May the Holy Spirit increase His presence in your life

The Bible tells us just a few things about heaven and the new earth. We know that God will be there and because of the brightness of His glory, there won’t have to be any sun. Jesus will be there. We will get to personally than Him for what He did for us and spend time in His presence.

It will be beautiful; very pleasing and wonderful to our eyes. Jewels and pearls and gold will be building material. Jerusalem will be massive. All of nature will be remade and once again, exist without flaw. Trees will grow marvelous fruit, always in season; it will never be bitter or tasteless.

We will have much to do; we will work and our work will be pleasant. We will not experience boredom or the constant stumbling blocks we do now when we try to accomplish something. There will be no frustration.

All tears and sadness will be gone; God will see to that personally. Things will be even better than in the Garden of Eden. We can find out the answers to all the questions we have in this life.

Keep clinging to Christ. He is the way to this perfect existence. The Bible speaks of eternity in only general terms. But these are enough for us to know that that’s where we want to be. The Bible also tells us that what we find when we get there is beyond what we can imagine.

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,  
And *which* have not entered the heart of man,  
All that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

1 Corinthians 2:9

In Christ’s love

John

P.O. Box 315

Capon Bridge WV 26711

(304) 856-2925 home

(304) 790-3114 cell text

[thatismyplan@yahoo.com](mailto:thatismyplan@yahoo.com) personal e-mail

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Matthew 25:14-30

What I hope to do is consider this parable today, and then next Sunday look at another parable of Jesus recorded in Luke 19. The account given in Matthew is usually referred to as the parable of the talents, while the one is Luke is the parable of the minas. While the two stories sound similar and do touch on some of the same principles, they are different parables and teach different concepts. Hopefully next Sunday we can do a little comparing as we study the story in Luke.

It is obvious in the Gospel accounts that Jesus liked using parables. These stories help give us ideas about the Kingdom of God and Jesus’ return. We have to be careful with parables. Sometimes we try to read to much into them. We must be careful to glean what there is for us to learn without forcing ideas that Jesus never intended. Not everything in a parable has an exact correlation to what is being discussed. Jesus uses the physical and earthly aspects of parables to give us certain understandings of the spiritual realm.

Jesus starts off with “*For it is just like a man about to go on a journey* …”. He is referring back to verse 1 in the preceding parable; so, He is talking about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is telling us something about the kingdom of heaven; which is spiritual. The man going on a journey is Himself. We know that Jesus later ascended back to heaven and this is the journey He is talking about.

This man *called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them*. “Slave” is a word we don’t like to use; it brings up images of the African people who were forced to work against their will. Briefly, a slave is someone who does not get to make their own decisions; they are required to do the bidding of the person who controls them.

In Israel, the civil law made it possible for one Israelite to become the slave of another voluntarily. This would come about when a man fell on hard times and couldn’t support himself and his family. He would “sell himself” to another Israelite for a period of time. During this time, he would work for the other man in order to sustain his own family. This arraignment was only to be for a set period of time. This arraignment is really not far from having a job in the modern world.

It could come to pass that the Israelite who had become a slave would come to love the man and family he worked for and want to stay with them for the rest of his life. There was a way to do this according to the law. Exodus 21:5-6,

*But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.*

We who claim to be Christians, have claimed Jesus as our Lord and Saviour; He becomes our Master. If we accept Him as Saviour, then we must also accept Him as our Lord. We recognize that He paid a terribly high price for us. We belong to Him. Christianity is a lifelong commitment. We have metaphorically had our ear pierced with an awl to the doorpost. We have voluntarily become the slave of Jesus for life. While this may sound distasteful, there is nothing better that we could do. Our Master loves us beyond what we can imagine; serving Him will bring pleasure to our lives now and forever. It is good to be a slave of Christ.

The man who was going on a journey, entrusted money to his slaves to do business with while he was gone. Any person who owns a business and goes on a trip, expects their employees to continue to work. While the owner is gone, their business continues to earn a profit. This man didn’t so much own a business, but he had money. He gave his slaves the money expecting them to use it to gain him more.

The word “talent” isn’t really a unit of money, it is a unit of weight. Estimates of how much a talent weighed range from about 55 to 80 pounds; we don’t know the actual weight in Jesus’ day. Also, the talent could be copper, silver, or gold. So, the value of the talents would depend on which of these metals the man left to his slaves. Jesus doesn’t mention the type of metal. The overall point is that the man left significant sums to each of his slaves.

It is a happy coincidence that our English word “talent” refers to our abilities; it refers to what we are innately good at and enjoy doing. The talents we have come from the Lord. Psalm 139:13,

*For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother’s womb.*

In the same way that the man in the parable gave talents to his slaves, Jesus gives talents to us. When we become Christians, slaves of Christ, the talents we are given are to be used for Him. Jesus expects us to use our abilities to build the body of Christ; He likes to see a “return” on what He’s invested in us. Each of us have wonderful gifts that can be used for the benefit of the church; that’s the local congregation you belong to and the worldwide church.

The man in the parable had an idea of what each of his slaves were capable of and he gave out talents accordingly. It is the same with us; Jesus knows what we are capable of and we are given appropriate abilities. Some have more, some have less; but it doesn’t matter, each given ability is equally important in His kingdom. At the same time, each one must use their talents to the best of their ability; and the more one has, the more one is expected to produce. From Luke 12:48,

*From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.*

Next Jesus tells what each of them did with the money they were given. Two of them immediately set to work in order to gain more for their master. The third slave simply buried his money in a hole. The application is obvious: Christians are to be at work while their Master is away. Those who do not use their abilities for the betterment of the church are basically burying what God has given them.

Think about how you would feel if you gave someone a very nice gift and found out that later they had dug a hole in the back yard and buried it. Think about having a business with employees; you leave for a while and coming back find that they have done no work but loafed the whole time. Likely, you would never give that person a gift again and you would fire the employees. We must all ask ourselves: How are we using the gifts and abilities that God has given us?

Verse 19 has a couple important things sort of hidden in it. It says that the master returned “*after a long time*”. This was a clue that Jesus would be gone for a while. His people must not be fooled by His long absence: Jesus is coming back. Also, the master “*settled accounts with them*”. There will be a judgement and Jesus will be the judge. For the Christian, this is not a judgement regarding salvation but reward, based on how we used the talents that God gave us.

The two industrious slaves doubled their master’s investment and the master was equally pleased with them. Notice that although the actual profits were different, their rewards were the same. Because they were faithful, they would be given greater responsibilities.

On the surface, this doesn’t sound very good. This takes place often in the work place. If you do a good job, you are given more work to do; usually at the same rate of pay. But Jesus is speaking of the spiritual realm. When we pass on into Christ’s kingdom, we will have work to do. Mankind was created with a desire to work. When placed in the Garden of Eden, the people were to till the soil and take care of the garden. Work became burdensome as a result of the fall. In heaven, that burden will be removed and the more work we can do for Christ’s kingdom, the happier we will be.

We see this in what goes along with the added responsibilities when they are told “*enter into the joy of your master*”. This is having them enter a closer relationship than simply master and slave; in the parable, they become more like partners. Spiritually speaking, we will enter into the joy of Christ. He will share His joy with us. Jesus mentions this idea in John 15:15, “*No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you*.”

And even more than business partners, when we have Jesus as Saviour, we become children of God. We are brothers and sisters of Jesus; and so, we share in His inheritance. What a wonderful thing we have to look forward to. We work now in the power of Christ with the abilities He has given us and we receive eternal reward, living in complete joy.

Now, to the fellow who buried his talent. He had an excuse ready. He felt that because of his master’s habits, he could be excused from making a profit on the grounds that he was afraid of his master. The master immediately saw through his slave’s words. If the slave’s words were true and he was afraid of his master, he should have worked all the harder to increase the money. It was obvious that he didn’t want to work and lied in order to cover it up.

The master calls him wicked and lazy. He didn’t want to put any effort into using what he was given for his master. Lying and laziness are both wicked works. No one wants to have to depend on people like this and these things are sins.

The master tells the slave that because his disposition was to be lazy, he should have at least put the talent in the bank so the master could have gained some interest. There would be no work involved on the part of the slave and the master would have gained.

How does that apply to us? Perhaps we are lazy and not inclined to use our talents for the body of Christ: I hope not. Or, more likely, there is something else keeping us from spending time working for Jesus: too busy with work, busy caring for someone else, perhaps just physically unable to do the work. Whatever it may be, we can still support other ministries that are doing the work of Christ. This usually means donating money to these ministries, but this will count to you as working.

The next thing that happens is that the talent is taken away from the lazy slave and given to the one who already had the most talents. This is explained in verse 29, “*For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away*.”

This principle holds very often in the world and somehow seems unfair. Often times it is unfair; those that have the riches and power will take from those who don’t have much and can’t stop the powerful. But the statement here is a spiritual principle.

The beautiful thing about the gifts God gives us is that the more we use them, the more they grow. As we use God’s gifts, the abilities actually grow in strength; just as the talents grew for the slaves who worked with them. Contra wise, if we don’t use a spiritual gift, we will gradually lose it. Those who use their gifts can be given more gifts. So, if one person isn’t using their God given talent properly, it will be taken away from them and given to someone who will use it.

This principle shows up several times in the Bible which shows that it is important. It fits very closely with the teaching to be busy working when the master returns. We want to be found busy with Jesus’ work, using the talents He has given us, when He comes back. There will be nothing better than knowing we have pleased the One who has done so much for us.

Lastly, we learn the fate of the worthless slave: he is cast into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus uses this terminology often to refer to hell. This slave, even though he belonged to the master, was completely rejected.

How do we apply this? There are many who claim to be Christian. They claim that Jesus is their Lord and Saviour. In this parable, the first two slaves show true followers of Christ. We who follow Christ will live like Jesus is our Master; we will do the work He wants us to do. We will be excited to bring Him profit in the form of glory. Our reward will be to live with Him forever and experience the unending joy that is His.

Unfortunately, there are many who claim to follow Jesus but their lives demonstrate that they are far from Him. They may appear to be His slaves, but they are in name only. They do have talents, but they refuse to use them for Christ’s kingdom. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*” This is exactly the kind of person Jesus is talking about in the parable. The man is a slave and calls him master, but his heart is far from him. The final destination of these people is hell because they did not truly accept Jesus as Saviour in the first place.

Prayer

Almighty God, You are worthy of all our devotion. You have blessed us with spiritual gifts and abilities; then You have paid a high price for our salvation. We are Yours; how blessed we are to be Your slaves. For You are the perfect Master; to belong to You is bliss; to obey You is blessing.

Jesus, You have bestowed all good things upon us. Yet, You know how unworthy we are. We are sinful people and tend toward selfish usage of what You have given us. Without Your guidance, we cannot properly use these gifts, even though we desire to do so.

Thank You for the Holy Spirit who indwells us and gives us the strength to properly use our talents, to build Your kingdom. If we are not truly following You, please, show us and bring us to salvation before it is too late.

We praise You in Jesus’ name. Amen