

September 9, 2018

"He who has ears, let him hear..."

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability...everyone who has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

Matthew 25:14-29

Last week we talked about how important it is for those of us who follow Jesus to be ready to meet him when he returns. When Jesus does return for us, either individually or at the last day, we will all stand before God and, as the Apostle Paul writes, "***...each one of us will give an account of himself to God.***" (Romans 14:12)

What is it that we will have to give an account of to God? Jesus tells parables addressing this very issue. In Matthew 25 the Master tells a parable about a man who entrusts his property to his servants while he is away on a journey. This underlying story seems odd to us because we can't really picture traveling anywhere for so long that we would need to leave our property to someone else. But in the first century travel took months if not years so doing this would have been fairly common.

Each of the servants is given a certain amount, "***... according to his ability...***" What they are being given is not theirs. It is theirs to use, but it still belongs to their master. The first two took what had been entrusted to them and increased the value of the original amount 100 percent. The last servant hid his talent and did nothing with it.

In the judgment scene the master congratulates the servants who have done well with what they have been given, but he condemns the man who did nothing with what he had received. There are, of course, a number of lessons that we can draw from this parable and the one recorded in Luke 19, which is the same basic story. First, I believe it is essential to understand that the talents in this parable are the master's property at the beginning, and they are still the master's property in the end.

All of us receive gifts and blessings from our God. He gives us abilities, strengths, opportunities, and blessings. He does not give all of us the same things, but he gives each of us according to our ability. Our Creator, knows what he created us to be and to do, and he knows both our strengths and our weaknesses. Because he knows us absolutely he gives us exactly what we are best suited to use.

Second, each faithful servant used what he was given. In both parables the faithful servants took what they had been given and put it to work. They did not waste time challenging the master's decision about how much they were to receive and comparing themselves and their gifts to others. They put what the master had given them to work.

Finally, at the judgment each servant was required to give an account of what they had done with what they had been given. Again, they were not compared to the others and their different gifts were not taken into the accounting. They were judged for what they had done with what they had been given and nothing more.

As you and I stand before God to give an account we will be accounting only for what we have done with what God has given us. Judgment will not be a comparison and contrast activity where we are measured by what others have done. Everyone of us has received gifts and abilities, opportunities and challenges, that differ from everyone else. But we do all have something.

At judgment our God will only want to know what we have done or not done with what we have been given. If we have been given power and prestige, then God will want to know what we did with them. If we are given wealth and material blessings, then God will want to know what we did with them. If we are given many opportunities and few challenges, then God will want to know what we did with those. And, if we are given few opportunities and many challenges, our God will want to know what we did with those.

At no time will God expect us to account for what someone else did or didn't do with what they received unless we have influenced them in those things. Our constant challenge is to understand what God has given us and what he wants us to do with those gifts. We will be and constantly are being judged by our God for how we use what he has loaned us. When the time comes, how will we account for those gifts God has given us?

