

Parable of talents

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 00] You turn with me this evening then for a short while to the chapter that we read previously, Matthew 26, Matthew 25 rather, Matthew chapter 25 and I want to read with you take up the reading again from verse 14.

Matthew 25 and from verse 14, the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey. He that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, made them other five talents, and likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

But he that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money. After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.

And then we take up the reading again at verse 23. As Lord said unto him, well done, this is to the man who had received the five and the two talents. Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things.

[1 : 21] I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed.

And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine. And so on. I suppose it's true to say that wherever you have had human beings, there's always been a fascination for the future.

I think it is true to say that it is one of the most best-selling subjects in the world today. If you want to write a book and want to make a fortune, you write a book on some kind of future speculation.

If you have some way of predicting or claiming to predict what the future holds, you can make an awful lot of money and you can become a very famous person indeed. I suppose that it was always like this, wasn't it?

I suppose that there was always a fascination for the aspect of the unknown, the element of the unknown. I remember myself, it came home to me very vividly one day.

[2 : 54] I was, the only time I ever visited the town of Blackpool in England, when I saw there was a shop on the shop front. I don't know if the shop is still there, perhaps it is.

I don't know, this was many years ago. In any case, on the window of this shop, there was all, there were a whole array of photographs. And these were all famous celebrities who had visited this shop in Blackpool.

And all these famous celebrities had come to this shop where they claimed their future was told to them. And, of course, this was the shop's way of advertising the credibility of the person who ran the shop as being someone who could predict what was going to happen in the future.

And there were hundreds of these photographs of all kinds of rich and famous people who had visited this shop, and you were supposed to say to yourself, oh, well, if all these people visited this shop, then there must be something in it.

I don't need to tell you that in a great many newspapers and magazines, you can read your stars as predicted by so many different people who claim that they are able to predict with some degree or another of accuracy what the future holds and what your day is going to be like and whether or not you're going to have success or failure or who you're going to marry or whether or not you're going to fall out with someone or whatever it is.

[4 : 19] You have this fascination with the future. Now, I want to point out to you tonight that according to the Bible, to dabble in the future is forbidden.

It is strictly and absolutely forbidden by the Lord. Now, that's not just some kind of old-fashioned Victorian notion.

That is for a very, very good reason. Or rather, I could say that it is for two good reasons. And the first of those reasons is this, that the future is something that belongs to God.

It is something that lies in the hands of God and only God has authority over the future because the future is ordained by God.

And it is an insult to God to think that we somehow can determine the future, whether it is by our tea leaves or by the stars in the sky or by our birthdays or whatever it is.

[5 : 27] We are blaspheming against God because what we're saying in effect is God has nothing to do with the future. The future is determined by the stars or the future is determined by whatever it is, by whatever method that I choose to determine the future.

The reason that such dabbling is forbidden in the Bible is simply because the future belongs to God. It belongs to God.

God knows the end from the beginning. He knows exactly what will happen to us. There is no dubiety or uncertainty or maybe about it.

God knows exactly what is going to happen to us tomorrow and the next day and the next week and next month and for the rest of our lives. Every moment of our existence on this earth is known and ordained by God.

There is another reason why it is forbidden to look into the future by other means. And the other reason is the reason that we have the subject of this chapter.

[6 : 32] And that is because what is important about the future has already been made known to us. It has already been explained to us everything that you need to know about the future you know already.

In other words, what is going to happen to you next week whether you are going to have a good day at your work or whether you are going to fall out with someone or whatever is going to happen whether you are going to have an accident or whatever that is not the important thing.

The trivialities of life are not the important thing as far as God. God has already told us what is important is the future according to the word of God.

And he has told us that certain events will take place as a matter of absolute certainty. And those are the events that are listed in our Bibles.

Now then, I want to look a little bit further then into some of those events and then look into particularly the parable that we have just read together as giving us an aspect of what will happen one day.

[7 : 40] Because the Bible talks about the future in two particular areas. First of all, it talks about a personal future. In other words, what happens when a person dies?

That is a personal extended future. What happens when a person dies? But then the Bible also has something else to say.

It tells us that there is a cosmic future. It tells us that a day will come when the whole world will be destroyed and where God will recreate a new heaven that he calls a new heaven and a new earth for the old heaven and the old earth will be passed away.

And what will happen is that existence as we know it will completely disappear. It will be destroyed and a new existence will be brought into effect.

That is the subject of the chapter that is in front of us this evening. And what it's called, the Bible has various terms that it uses to denote this time.

[8 : 50] It calls it the day of the Lord. But particularly, it calls, it terms the cosmic future as the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The second coming of Jesus Christ. Now no one knows, despite all kinds of predictions and calculations and guesses and all kinds of things that people have thought up by trying to piece together bits and pieces of the Bible, it is still as much of a mystery, I think, as it ever has been, when Christ will exactly come.

No one knows. That's part of the, that's part of the teaching of Christ. It's important that no one knows. Because Christ said that the Son of Man will come as a thief in the night.

And that when he does come, it will be a time when we won't expect. The important thing, the thing that is stressed beyond any question in this chapter, is the readiness with which we ought to be living in this world.

It is as if he could come at any moment in time. Be ye therefore ready. That's the whole point of the first of those parables that we read together. The parable of the five, the ten bridesmaids, the ten virgins.

[10:02] The whole point is given to us in the 13th verse where Jesus says, Watch therefore, he says, For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

That's the whole point. And it is important not to say, Oh well, Christ will not come for another hundred years. That's important that we don't say that. That we never ever come to a point where our understanding has been corrupted to the extent where we actually think we know when he's going to come.

Watch therefore, he says, For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. However, the Bible does tell us that certain events will accompany or rather they will come before the great event itself.

For example, it tells us there will be wars and rumours of wars. If I can just list some of them before you this evening. There will be wars and rumours of wars. And then Jesus says, Many will come. He says, In my name, claiming that I am Christ and will deceive many. Nation, he says, will rise up against nations. There will be famine and earthquakes in various places.

[11:13] There will be false prophets. Christ says, Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. He tells us that the gospel will be preached in every nation.

He tells us that there will be a great tribulation, what he calls a great tribulation. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 10 that the nation of Israel will be largely converted.

There will be a great revival. where their eyes will be opened and they will see Messiah as Jesus Christ as they've seen it never before. It tells us, the apostle Paul tells us in Thessalonians that there will be a man, the man of sin, whoever that will be.

The man of sin will be revealed. The Antichrist will be revealed. All of these things were to predict, were to accompany, or by which we were to see and to recognize and to be assured that the Son of Man will come.

Be sure, for sure, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, will come. And then he says the last thing that will happen. After all of those things that we've just mentioned, all of those things that we've just given a list of, he tells us this, that the sun will be darkened and the stars will fall from heaven.

[12:32] The moon will not give its light. In other words, all the lights will go out. Everything that gives light in this world will go out. And then, and then suddenly, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now then, I want to look this evening during the time that remains at the teaching surrounding this event that is given to us in what is known as the parable of the talents.

We've seen already, we've given, we've mentioned before the first of those parables given at the beginning of this chapter, but then Jesus, you notice, goes on to another parable. And it is the second parable that I'd like to consider with you for a few moments in the time that remains.

He talks about, first of all, a man going into a far country. And before he went, he called his own servants together and he distributed to them.

To one, he gave five talents. To the second, he gave two talents. And to the third, he gave one talent. Each man, we are told, according to his own ability.

[13:48] Now, a talent was a unit of weight or a unit of money. And in this context, it is used as a unit of money.

It has nothing whatsoever to do with our modern day usage of the word talent. We talk about talented, somebody's been talented as a person, as a good singer or a good artist or a good writer or whatever.

That has nothing to do whatsoever with this parable that is in front of us this evening. The talent was a unit of money. It actually happened to be a very large unit of money.

It took a laborer in those days 20 years to be able to earn one talent of money. So, when the businessman, when the Lord here in this parable distributes five talents, that was worth a hundred years of a laborer's time.

It was obviously, this man was obviously a very rich businessman indeed. Neither has the parable anything to do with any interest that Christ may have had in business dealings.

[14:58] Some people use the parable to talk about, well, this is Christ giving his consent or he was condoning business activity. Well, if you're going to go down that road, you're going to miss the

whole point of the parable.

I'm not trying to say that we can't argue these things, but I want to say we must keep on the central message of this parable. And I want to go through that central message with you.

It's divided, you'll notice, into three parts. First of all, the first part takes place just before the master is leaving to go into the far country.

We don't know where he was going, where the whole point of the parable is, that we don't know when he was going to return. He was going for an unspecified period of time. He distributes, before he goes, the talents, his money, his property to his servants.

Five, and then two, and then one, each man according to his various ability. And then he goes away. Then we come on to the second part of the parable.

[15:59] And that is where after the master has gone, all of a sudden, I want you to notice that a division arises. First of all, we have three servants, but as it's when the master goes, that all of a sudden we see the servants for what they truly were.

And what starts off as three servants, in actual fact, ends up as two servants. Because the first two servants are really one servant. They both have exactly the same frame of mind.

They both do exactly the same thing. They go off immediately and put their master's money to work. They do exactly, their action is absolutely identical. They go straight away to the bank.

They go straight away to the money exchanger and they put their money to work, the master's money to work. But there is where we see the difference. Because the third servant, this is where the difference lies.

The third servant did the opposite. He took his one talent, he went away with a spade, dug a hole in the earth and put the talent firmly in the place, covered it all up again and presumably for a marker just where he had put it so that he would know where to come for it when the master, when the master returned again.

[17:09] That's the second part of the parable. But then we come on to the third part where one day the master returned, the Lord returned. It tells us in verse 19, after a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.

He called them all together just as he had done before. And there, there formed a queue in front of him. First of all, there was a man who had been given the five talents, then behind him was the one who had been given the two talents, and then behind him was the man who had been given the one talent.

What were they going to say to him? Now I want you to notice this. First of all, I want you to notice the mood that exists between the first, the first two servants and the third.

He says, so he, verse 20, he had made a hundred percent profit in the money exchanges or the bank or whatever system they had in those days.

And here he was not only with five talents but another extra five for his master. And he had come, he had been ready for his master, for his coming.

[18:17] And I want you to notice the difference in the mood between those two servants. I want you to notice in verse 21, verse 20 rather, he said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents.

Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. Five talents. And we have to go back in order to capture the drama of this moment, it is useful to go back into the original language.

Because the original language brings out a little bit better than the translation does in the English. It brings out the sheer excitement of this first sermon.

I want you to notice the sheer delight that there is in this first sermon. Because here is a man who every day has been waiting for his Lord to return. Every day he's been going back to the bank asking how the money is doing.

Asking what progress has been made on the money. On his money that has been left to him, has been entrusted to him. Asking how things are going. Why? Because he loves the Lord. He's waiting for his Lord to return.

[19:27] He's expecting, he's anticipating the Lord to return at any moment. He doesn't know when, but it doesn't matter when. Because whenever it's going to be, he's going to be ready for him to come.

Waiting with sheer and utter delight in his heart. And when he does come, he's expecting him. And he says, Master, he says, this is the original language, Master, he says, five talents you placed in my hands.

Look, he says, look, I want you to see what your money has gained. I want you to see what's happened in the meanwhile while you've been away. There is good news, Master.

There's another five talents I have gained for you. And you know this, I want you to notice that not only is the servant earnestly and delightfully expecting his Master to return, but look at the delight that's in the heart of the Master.

There is no disappointment. There is no ill feeling. There is no heaviness or there is no awkwardness about the feeling of the Master.

[20 : 33] The Master receives the servant with just as much delight. He says, well done, he says, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things.

I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord. Now you see, there is no need to go into the second servant because the second servant says exactly the same things.

He's waiting for the Master having done exactly the same thing. He's done what he ought to have done with his Master's money. There's no reason to be ashamed. There's no reason for any awkwardness.

There's no reason for him to hide at all because he's ready and waiting for his Master having put his Master's money to what? But then we notice the third servant.

And if you've been reading the passage and I'm sure you've read it so many times before, probably heard several people preaching on it before, you'll notice that it gets that the tone of the whole thing shifts and we're waiting all the time for this third servant to find out what's going to happen to the third servant.

[21 : 43] We're waiting and we don't like what's going to happen to the third servant because we know that he has done something completely different from the first two.

And so it is. He that had received the one talent, verse 24, came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine. Now then, what does this mean?

What point is Christ making in this parable? Before we go any further, why was it that Jesus told this story to his disciples?

What is the central issue? What is the teaching in this parable that applies to you and to me this evening? What relevance is it to you and to me this evening?

[22 : 43] What are we to understand by these servants and the first two servants and the third servant and the talents and the gain that they made and the burying of the third talent in the ground?

Well, it's this. That God has made every single one of us for a purpose.

and for that purpose God has given us certain things. In fact, I would even go as far as to say this, our whole lives and everything that we have in this life is given to us for God, by God.

That's the starting point. So there you have the Lord giving out his talents, distributing his talents among his servants but it's not for themselves.

It's to provide a return for his own glory. That is it. Now here is where I have to put to you. We have far 20th century and I'm going to start saying soon 21st century if we live that long we live for the next four years.

[23 : 58] The 21st century mankind has completely got it wrong because his view of life is entirely one that revolves around himself.

And is it not true this evening that we have forgotten our responsibility to God that we have been made and we have been given everything that we have been given in this life by God for God.

I was listening to the testimony of a young student a few weeks ago and she was telling how the Lord had come into her life.

She had been brought up in a Christian home but of course that is not enough to be brought up in a Christian home. We must come to know Christ for ourselves and she was telling us how she had come to know Christ for herself and she was telling and I think this is how it fits in so well with this parable she was saying you know she said the thing that always struck me and from which I could never escape she says was this thought time and time again this thought would come back to me how much she said God has given to me and what am I doing with it what am I doing with my life and through thinking about these things through considering and coming to our knowledge of her Bible and the gospel she was converted and that is to have a correct understanding of our

perspective where we stand before God this evening we talk about our entitlements we talk about our rights we talk about our opportunities we talk about the things that are open to us and the opportunities and the chances that we have and the things that we want to explore and achieve and be successful is for ourselves that's what we're led to believe isn't it and we've swallowed it we've gone down the road and right now I'm sure there are many of us in here you can't understand this parable because you can't see yourself in the same light you can't see yourself as being accountable to God you see yourself as a free agent you're born one day and what you make of your life well that's so be it what I make of my life is my own entitlement and I'm going to make of life what I will because you only live once isn't that the way we think

I only live once we say let's make the most of it wrong entirely wrong we were made for God and we will only find a rest when we find a rest in God and there will be always a gap what Augustine called a God centered void in my life until I find my rest in God that is the whole point of this parable I want you this evening to look back at your life I want you to start counting this evening everything that God has given you your health your mind the place that you were brought up in all the goodness all the opportunities that God has given you I want you to remember that he has given you his word his truth his gospel time and time again and greatest of all he's given you his son to die on the cross for lost sinners so that you could be saved by coming to faith in him what have you done with him what have you done with all that God has given you have you put it to use have you used it to his glory or have you taken what you had and dug a hole in the earth and buried it in the ground

[27 : 48] I remember once working with a fellow and he would come in every morning so it's years and years ago and he would come in every morning the first thing he would do is he would phone up his stock broker first thing he would do nine o'clock in the morning he would come to his desk pick up the phone first thing I used to watch you could set your watch by him phone up his stock broker and find out how his shares and stocks were doing that was his diligence about his own money and how things were going in his own self with his own fortunes and how much his money had made over the weekend or over the week or whatever it was I don't know what it was but you see that's the diligence that we ought to have with God that's the diligence that these first two servants had immediately straight away as soon as they got the money they were straight to the bank straight to the stock broker if you want to put it in modern terms straight to the stock broker investing the money not for themselves but for their lord why because they loved their lord because they were so filled and captivated with the responsibility that they were given it wasn't some kind of slavish fear some people might say well what wasn't it for them you see that's modern man again that self centered modern man who sees life revolving around himself who sees life as just a self worship let's see what I can get out of it but the first two servants it was entirely the opposite but look at the diligence every day I'm sure they would go back down to the money exchanger to find out what would happen to their lord's money now let me put it like this to you this evening we are here tonight and there is some of you there are those of you this evening and you are like those first two servants oh I know that we should be better

I know that we are not as like them as we should be I know that we are not doing what we ought to be doing I know that there are blemishes and flaws and sins that take place in our Christian lives I know all that but nevertheless there are some of you in here and you live every day for the lord Jesus Christ every day is a day with Jesus your life has been changed by him he takes the central and the main place in your heart and it's not just that you've been a Christian but that you are a Christian you are a Christian every day every day you wake up in the morning and you're a Christian when you go into work you go into work as a Christian when you deal with your family you deal with them as a Christian when you deal with other people you deal with as a Christian and you act and you behave I know not perfectly but with a love and a desire in your heart to be a better and better Christian for the lord why because Christ is at the centre of your life but there are others who this evening do not live every day for

Christ they don't even live any day for Christ you have taken what God has given you that doesn't mean to say you don't know anything about Christ I'm not saying that you do know not only that you have been given you have been given a mind that can understand the gospel you have been given time after time for many of you the opportunity time and time again to receive the gospel it has been put in all kinds of different ways by all kinds of different people coming at it from one angle or another so that there's no way that you can misunderstand the gospel that you have taken what God has given you and you have dug a hole and you have buried your talent in the ground and you

have covered it up and you have gone away now you know I'm sure that there are many of you this evening who will ask well I've listened to this man's answer in verse 24 I've read this a few times now and I can't find what's wrong with this poor man Lord he says I knew thee when it comes to his turn last in the queue Lord I knew thee that thou art a hard man reaping where thou hast not sown gathering where thou hast not strawed and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth lo there thou hast that is thine well you might say to me well what is wrong with what this man did he says he knew the master that he was a hard man well what's wrong with that he says he was afraid how can you blame him for that he went there and he did what came to him he dug his hole in the earth he put his talent in the ground and there it was how can you blame him for that well let me explain it to you like this you see the third servant had everything worked out in his own mind you notice that from the answer look at the answer he gave it was perfectly worked out in his own mind and I want to go through and for a few moments his reasoning his reasoning what he had worked out in his mind first of all he says this lord he says i knew thee that thou art a hard man reaping where thou hadst not sown and gathering where thou hadst not strawed well first of all that was a downright lie and don't say that you can't blame someone when they tell a lie well he says well surely he was ignorant surely he had a wrong that's precisely the point that is precisely the point that his ignorance was due to his own reasoning you see what happened he did not he couldn't care less about his master's money you know what he did was this he doesn't just hide in the ground come again when his master comes and says lord i couldn't care less about your money no no oh no that would just show him up for what he was and neither does our hearts work like that because i reckon this evening there are very few of you this evening who would say i couldn't care less about the gospel i couldn't care less whether i what i do with what god has given me doesn't really bother me i really can't it doesn't have any interest in me at all i really if i was to meet god tonight i really couldn't care less i'm sure that there would be very few of you if any who would say such a thing no no it's much more subtle than that what you're doing is exactly what this man did you're trying to make yourself look as if you are in the right you're trying to twist the situation round first of all because of a wrong and a twisted perspective of god how many times this evening have you heard people talking about god how many times have you heard that god is long suffering how many times have you heard about his mercy how many times have you heard about his love how many times have you heard the verse for god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life and you know what you do you go away and you say god is only wrathful god is angry that's your view of god it doesn't matter how many times you've heard about his mercy and his loving kindness and his goodness and his love you say to yourself I know what kind of god he is don't tell me what kind of god he is I know what kind of god he is you don't need to tell me I know and you see what you're doing is exactly the same as the third person the third servant you've worked god out to suit yourself you've worked god out to enhance his wrath so that all you want to think about is his wrath so that you think you're going to say to him but one day lord you're full of wrath I was afraid so therefore I didn't do anything because I was afraid you see the way it works it does not stem from his view of god it stems from his own laziness and his own unbelief and I have to say to you this evening if you think that you're going to stand before god and have some kind of argument against him you are totally mistaken because the truth is that everything that god could have done to save your soul has been done everything god has not missed out anything he sent his only begotten son so that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life don't say this evening that you weren't told don't say this evening that you were given too much this man wasn't given too much don't say that you did your best don't say that god is harsh and ruthless don't say that you never understood because it's all a lie a lie to suit your own conscience every day that you live your life this evening is a day nearer his coming whether that coming whether we will live to see his coming or not that is not the point but for every one of us his coming will be the day that we pass away from this life and every day is one which grows nearer and nearer and nearer that point and if you this evening are that third servant who has hidden the talent that god has given you in the ground you know in your own heart how true that is you will notice that it was only when the lord came that his talent was taken from him and that means that there is still time that means that there is still time to go to wherever the marker is wherever that mound of earth is in your life that marks the place where you have dug and hid your talent in the ground to go straight away and to dig it up and to believe in the lord jesus christ and to put your house in order by receiving him to be your own before the master comes watch therefore for you do not know the day nor the hour when the son of man shall come

let us pray oh lord oh god we thank thee that we are yet on mercy's ground we thank thee oh lord
for all that thou hast given us in thy mercy and in thy great grace we thank
[39 : 35] thee for sending thy son into the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish
but have everlasting life oh lord give us that everlasting life even tonight we pray we pray especially
for those who are like that third servant we pray that they might have the sense and the wisdom this
evening to lay hold upon the lord jesus christ for themselves while there is still time and to believe
on him for whom to know is life eternal guide us we pray this evening as we sing our closing psalm
bless it unto us we pray speak to us through it pardon our sins in jesus name amen