

**“Try!!!”**  
**November 19, 2023**  
**Pastor John Mars**

This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! Our Scripture today comes from Matthew, chapter 25, beginning with verse 14, a parable of Jesus.

“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. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. And also, the one who had two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent 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 the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. 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 the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; 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 the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and I went out and I hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

“The master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew I harvested where I have not sown and gathered 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.

“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. And whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

May God bless the reading of His Word.

Today we are looking at one of the many parables of Jesus. Now, a parable is a story told to make a point, sometimes several points, but you can’t take them too far. You scientists out there--they are not meant to be dissected. They’re told for a purpose, to make a point. Think of them as a preacher’s story; they’re not necessarily true! I am reminded of my first preaching professor who, one Sunday after church, noticed his son in the backseat of his car was very pensive. And he said, “Son, what are you thinking about?” He said, “Dad, was that story you told true, or were you just preaching?”

This parable makes a number of different points, but it was aimed primarily at the scribes and the Pharisees. Let me explain. This is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. “The kingdom of heaven is like...” And Jesus gives this parable about the

talents. It was directed at the scribes and the Pharisees, because during the era of Jesus, during his time, they sought to build, and I quote (these are not my words; these are their words). They sought to “build a fence around the Law,” and they used that terminology often. Now what they meant by that was: they did not want anything new to get in or anything old to get out. And you're going, “Okay. Alright. What's wrong with that?” Well, let's continue: No new ideas, no development, no new interpretation. They were unwilling to entertain anything other than what they already knew, what they already knew at that moment. Now, let's think about that for a moment. Let's apply it to the Christian faith. Let's say that our forefathers and mothers, during the 13th century, were to say, “We have learned everything there is to know about the Scriptures. We're not going to learn anything else. We're not going to do anything else, and we're not going to allow for any new beliefs.” If they had done that, there would be no such thing as the Protestant Reformation. If they had done that, slavery would still be the norm. If they had done that, you and I, for believing what we believe today, would have been burned at the stake as heretics. Jesus directed this parable at them. They knew that the man who had the one talent, that went out and buried that talent in the ground, Jesus was talking about them. Because you see, at that moment in history, they had their mind made up as to who Messiah would be and what Messiah would do. And that was not Jesus Christ, and they refused to entertain the possibility that it might be. They had been given the great gift of the Law, and everything about the Law was to point them toward Messiah, to prepare them for Messiah. But they refused to use that great gift, and the great gift of their mind, and they refused to see what God was doing. How dare God do something different than what they expected? God has no use for the shut mind. Some people approach their faith like this: “Don't confuse me with the facts. I have my mind already made up.” God has given us the great gift of Scripture. God has given us the great gift of our minds. And God expects us to apply both.

There are other lessons in this parable, the lesson that we are all gifted differently. In our parable, one servant had five talents. Another servant had two talents. And one servant had one talent. The number of talents is not important; it is what one does with the talents that they have. The person with one talent, that uses that talent to the best of their ability for the kingdom of God, is much more valuable in the kingdom than the person with ten talents that does not use them. God expects us to use what we have, to do what we can do, to give what we can. God does not expect us to use what we do not have, and gifts that we have not been given. And I thank God for that! I'll tell you why. Somebody was asking me this morning, actually, how long I had been in ministry. And I'd already been thinking about that. When I entered ministry as a pastor, I started pastoring a church when I was 20 years old. (That's scary, I know.) Because of my age, everybody assumed that I would be good with youth, because I was basically a youth myself. Well, I was born to my parents late in life. Growing up, my friends were my dad's friends. I got my first job when I was 12, and I have been employed continually since then. I was never really a youth. I didn't relate well to youth. And when I tried to work with youth, I failed miserably. And finally, God said, “John, you're not good at that. Let somebody else do it.” And I said, “Thank you, Jesus!” Also, I don't have children. My friends mostly don't have children. At several churches I have been asked to be a camp counselor for children, especially for wilderness camps, because I like the outdoors. But if I was a camp counselor for those kids, and I took them on an outing out in the woods, I would bring back fewer every time I took them out! Okay? You don't want me as a camp counselor.

God does not expect you to do what you are not gifted to do, but to do what you are gifted to do. God expects us to do all we can with what we have. To whom much is given, much is required. Do what you can. Some people are phenomenally gifted and completely useless. I'm serious. But some people have little gifts, and they are invaluable. It all depends on effort. It all depends on trying. And if you do, and if you use, and if you give all that you can, you will be rewarded. Let's think back to our Scripture and what the reward is. The master says to his servant, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." Do you hear what he said? More work! Your reward for a job well done is more work! Use the gifts you have, and you will be given more tasks and responsibility. Your reward is not rest. Do your job, and God will let you know when you're done. I have heard people for the last forty years say, "I've done my part. I've done my part." And I want to say, "Have mercy. You poor thing." God will let you know when you're done. There's no retiring from serving God. You may change positions, but there's no retiring.

We also learned from our parable that the one who is punished is the one who refuses to try. He didn't lose his talent; he just didn't use his talent. It would be okay if he lost it while trying. I have an awful lot of grace for people who try and fail. And I want you to hear me say very clearly: It's okay to fail; it's not okay not to try. God willing and the creek don't rise, you and I are going to do some failing together, and that's okay. Because the only time you don't fail is when you don't try. If you continually try, sooner or later you are going to fail, and that is okay. The person that is punished is the one who does not try, the one who does not give, that does not do their best. The issue is not how much talent you have; the issue is effort. God knows what you can do. And for some of you, you cannot do what you did at one time. And I want you to hear that's okay. Do what you can, to the best of your ability now. Use what you have. Trying is enough. And to those who use their talents, more will be given. Use what you have, to the best of your ability, and God will bless your effort. It will not be perfect, but if you try, it will be enough. God blesses our effort. The only way you keep your gift is to use it. If you don't use it, what happens? You lose it. God expects you to do what you can do, to the best of your ability. Those who have been blessed with great things, with great material possessions, with great talents, God expects great things from you. And those with little, God expects little. It is not the amount of the talent; it is not the amount of the gift; it is the sacrifice behind it and the effort behind it.

So, our lessons: We're all gifted differently. Some of you God expects to work with youth; He does not expect that of me. Brief periods of time: We're all gifted differently. Use what you have to the best of your ability and God will bless the effort. Trust me. If you use what you have, you won't lose it. If you don't use what you have, you will. And God will let you know when you're done. God will let you know when you're done.

Let us pray. In the quiet of this moment, only you can answer the question of whether or not you are using your gifts, your resources, to the best of your ability. If you are, expect more work. And if you aren't, today is the day to make that right. Let's pray together.

Lord, we all know how we were blessed. And Lord, during this season of Thanksgiving, we thank You for those many blessings. And Lord, help us to use our gifts, our blessings, to the best of our ability, to Your glory and to the furtherance of Your kingdom. In Christ's name, amen.