five observations that Jesus teaches concerning God’s Control over and in our lives in the parable of the talents are: God has entrusted

Blessing to us, God's Gifts are not equally given, People respond differently to what God has given them, All of us will be accountable for what God has given us, and All of us will be rewarded for how we developed God's blessings...

Homiletical Idea: "God is either Lord of all, or not Lord at All.. "

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand and respond to the unique challenges that God gives to each of us as Christians as far as God's control over and in our lives.

Introduction: He is risen! He is risen indeed! In the Lenten season we concentrated on "giving up...;" What can we "give up" to draw closer to the Lord that we knew was coming to die on the cross for our sins and more for us personally. Last week as we celebrated Easter; however the emphasis shifted from us "giving up" to what Jesus "gave up" for us! Today we start a four week study in reaction to Christ's great act of grace and mercy on our behalf: What can we give back? How can we then live out our daily lives? And most importantly, what should our mindset, and more our heart-set be now that Christ has chosen us, called us, and claimed us as His Cherished Kinsmen and Kinswomen. We begin our series talking about the basics: Control... is God really in control of my life... everything in my life? Have I come to the place in my own life that I want more than anything else to let Him take control... ?

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

Groundwork: Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

25:14-30 Christ keeps no servants to be idle: they have received their all from him, and have nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. It is not meant that the improving of natural powers can entitle a man to Divine grace. It is the real Christian's liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer's servant, in promoting his glory, and the good of his people: the love of Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord. The slothful servant is sentenced to be deprived of his talent. This may be applied to the blessings of this life; but rather to the means of grace. Those who know not the day of

their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. It is a usual way of expressing the miseries of the damned in hell. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour goes out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and this serves as a key to the whole. Let us not envy sinners, or covet any of their perishing possessions.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

For the kingdom of heaven ... - The "parable of the talents" was spoken still further to illustrate the manner in which he would deal with people at his return to judgment. The words "the kingdom, of heaven" are not in the original, but are very properly inserted by the translators. The design of the parable is to teach that those who improve their talents or faculties in the cause of religion who improve them to their own salvation and in doing good to others shall be proportionally rewarded; but they who neglect their talents, and who neither secure their own salvation nor do good to others, will be punished. The kingdom of heaven is like such a man - that is, "God deals with people in his government as such a man did." His own servants - That is, such of them as he judged to be worthy of such a trust. These represent the apostles, Christian ministers, professing Christians, and perhaps all people. The going into a far country may represent the Lord Jesus going into heaven. He has given to all talents to improve, [Ephesians 4:8](#); [Ephesians 2:12](#). His goods - His property representing the offices, abilities, and opportunities for doing good, which he has given to his professed followers.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

This parable, while closely resembling it, is yet a different one from that of The Pounds, in Lu 19:11-27; though Calvin, Olshausen, Meyer, and others identify them—but not De Wette and Neander. For the difference between the two parables, see the [1356]opening remarks on that of The Pounds. While, as Trench observes with his usual felicity, "the virgins were represented as waiting for their Lord, we have the servants working for Him; there the inward spiritual life of the faithful was described; here his external activity. It is not, therefore, without good reason that they appear in their actual order—that of the Virgins first, and of the Talents following—since it is the sole condition of a profitable outward activity for the kingdom of God, that the life of God be diligently maintained within the heart." 14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man—The ellipsis is better supplied by our translators in the corresponding passage of Mark (Mr 13:34), "[For the Son of man is] as a man," &c., travelling into a far country—or more simply, "going abroad." The idea of long "tarrying" is certainly implied here, since it is expressed in Mt 25:19.who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods—Between master and slaves this was not uncommon in ancient times. Christ's "servants" here mean all who, by their Christian profession, stand in the relation to Him of entire subjection. His "goods" mean all their gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. As all that slaves have belongs to their master, so Christ has a claim to everything which belongs to His people, everything which, may be turned to good, and He demands its appropriation to His service,

or, viewing it otherwise, they first offer it up to Him; as being "not their own, but bought with a price" (1Co 6:19, 20), and He "delivers it to them" again to be put to use in His service.

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 14-30. - **Parable of the talents.** (Peculiar to St. Matthew.) Following on the lesson of watchfulness and inward personal preparation just given, this parable enforces the necessity of external work and man's accountability to God for the due use of the special endowments which he has received. The former was concerned chiefly with the contemplative life, the waiting virgins; this chiefly with the active, the working servant; though, in fact, both states combine more or less in the good Christian, and the perfect disciple will unite in himself the characteristics of John and Peter, Mary and Martha. St. Luke ([Luke 19:11-27](#)) has recorded a somewhat analogous parable spoken by Christ on leaving the house of Zacchaeus, known as the parable of the pounds; and some critics have deemed that the two accounts relate to the same saying altered in some details, which are to be accounted for on the hypothesis that St. Luke has combined with our parable another on the rebellious citizens. That there are great resemblances between the two cannot be disputed, but the discrepancies are too marked to allow us to assume the unity of the two utterances. Christ often repeats himself, using the same figure, or illustration, or expression to enforce different truths or different phases of the same truth, as here he may have desired more emphatically to impress on the disciples their special responsibilities. The variations in the two parables are briefly these: The scene and occasion are different; this was spoken to the disciples, that to the multitude; in one the lord is a noble who was to receive a kingdom, in the other he is simply a landowner; here his absence is a matter of local space, there it is a matter of time; the servants are ten in the one case, and three in the other; in one we have pounds spoken of, in the other talents; in St. Luke each servant has the same sum delivered to him, in St. Matthew the amount is divided into talents, five, two, and one; in the "pounds" the servants show differing faithfulness with the same gifts, in the "talents" two of them display the same faithfulness with differing gifts; here the idle servant hides his money in a napkin, there he buries it in the earth; the conclusions also of the parables vary. Their object is not identical: the parable in our text illustrates the truth that we shall be judged according to that which we have received; the parable in St. Luke shows, to use Trench's words, that "as men differ in fidelity, in zeal, in labour, so will they differ in the amount of their spiritual gain." The latter treats of the use of gifts common to all, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual, such as one faith, one baptism, reason, conscience, sacraments, the Word of God; the former is concerned with the exercise of endowments which have been bestowed according to the recipient's capacity and his ability to make use of them, - the question being, how he has employed his powers, opportunities, and circumstances, the particular advantages, examples, and means of grace given to him. Verse 14. - For the kingdom of heaven is as a man The opening sentence in the original is anacoluthic, and our translators have supplied what they supposed to be wanting. The Greek has only, **For just as a man**, etc.; Vulgate, **sicut enim homo**. The other member of the comparison is not expressed. The Revised Version gives, "It is as when a man." They who receive the possible interpolation at the end of ver. 13 would simply render, "For he (the Son of man) is as a man." The Authorized Version plainly affords the intended meaning in the

words of the usual preface to such parables (ver. 1; Matthew 13:24, 31, etc.). The conjunction "for" carries us back to the Lord's solemn injunction, introducing a new illustration of the necessity of watchfulness. Travelling into a far country (ἀποδημῶν, **leaving home**). Here our Lord, being about to withdraw his bodily presence from the earth and to ascend into heaven, represents himself as a man going into another country, and first putting his affairs in order and issuing instructions to his servants (comp. Matthew 21:3; 5). Who called his own (τοὺς ἰδίους) servants. The sentence literally is, **As a man... called his own bond servants**. Those who specially belonged to him - a figure of all Christians, members of Christ, doing him service as their Master. Delivered unto them his goods (τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ, **his possessions**). This was not an absolute gift, as we see from subsequent proceedings, and from the well known relation of master and slave. The latter, generally speaking, could possess no property, but he was often employed to administer his master's property for his lord's advantage, or was set up in business on capital advanced by his owner, paying him all or a certain share of the profits. The money still was not the slave's, and legally all that a slave acquired by whatsoever means belonged to his master, though custom had sanctioned a more equitable distribution. The "goods" delivered unto the lord's servants represent the special privileges accorded to them - differences of character, opportunities, education, etc., which they do not share in common with all men. This is one point, as above remarked, in which this parable varies from that of the "pounds." In both cases the gifts are figured by money - a medium current and intelligible everywhere on earth.

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. God has entrusted Blessings to us. (Vs.14) ¹⁴ *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.*
- B. Listen, when we each became a Christian, you and I were indeed blessed with so much... Salvation; Forgiveness of sins, freedom from guilt; life purpose, a great new relationship in the family of God, and a great new privilege to walk and talk directly to God, now not as God Almighty, but as Heavenly Father; Abba... Yet, let's not fool ourselves however and think that God only graced us with an eternal hope for the sweet bye and bye. Yes, we are His and He is ours. Praise His holy Name. But in our opening verse we are left to consider a more basic aspect about our lives: Who we are, what we have... and how we live. ¹⁴ *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.*
- C. In fact, this entire parable concerning talents, as we'll see, really is more about our perspective about not only Him being our Savior, but about answering the question as to whether or not I have allowed Him to truly be in charge... In Christian-eaze... is He My Lord? Do I see Him as that King that someday I will am looking so forward to coming face to face with... or I have come to place where He my King now, in my daily life, the One

whom I am delighting in serving now with my whole heart? In other words, who really, I mean is in control of... well, me... And all that I have and am becoming, of all that I have been blessed to accumulate...

- D. I think this is what Jesus is going to hone in on in this parable He interjects two familiar people in the first verse: ¹⁴ *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.* The man who would leave is Him and he did, and the Ones who left in charge of all that He owns are the servants of His, those whom He has bought and paid for, those who can and should be trusted... with all that is His... you and Me.. And he expands on the parable by pointing out another truth. But before we look at it, know that with God in control:

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. God’s Gifts are not equally given. (Vs.15) ¹⁵ *To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.*
- B. The truth of the matter is Jesus died for the sins of the world, And more, God loves each of His chosen and converted children equally...but just as important: God doesn’t bless, or entrust each of His children in their time on this earth, in an equal manner or an equal way. We each have a specific destiny to fulfill, a determined path we are called to follow, a certain century to born in to specific parents, on a specific day.
- C. The fact of the matter is God knows your needs, God sees your circumstances, delights to delight you, but He does not owe you or I anything. He blesses some with a little and he blesses some with a lot. He blesses some people with high intellects, some with unique business skills, some with being at the right place at the right time, and some with the ability to be content on what they do have and not so obsessed with what they do not have... This in itself should be encouraging... he knows what I best for me. He will guide me with His sure hand. He will provide what I need at the right time on the right way.
- D. ¹⁵ *To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.* You and I are not responsible for what we do not have—we are each only responsible for what we do have. And each one of us has a lot! The real question in this parable is not that of equality or equity, but acknowledgment and accountability, perspective and Productivity, rights and responsibilities. The bottom line

is, each of us has “something” and “somethings” that we are individually responsible for. With God in control:

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. People respond differently to what God has given them. (Vs.16-18) *¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*
- B. Of course, this goes for everything in life. The question is what we are doing with what we have been given. And this isn't just about a perspective concerning material things. Do we see our intellect as something that first has been given to us by God... and as such can be developed as it should be to its fullest extent in order to glorify God and for God to use us in ways that help others... it's a choice. Do we see our spiritual blessings or our spiritual gift's as spiritual treasures that God has gifted and entrusted us with as areas that can and must be honed, shared and used to enhance the spiritual well-being of Gods family... it's a choice . Do we really see our material blessing for what they really are: given to us ultimately by God, entrusted as well as accumulated wealth—to be shared with others throughout this life... it's a choice
- C. *¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*
- D. The real question it seems, is not only what we do with what God has gifted each of us with. I mean, that is the substance of the parable. But the heart of the parable goes deeper: It's the implications and nuances we see between the lines that we need to consider. The obvious one is of course, Which perspective do we approach all that we have and all that we have been blessed with in regards to ownership. Do we consider “things” as ours, to tightly keep or His, to completely control? Do we have “I am a steward” or “I am an owner heart and mentality?” I wonder which one God would have us operate from? With God in control:

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. All of us will be accountable for what God has given us. (Vs.19) ¹⁹ *“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.*
- B. If scriptures teach us that every hair on our head is numbered, that every thought is noticed and noted, and that we will give an account for every idle word we have mumbled... what about what we have done with what we have been given...? Oh my! But let’s consider this in a positive sense: Look how the Lord flowed through me to be blessings to so many. Look at what good we did together. What a Blessing to be a Blessing. I can’t wait to get to heaven to see what “dad” has to say!
- C. “Only one life shall soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last...
- D. ¹⁹ *“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.* With God in control:

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. All of us will be rewarded for how we developed God’s blessings. (Vs.20-30) ²⁰ *The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’* ²¹ *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’* ²² *“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’* ²³ *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’* ²⁴ *“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’* ²⁶ *“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*
- B. Two Men looked at the Master’s expectations as a Blessing. One man saw the Master’s expectations as a Burden.
- C. What are some lessons we have learned?
 - 1. Our Responsibility is clear: develop the gifts and blessings God has entrusted us with.

2. Our accountability is certain: Someday we will give an account to God for what we have done with what He gave us.
- D. It's quite sobering to consider that the parable does seem to imply that unlike salvation where there is nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it. Life after salvation does have some expectations that we are challenged with doing. This parable begs the question, are we, or have we, really been interested in Giving back... Giving back to Christ, first of all, what matters most, Control over my entire life. Consider the verse in Matthew 7: ²¹ *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*
- Secondly, it does seem that Jesus is not so much interested in lip serve as He delights in legitimate action. Living for Him because he died for us is not a bad way to spend our lives.

(Giving back is impossible not to do)