

Feb. 12, 2023

WHILE WE WAIT

(Matt. 25:14-30)

The favorite subject of Jesus was the kingdom. The word “kingdom” occurs about 140 in the NT. It means, the reign of God. It’s not like a country with specific borders on a map. No, the kingdom of God exists wherever Jesus rules in the hearts of people. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:3). The kingdom of God is alive and well in Cairo, Egypt and in Helsinki, Finland because Jesus rules in the hearts of some of the people there.

All redeemed people everywhere are in God’s kingdom, because he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

Jesus told 20 stories about the kingdom. Matthew 13 contains six of those stories. Matthew 24-25 contains five of those stories. But they are more than little children’s stories. Yes, they help us understand but they often have tricks up their sleeves. Jesus has a way of telling stories that pull us in and then give us a kick in the pants. They challenge us and push us to take an action step.

There are usually several details but one main point. Beware: If there’s a series of stories, they grow in intensity and the last one is a doozy! Jordan will share that last story next week. Today let’s look at a very familiar story. Let’s read responsively. I’ll read even verses, you read odd.

“Again, the kingdom will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according

to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.

But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

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.’ “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!' "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.' "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!' "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. So, I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "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? 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.

"So, take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 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.

And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matthew 25:14-30)

Here's another story with an absentee boss. Remember this is a picture of Jesus ascending into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God. The church is waiting for his return. The schedule is unknown. What are we to do as we wait? The servants are expected to go to work.

Each servant is given a different amount of money according to his ability. One of the key words in our country is equity. Everyone gets the same. In God's economy he makes some people 7 feet tall and some people 4 feet tall. Some people never study and get a 1600 on their SAT test. Others study for months and are glad to get 800. Some people never trained with a voice coach but appear in the top ten in America's Got Talent. Some people can't carry a tune in a five-gallon bucket but they can fix anything. This is reality.

Lots of people envy others with their five bags of gold but the truth is none of the servants weren't left out. All three received something. All three had the same opportunity and obligation. One of the great books of my teen years was titled, "Up from Slavery" by

## BOOKER T WASHINGTON

He was born a slave in 1856 on a Virginia farm. In my mind he was the man with one bag of gold. Yet through hard work and wisdom beyond his years he excelled in school. At age 25 he was recommended to be a principal at a school in Tuskegee, Alabama where he stayed and influenced people until his passing in 1915. One hidden talent, very small window of opportunity yet a powerful influence for good.

In Jesus' story, the first two double their money. Both are praised by the boss when he returns to settle accounts. One servant took the road with no risk and little effort. He followed the custom of the day and buried gold in the ground. After a long time, when the master returned, he was eternally condemned with very harsh language.

A talent was worth 20 years of income at minimum wage. (Bloomberg, Preaching the Parables, p. 199)

Heads up. Jesus is not teaching a course in economics or how to make money as a venture capitalist. I know we like that idea very much. Where can I invest and double my money? Jesus is teaching us a lesson about his spiritual kingdom.

Everything he has given us: time, gifts, personality, health, interests and work ethic, he expects us to use for his kingdom. The third servant explained his reasoning: you are a hard man; you profit from the labor of others. So, I was afraid and hid your gold. See here's what belongs to you.

The master is not impressed. The first two servants were good and faithful but this servant is wicked and lazy.

We are obligated to use what we have. What are you doing for the kingdom?

Go to the ant you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

How long will you lie there you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:6-8)

Ultimately the outcome of such a worthless servant is banishment from the kingdom forever.

For the church in waiting for the return of the King, this calls for diligent service. Be faithful. The emphasis is on faithfulness expressed through work.

The first two servants doubled their investment. Can you imagine? If you put \$1,000 on deposit in these times you might earn \$25-30 maybe \$40 in a year's time. You sure wouldn't double your money. I read that 16 billion will be bet on the Super Bowl tonight. Millions will be won or lost on which player scores the first points. Someone will certainly double their money and someone will lose it all. My plan is to watch the game and eat wing dip. This one talent man was given a great opportunity but he wasted it. One title for this message could be

"Don't Waste Your Life."

He didn't try. He sat on the sidelines. There's a reoccurring theme in all five stories: Judgment. This man was cast into the outer darkness where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. "The same terms are used in (Matt 8:12 & Matt 22:13).

You know this is about us right? We are the church in waiting.

God expects us to use our gifts and opportunities to advance the kingdom. "My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58).

Bottom line: God has made an investment in each of us and he expects to reap a profit from that investment.

Now you may not appreciate the term servant. It may have negative connotations to you but here's Bible truth. Servants were bought. The master had a claim on their time and labor.

We are not our own, we were bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

How and when were we bought?

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18)

This story is about us.

When we were born, we were given certain natural abilities. No matter how much I practice I will never be able to throw a football like Josh Allen and I'll never be smart enough to invent things like Thomas Edison.

At birth you were given certain abilities. When you were born again you were given certain spiritual abilities. God has invested in all of us.

1 Peter 4:10 use whatever gift you have to faithfully serve others. Romans 12:3-6 we have different gifts according to the grace given us. 1 Cor. 12:7 now to each one of us the manifestation of the Spirit has been given for the common good. God does not expect me to glorify him through ballet dancing.

**God doesn't expect a profit from where he hasn't invested. But he does expect a profit from where he has invested, and you better believe he has invested in you.**

One dedicated talent goes a long way. Don't worry about what you can't do, but do what you can do. Be faithful with your one talent. We have many examples all around us.

### **JIM ABBOTT**

was born without a right hand but he wanted to play baseball, and he was good. He became a pitcher, and this is where the story goes downhill for a minute. Of all things, he went to the University of Michigan, then he eventually wound up on the New York Yankees. On September 4, 1993, one handed Jim Abbott did the unthinkable. The Yankees were playing the beloved Cleveland Indians. On that day, Jim Abbott pitched a no hitter, the first no hitter in 10 years for the Yankees and probably one of the most incredible events in the history of Yankee stadium.

### **LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN**

was born in 1770. He never had any formal training. Growing up he was constantly sick. By 1801 he was totally deaf. Groves Dictionary of Music: "It is known by lasting world judgment that from this time on he had new powers as a composer." In the last 26 years of his life, he produced many of his greatest works.

In 1920 two young brothers were pulled from a burning school house in Kansas. Doctors said one of the boys would never walk again. His name was

### **GLEN CUNNINGHAM**

At one time he held the world record in the mile run and won the silver medal in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Stan Dale, was a commando in Australian army in WW2. Looking over the ridges of Papua New Guinee he was amazed to find native people living out there. Being a Christian, he wondered how they would ever hear about the love of God. Day after day he kept watch and kept praying. Finally, he prayed.

**"Lord, I know you have other people far more talented and educated than I, but if they are not willing to go tell this people, I am."**

That's the kind of prayer the Lord is waiting to hear from us. This story is told with the one talent servant in mind. This is about thinking we have nothing to offer. This is about being lazy. This is about people who forgot their purpose is to bring glory to the Lord.

Don't waste your life.

The Master will return.

He will hold us accountable for how we used our gifts and opportunities. He is looking for productivity.

Severe punishment awaits the wicked and lazy servant.

What does it mean to me? Find your gift and use it. Don't sit on the sidelines and watch. Everyone is expected to go to work as we wait for his return.