

The Parables:

According to the Greek and Hebrew definitions, a parable is "a placing of one thing beside another, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, sentences with ethical wisdom and a comparison of one thing to another." God uses parables to teach those who are truly interested in following after Him. It is my prayer that you will be blessed by these truths.

Church's Got Talent!

By Mary Kane

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Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to become a professional singer, dancer or actor? Would you be willing to "risk it all" on national television to find out? Every week thousands of people tune in to watch a few "hopefuls" compete for instant stardom. The contestants work for months, even years perfecting their skills, but they know that not only does it take drive and determination to become a celebrity—it also takes talent.

Please read Mathew 25:14-30

Write a brief summary of this parable.

Symbolically speaking, who are *the man traveling to a far country* and the *servants*?

The man and the servants represent Jesus and born-again believers.

Before leaving on His journey, what did the man give to his servants?

The man gave the servants his goods, or his *talents*. Notice that all of the servants were given talents; no one was left empty-handed.

Please list how much each servant was given.

At first glance, it may seem as if one of the servants came up on the short end of the stick; he only received one talent. *One* talent seems like such a small amount. However, I looked up the meaning of *talent* in the original Greek and discovered that it equals either 100 pounds of silver or 200 pounds of gold. On July 22, 2011, silver closed at \$40 an ounce and gold at \$1,600 an ounce. Using these current prices, the master of the house left His poorest servant (the one who received one talent) somewhere between \$40,000.00-\$320,000.00. All of the master's servants were greatly gifted.

According to what criteria did the master entrust his goods to his servants (verse 15)?

He gave to His servants each according to their own ability. The master did not base his giving on the financial status, intelligence quotient or reputation of his servants. Each person was given gifted according to what they could manage. In short, the master set them up to succeed; he specifically gifted them so they could flourish.

Like the servants in this parable, Jesus has also given His modern-day followers *talents*. If you are a born-again believer in Christ, upon your salvation Jesus bestowed upon you gifts to use for His kingdom. He will also empower you to be successful with whatever you have been gifted to do. Rest assured; God will not ask you to serve beyond your gift. If He has

brought an opportunity to you to use your gifts, it is because He plans to use you effectively in that situation. You do not need to be afraid of failure; you can serve the Lord with confidence and assurance, knowing that you will bring Him glory.

Perhaps you may think that you do not have any particular gifts. Ponder for a moment about what you really enjoy doing. Most likely your gifts are related to the activities that bring you great enjoyment. Your challenge then is to figure out how to use your gifts for the kingdom. If you have a beautiful voice, it is not personally your beautiful voice...it came from Jesus...it doesn't belong to you, but Him, so you must use it for His glory! Perhaps you could sing with the worship team at church, give voice lessons or lead a sing along at a local nursing home. Whatever your gifts, they can be used to glorify God.

Please read verses 16-18 again and fill in the missing word for verse 17.

"And likewise he who had _____ two gained two more also."

Each of the servants *received* their gift. The word *received* in the Greek is *lambano* which means among other things, to take, to take with the hand, to take a thing *in order to use it* (emphasis mine). Therefore, based on what we just learned about the word *received*, we can assume that God gives us gifts and expects us to use them for His kingdom work.

What did the first two servants do with their gifts?

The NKJV states that they *traded* with their gifts. I was a little surprised when I learned the definition of the original word used in this verse for *traded*; it means to work, to labor, to do work, to trade, to do business, to

exercise, to earn. Whatever the servants did to increase their talents, it required work and effort. Like the servants in the parable, we will also have to work hard to use our gifts.

Name some ways in which you've had to labor to use the gifts God has given you.

In order to effectively use our gifts we may have to practice, rehearse, take classes, receive training, or be mentored. We may even have to labor in battle while using our gifts because of the Enemy. Satan would like nothing better than to destroy our service for God. Like the returning exiles of the Old Testament, we may have to keep one hand on our sword as we labor to use our gifts for the Lord (See Nehemiah 4:17).

What did the third servant do with His gift?

Remember the Greek definition for the word *traded*...to work, to labor, to exercise? Glance at verse 26.

What two words does the land owner use to describe the third servant?

Wicked and *lazy*. The land owner was upset that the servant did not make any effort to use the gifts that he had been given to use! The third servant reminds me of someone I know who buys nice things, but then never wants to use them because they might break. No one else is allowed to use these things either and they sit...gathering dust...wasting away. What a shame. Let's not hide our gifts but commit to using them as God intended.

Do you have any talents that are gathering dust from lack of use?

Keep in mind that sometimes we may have to wait to use our talents because God wants us to receive more training. Or perhaps we need a greater level of maturity or integrity in order to responsibly use our gifts. Timing is very important!

Please look at verse 18 again. Verse 18 says that the third servant *hid* his lord's money. The word *hid* in the Greek is *apokrypto* which means "to hide, to conceal, to keep secret."

Why do you think the servant hid his master's talent?

Eventually, the master returned home and called his servants to him to settle accounts.

Please fill in the missing word from verse 20:

"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; _____, I have gained five more talents besides them.'"

In the NVJV, the missing word is *look*.

Please write a definition for *look* in the space below:

In the Greek, the word used for *look* in this verse is an *interjection* (an interjection adds excitement or emotion to a sentence) which means: miraculous, new or unexpected. This same word for *look* is used to highlight surprising events in the New Testament such as when the disciples saw the withered fig tree that Jesus had cursed, when John the Baptist announced

the presence of Lamb of God and when angels at the tomb announced that Jesus had risen from the dead.

What do you think the servant in verse 20 was surprised about?

Probably the same thing that we are surprised about when Jesus uses us greatly for His kingdom! Because Jesus joins us in our work for Him, like servants one and two, can step out in faith and use our talents for Him. He anoints our work with His power and makes it fruitful. We can work beyond what we think we are capable of because we work in His strength not our own.

Now, let's turn our attention to another very important word in verse 20, *gained*. In the original language, the word *gained* transliterates as *kerdaino*. *Kerdaino* means to acquire, to get to gain, "of gain arising from shunning or escaping from evil, to gain any one i.e. to win him over to the kingdom of God, to gain one to faith in Christ." This definition is brimming with important applications for modern day believer! Please consider the following:

1. In order to use our gifts greatly for the kingdom of God, Christians will have to make deliberate choices to avoid evil and sin.
2. Our gifts will be enhanced as we choose to avoid sin and evil.
3. Our gifts are to be used in order to bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ.
4. By not using our gifts we completely miss the message of the Gospel, the Great Commission and the specific calling that God has on our own lives.

In light of what we just learned about the word *gained*, perhaps we can understand a little better our Master's frustration with the "third servant mentality." We were not saved just to pass the time away, waiting to be taken up to heaven. The Master left talents with us to be used expressly for His life work. Every single Christian on this earth has been greatly gifted to serve in the kingdom of God. Our Master isn't concerned about *saving up* our

gifts, He's concerned about *gaining* souls; it is His will that none should perish. Therefore, we need to pour ourselves out like a drink offering by using our gifts for His kingdom. To truly be a servant of the Master, we need to look beyond our own salvation and comfort and plan to use our gifts to bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ.

How did the Master commend servants 1 and 2?

He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Why were the servants faithful? Because they faithfully used their talents.

Did you notice that the master was equally happy with both servants one and two? Despite the difference in the net gain of the two servants, God did not commend one more than the other.

What did the master do as a result of the servants' good work?

The master expanded the servants' responsibilities. Remember as we learned in verse 15, the master gave to his servants according to their abilities, therefore if he gave his servant a greater gift, the servant must have grown in his ability to use his gift. God also expects us to grow our gifts by using them. He then in turn will bring us more opportunities to serve.

What new title was given to the faithful servants in verses 21 and 23?

From servants to rulers! What a promotion!

Think of the talents that God has given you. How have you been growing your ability to use your talents?

What other training do you need to “grow” your gifts?

How might God want you to expand upon the use of your talents?

Are there any steps you need to take at this time?

Now, let's focus the third servant for a moment. When questioned by his master, the third servant said he buried his talent out of fear. I believe this servant either had a wrong view of his master's character or he was not even telling the truth about his fear (the master reveals the faultiness of the third servant's fear in verses 26 and 27). Furthermore, the other two servants did not fear their master; they even rejoiced with him over their fruitfulness.

It seems then that doing nothing for the kingdom of God is equally as bad as working against the kingdom of God.ⁱⁱ Like a cook who will not cook or a construction worker who will not build, what use is a servant who will not work?

What was the final destiny of the third servant?

The unprofitable servant lost the reward that comes with committed service in the name of Christ. Instead of entering into the joy of his lord, the third servant wept alone in the darkness.

In the end, living for ourselves will leave us empty, depressed and regretful. By refusing to use our talents for the kingdom we will miss storing up treasures in heaven. More importantly, we will miss the joy of our Master. The gift of talents is a test that can lead to future rewards and he who is faithful with little will be a ruler over much. By using our talents not only will we bring God glory, but we be invited to rejoice with Him forever!

Well done my good and faithful servant...

Enter into the joy of your lord!

By Mary Kane

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ⁱ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *parabolē* (Strong's 3850)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2010. 16 Aug 2010. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G3850&t=KJV>>

ⁱⁱ Jamieson, Robert; A.R. Fausset; and David Brown. "Commentary on Matthew 25." . Blue Letter Bible. 19 Feb 2000. 2011. 20 Aug 2011. <[http:// www](http://www)