

Avoid Wasting God's Good

"Using Your Gifts to Bring Great Impact"

Matthew 25:14-30 (New International Version)

CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture today, we acknowledge the language of master and servant may cause tension with receiving the message of the text.

The master and servant in this passage is similar to the relationship between an employee and employer NOT the master and servant similar to American slavery. Slavery in the time of the Bible was because of war or debts owed and there always an ending date in sight. American slavery, however, is the only form of slavery where people became human property forever.

Discuss what it looks like to have a healthy employee/employer relationship by considering both the employee and employer.

It is important to realize you have been given gifts by God the creator in the form of your money, your talent, and your time. This story highlights honoring the gift giver by being good stewards of our money, talent, and time.

In the age of social media, it is very easy for us to waste hours scrolling through news feeds or posting. We miss the opportunity to be present because we are trying to take pictures or make comments for our next post.

In a desire to gain status, it is very easy for us to waste money on self-esteem items. We purchase things under the assumption that it adds value to who we are.

In a push to protect ourselves, it is very easy for us to allow fear to keep us from utilizing our gifts. We may know that we have the talents or skills to better ourselves, our community, and our networks, but we hide them.

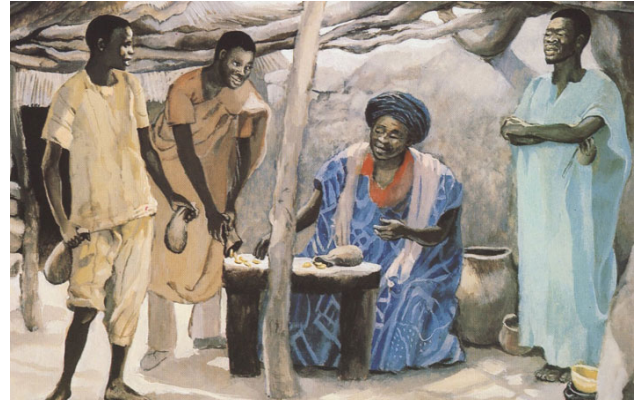
Discuss what aspects of our culture, campus, and community have suffered because we have not been good stewards of our money, talent, and time.

There is value not only in what we have been given, but also in the one who entrust us with their good things. When we choose to NOT waste our gifts, we honor the gift giver. We invite you to enter the text by considering how the actions of the workers not only benefited themselves, but it also benefited their boss who entrusted them with their valuables.

READ

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ 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.’ ²¹ “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!’



²² “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.’ ²³ “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!’

²⁴ “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. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ ²⁶ “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? ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

DISCUSS

- Jesus used four different parables to teach his disciples to prepare for his ultimate return in the End Times. This fourth parable focuses on the responses of a master to his three servants who were given bags of money for while he was away. In this teaching, Jesus is analogous to the master, the servants are those who claim to be His followers, and the bags of money are something one considers to have value. Why do you think the boss gave the money amounts based on the servants’ abilities and not the servants’ potential? What could be the gain or loss for the master based on how much he gave each servant?

- Because the master settled accounts with the servants upon his return, his giving them money shows he was making an investment with his valuables. The Lord invests in His people by His actions, His communication through the Scriptures, His healing mentally or spiritually, His provisions financially or relationally, all of these and more are valuables the Lord shares with us. What are valuables you received from the Lord? What makes them valuable?
- When someone makes an investment, the goal is a bigger return in the end. Two of the servants utilized their gifts, skills, and abilities to bring the master a double return on his investment. The other servant chose to bury the investment giving his master no return. Similar to the parable the Lord expects his servants to utilize their gifts like intercession or teaching, skills like public speaking or creating ideas, and abilities like singing or drawing, as avenues to bring Him a return. A return for the Lord is seeing more people have a relationship with Him or seeing more people experience Christ on earth. How should you use your gifts, skills, and abilities to bring the Lord a return? How does His investment in you ultimately grow His kingdom?
- The two servants who doubled the investment were extended the same sentiments of gratitude in response (v. 21 and 23). This shows it is not about how much the master benefits, but instead how much effort the servant puts in using their gifts to be a blessing. If the Lord asked you today for an account of what you have done with His investment, would He have the same response? Why or why not? What can you do to further grow His investment in you as it relates to serving on your college campus?
- Because of the lack of banks in that time, many people buried their valuables for safe keeping. The servant's decision to bury the money confirms his understanding of the value of his master's investment. Yet, either the servant's self-identified fear, laziness as suggested by the master, or both caused him to waste the investment in him. As a result his money was taken from him and given to the servant who now had ten bags. Why is it important to realize the servant's decision not to use his gifts was a result of fear and/or laziness? How might God's purposes in you not be fulfilled because He chooses to use someone else? Using the master's responses as an indicator of how the Lord might respond, write three ways you will avoid allowing fear and/or laziness to cause you to waste God's investment in you.

RESPOND

We invite for you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of black culture, turns your attention to the black community on your campus, and focuses on impact to your home community.

The servant considered by the master as wicked and lazy in the story missed out on the opportunity to grow what was entrusted to him by the master. In the end he was condemned and the faithful servant was blessed by the master with even more goods.

Misuse of our talents within **Black culture** has devalued the beauty of blackness as opposed to adding value. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of how the culture has been devalued and discuss the questions given below.

Black heroes of the past were Black inventors and now we are promoting others who have advanced themselves in less honorable ways. Black poets of the past have shaped our culture where they articulated what Black people during their time were experiencing, but now poetry through many musical artist are using poetry to promote negative stereotypes connected to Black people predominantly by others (i.e. Billy Holiday - Strange Fruit vs Cardi B - Overly Sexualized Black Women). Historically male slaves were called studs and were told they couldn't form relationships with women, instead they were only good for impregnating them. In America this was to create more slaves. In Africa this was for deception to convince men that they are not a warrior, provider, protector, nor do they have a history prior to colonization. **Why do we continually allow the majority to repackage old ideas and stereotypes about black people through our talents and convince us that this is our culture?**

You are only as strong as your mother country and your connection to your mother country/continent. To realize Africa is filled with talent and is the wealthiest continent when it comes to natural resources would be a game change for Black people all over the world. **How do you convince a people group who are on the wealthiest continent in the world (evidenced by the many countries who take from it) that they are the poorest?**

Fear connected to **Black college students and/or faculty** using their talents have robbed the campus community of the potential impact of this hidden voice. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of how Black college students and/or faculty have been in hiding and discuss the questions given below.

Black students are often afraid to use their talents in a positive way because ratchedness is popularized. Thus they shy away from utilizing their gifts to promote things that are righteous. **How would your campus experience the creativity and power of black thought and giftedness if black students understood the greatness that has been entrusted to them by God our Creator?**

At time there appears to be a struggle within the Black community around unified talent vs competitive talent. Often time Black students use their talents to sabotage each other or to tear each other apart instead of developing a collective front. **How would it strengthen the impact of black students, faculty, organizations, or efforts on our campus if we found ways to unify our talents to advance the desires of the black campus community?**

Failure to recognize the importance of the blessing one can be to their **home community by utilizing their talents to bring growth causes great dishonor your gift givers**. Consider some of the following acknowledgements of contradicting attitudes which brings forth dishonor and discuss the questions given below.

Arrogance vs Humility. When we return home, the educated often have a deep seated arrogance against those who haven't had the social and cultural experience of college life. **How do you take your talents, gifts, and education back to your community in a way that it doesn't push away, but empowers those around you?**

Getting Out vs Going Back. When we have finished our schooling, often times we choose to avoid the places that got us to where we are. Thus we have no desire to go back to our neighborhoods, schools, or churches that we may view as “lesser.” Christ’s invitation for us is to go to the least of these. **How does it dishonor God our Provider who blessed us with this opportunities when we choose to forget those that our gifts may bless?**

CLOSE

Assess what God has entrusted you with. Take some time to meditate on all of your responses. Conclude by writing a letter of action to God. Share your acknowledgment of the valuable things from the Lord, your gratitude for the ways He invests in you, your confession of the times you wasted God’s valuables due to your fear, laziness, etc., and your intentions for using your gifts, skills, and abilities to grow God’s kingdom in your various spheres of influence.