

Advancing the Interests of the Master
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Matthew 25:14-30, Romans 12:3-8
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- I. Our call to worship this morning drew attention to this line, *Well done, good and faithful servant!* which arises out of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25.
 - A. The master in the parable says this to his two servants who, as he says, *...Have been faithful with a few things.*
 1. When he uses the term “*few things*” he’s not downplaying the value of what he had given them, which was actually a large amount, but he’s comparing that amount to the much greater “*many things*” over which he is putting them in charge.
 2. These were servants who had really done well, earning a 100% return on what the master had invested with them.
 - B. Now it’s clear from the story that when the master “gave” the servants this money he was investing it with them—he expected them, as the text says, “to put the money to work,” to increase it, to use it to advance his interests.
 1. Since neither Citibank nor the New York Stock Exchange had yet been established, this was one of the few ways he had of investing his capital.
 - a. Either he could bury these eight talents and accept the fact that his interests would not be advanced at all while he was gone.
 - b. Or he could give them to individuals who would put them to work and hopefully advance his interests in his absence.
 - c. In this case the master chose three people who he thought would be judicious in putting his money to work, and he gave them different amounts based on his judgement of their abilities.
 2. The first two servants achieved a lot in advancing the master’s interests.
 - a. They both put his money to work and doubled it.
 - b. As a result they received the strong commendation of the master—*Well done, good and faithful servant!*
 3. The third servant would most likely have been told *Well done, good and faithful servant!*, even if he hadn’t earned a 100% return, if he had tried. If he had made an effort. If he had attempted to advance master’s interests.
 - a. His condemnation came upon him not because of his 0% rate of return, but because he didn’t even try.
 - b. He had done nothing to use what the master had given him to advance the interests of the master.
 4. The lesson of this parable is that the master expects us to use whatever he has invested in us in an effort to advance his interests—whether it’s five talents or two talents or one talent.

- C. Now it's interesting that the name of this ancient unit of money is the same as the word we use to describe inherent abilities that lie within us as human beings or special abilities that are granted us by the Holy Spirit.
1. Some of us have a talent for music.
 2. Some of us have a talent for medicine.
 3. Some of us have a talent for mechanics.
 4. And of us have a talent some for ministry.
- D. And the assumption that goes with the possession of these talents or gifts is the same as the assumption in the parable.
1. That the servants will use the talents or gifts the master has invested in them to advance the interests of the master.
 2. That to be faithful one has to make an effort with what one has been given.
- II. Paul develops this exact same idea of using the talents God has invested in us to advance his interests in Romans 12:3-8.
- A. *He begins by talking about the fact that we each receive something different from God—just like the three servants received something different from the master in Jesus's parable.*
1. V. 6 says, *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*
 2. Just as in the parable, the Holy Spirit passes out gifts in different amounts and kinds according to a formula which only It understands.
- B. And, as vv. 6-8 point out, we are to use the gifts or talents the Spirit has given us to advance the interests of God.
1. Now lest we read too much into the words here, the English translation's references to "man" in v. 6 and all the "hims" of vv. 6-8 have been put there by the translators.
 - a. There is nothing in the original Greek that refers at all to gender.
 - b. This passage just simply is saying that when God gives a talent to a servant that servant should use it to advance the *work of God*.
 2. *If a person's gift is prophesying, --- let that person use that gift.*
 3. *If a person's gift is serving, --- let that person serve;*
 4. *If a person's gift is teaching, --- let that person teach;*
 5. *If a person's gift is encouraging, --- let that person encourage;*
 6. *If a person's gift is contributing to the needs of others, --- let that person give generously;*
 7. *If a person's gift is leadership, --- let that person govern diligently;*

8. *If a person's gift is showing mercy, --- let that person do it cheerfully.*

- C. Now this shows the same expectation we find in the parable—that those who receive gifts are expected to use them to advance their master's interests.
1. God has given each of us a gift, a talent, an ability that He wants us to use in the work of the kingdom.
 2. He has given us something that will advance the work of his kingdom.
 3. And he expects us to be faithful in using it.

III. And in this we want to look to Mattie Marie today as an example of one who has used the *talents God has given her for advancing the interests of the master.*

- A. Now it's not been easy for Mattie Marie because she's a woman.
1. She grew up in an environment that certainly did not welcome a woman exercising gifts of ministry—even if the Spirit gave them to her.
 2. Some people still interpret the Bible that way—they feel that women may not use the gifts God has given them—even to advance His interests.....
 - a. –Despite the teachings of the Bible on using one's gifts
 - b. –And despite the church's huge need for the gifts of all whom God has gifted.
 3. It has been unfortunate that Mattie Marie has had to face resistance to her desire to advance the interests of God by using the gifts he has given her.
 4. But still she has persevered.
 - a. Knowing the gifts she has, she has pressed on to use them to advance the interests of the master.
 - b. And the kingdom has been advanced because of her efforts.

IV. We want to take some time today to explore what Mattie Marie has done in advancing the interests of the master.

- A. We have invited several people from the congregation *to reflect on ways in which Mattie Marie has used her gifts to advance the interests of God here at Sonnenberg and then we'll all get a chance.*
- B. Don's going to lead us in that.