

Burying Talents: (Matthew 25:14-30, Mark 4:21-32)

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Jesus told a story of 3 men given money by a ruler and told to manage it as stewards, for the ruler would be gone on a long journey, but would be back one day. Two of the three put their money to work, doubling it. The 3rd one buried his money- he had an improper understanding of his master. When the master unexpectedly returned from his long journey, he called each of the managers to account. The one who buried his money was called by his master: lazy, unprofitable, and wicked- he didn't advance his master's cause and thus hurt his master, betraying his master's trust. As a result, the money he had was taken from him and given to the other servants. The parable ends with these sober words of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the **outer darkness**. There will be **weeping** and **gnashing of teeth**." (Matt 24:29-30)

This parable should cause us to **rejoice** over the glory of what it will be like to hear those blessed words from our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, for rewards for hearty work to advance the gospel by the power of His grace (1 Cor 15:9-11), as He tells us on Judgment Day, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter the **JOY** of your Lord."

What a blessed day that will be as God is "remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope **in** our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 1:3)

-AND-

This passage should make us **tremble** with fear for those who have been given so much by the Lord- they've gone to church Sunday after Sunday and heard His rich word, His gospel, and they have acknowledged it as true and blessed and will be quick to tell other believers that it is a wonderful message... but they've buried the message- they've not shared it with others, they've not had a war-time mentality that souls are going to hell and need to hear how they can escape the wrath to come and enter into eternal life. They've not invested their time and money and spiritual gifts (all given to them by their Master who has charged them to be good managers) to win souls for Christ- they've buried all that the Lord has given them- woe to them- they go to our churches, they bless us in the name of the Lord- and go about their daily lives as unprofitable servants, wicked, lazy and unbelieving. They haven't trusted God's promises to take His word and multiply it. He has pleaded with them to share it, but they've hid it in the ground.

Elsewhere Jesus said these words about the power of a faithful witness, led by the Lord, to turn the world upside down with the gospel...

"Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? ²²For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light... ²⁴Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. ²⁵For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

²⁶ And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

³⁰ Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?"

³¹It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth;

³²but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade." (Mark 4:21-32)

Often these three paragraphs are taken separately- but taken in context, they're all looking at the same thing from different angles- the gospel of the kingdom of God must not be hidden (buried)- we have been given the greatest treasure imaginable in the gospel- how can we hoard it to ourselves? As we apply and share God's word, God opens up the floodgates- souls get saved, the Kingdom advances and even we as stewards of the gospel are forever changed by the process as God rewards us as faithful managers of His kingdom.

Paul wrote of this stewardship, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a **stewardship**." (1 Cor 9:16-17) Like it or not- if you belong to Christ, you are a steward of the gospel- which manager are you- are you wicked, lazy and unprofitable to your Master, or are you busy scattering seed and putting the light of the gospel on its stand, proclaiming it boldly for all to see?

God causes the invisible growth of the gospel in the hearts of men and women. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [managers, stewards] through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase**." (1 Cor. 3:5-8) God made the work of the gospel on the heart as an invisible work- so often in evangelism a seed is planted and no one sees for quite some time that there is the mysterious work of God taking that seed and forging a new, eternal life from it.

Think for a minute how amazing "seed" is- whether we're talking about plants, or sexual reproduction- the end result takes time- there are uncertainties, and it is for a time an invisible work of God- but the seed brings forth life- and God's spiritual seed, faithfully planted, in due season produces eternal life. We must not misunderstand our Master- He has given us seed to spread- we must faithfully spread it, regardless of weather conditions and regardless of whether we're in the mood or worn out. My wife and I take day trips at times from Indianapolis to Cincinnati. At times we've seen a farmer in the field early in the morning on our way to Cincinnati and late at night on our way back- there's work to be done- the seed must be planted, it must be fertilized, and it must be harvested- or the farmer is a worthless, lazy, unprofitable farmer.

Jesus told us the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. He who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son (Prov 10:5). There's work to do- we're crying out to the Lord of the Harvest to send out harvesters- the fields are ripe, "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together." (John 4:35-36).

Come on out and join us, learning on the streets of Indianapolis and in the malls how to share your faith- I can't think of any better training ground- the conference is a great opportunity to get a jump start (www.goodmessengers.com)! Farmers take time to learn how to sow and water and fertilize and reap. Many of us have spent thousands of hours studying to get a bachelor's degree in some field that will provide us a livelihood for 30-40 years- how much time have you spent "on the job" learning the basics of sowing and reaping for souls for eternal life? Some say evangelism with strangers is ineffective- could it be they've misunderstood the Master? Could it be that they have ulterior motives for saying it is ineffective? I don't want any of my friends to hear the Lord Jesus say to them on Judgment Day that they are wicked, lazy, unprofitable servants. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that."