

# Red Chairables

## *The Talents*

Part 2 - July 18, 2010

[Video location: Skagit State Bank vault]

Imagine going to the bank to see how much interest you'd earned on an old certificate of deposit, and they said: "None." They buried your money in the ground! In the parable of the talents, Jesus warns us that God has invested in each of us, and He expects a return on His deposit.

[The kingdom of heaven] 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. So also, the one with the 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 that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "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? 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 the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. 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. - *Matthew 25:14-30 NIV*

It's tempting to relate to the one-talent man: he's not given much, and he fears what his cruel master will do if he loses it, so he hides it. And then he gets chewed out and punished. Don't you kind of feel sorry for him?

Well, we've lost something in the translation. To Jesus' listeners, this guy would've come off as a real jerk! So, let's see what we're missing.



Last week we talked about the fact that talents were *not* coins; they were the largest measure of currency in Jesus' day. A single denarius was given for an average day's wage. And a talent is equal to 6000 denarii or 6000 *days'* wages! So, a talent was roughly equivalent to 20 years wages.

This is *big* money. The servant is obviously a capable manager; and the master would've had existing business plans to guide him. And there was no middleclass in Jesus' day.



The few who had this kind of wealth had *huge* opportunities and *little* competition. It'd be like owning the sole concession stand at Safeco Field and turning it over to one of your managers. And when you return from vacation you find out he never even opened the doors. He didn't do what was safest, but laziest.

And he wasn't *just* lazy; he was *wicked*. He intentionally put all that money at risk without any possible benefit. If anything had happened to this servant, the money would've been lost forever.

Did you see the guy on the news last week, metal-detecting for coins in England? His detector gave a "funny signal", and he dug about a foot under the surface and unearthed this big clay jar. And the jar contained over 50,000 ancient coins that were buried about 250 years after Jesus' parable (and valued at \$5,000,000)! The coins were worth about four years wages (for a Roman legionary soldier).



Metal detector enthusiast Dave Crisp discovered over 50,000 coins (circa 293 AD) in Frome, Somerset England in April, 2010.

The man in the story buries about five times this amount! This is gross negligence! He not only deliberately wastes an incredible opportunity, he so disdains the master that he completely disregards his assets. And to top it off, he blames *his* inaction on the *master*!

I knew that you are a hard man [**i.e. callous and harsh**], harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed [**i.e. dishonest and corrupt**]. - *Matthew 25:24b NIV*

But Jesus presents him as a *good* master who entrusts his fortunes to *servants*, praises them equally for their efforts, rewards and promotes them, and invites them to celebrate alongside of him.

This guy obviously doesn't really know the master. And he says:

So I was afraid ... - *Matthew 25:25 NIV*

The master exposes this as a lie, by the flaw in his logic:

So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather 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. - *Matthew 25:26-27 NIV*

If you thought I was ruthless, and you feared to stand before me and account for your actions, then you would've done the bare minimum and not put my money in jeopardy. These actions don't betray fear; they betray the *lack* of it! You see: he's a real *jerk!*



The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem

Matthew says that the disciples were on the Mount of Olives with Jesus, a few days before the crucifixion when Jesus told this parable to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. Jesus is the master about to go on a journey. And He's entrusted all of us with kingdom assets to invest.

1. There's no such thing as a no-talent servant.

Each servant was given *something*. You have natural abilities, honed skills, possessions, finances, connections, opportunities, and unique personality traits. But, do you see your "talents" as having been *entrusted* to you by a gracious Master, to be invested in His eternal kingdom? Or, are you "burying" them in temporal, earthly pursuits?

The only investments that matter are the ones that'll follow us into eternity. So, whatever we do, work, rest, or play, we must do it as unto the Lord, and seek first the kingdom of God.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. - *Colossians 3:23-24 NIV*

Years ago when I worked children's shoes at Bullock's Department Store (in Sherman Oaks, CA), a female coworker was a practicing witch. Pretty much every day I asked her about her witchcraft. And then she began to ask me about *my* faith. On my last day, I hugged her goodbye, and she wept and confided in me that just the night before she had prayed to God to give her what I had.

In what ways are you investing your "talents"? It requires some risk: it means stepping out on faith and facing the possibility of embarrassment, disappointment, or failure. Be like the two servants who were eager to invest what had been entrusted to them, and excited to show their returning master.

At home, work, school, or here at His Place ... risk something! Because ...

## 2. God expects a return on His investment.

On the Day of Accounting you want to be ready for your *audit*!

Did you notice the master praises the two servants for being *faithful*, and *not* for being shrewd or effective or profitable?

His master replied, "Well done, good and **faithful** servant! You have been **faithful** with a few things ..." - *Matthew 25:21a NIV*

The praise is for their faith, not their results. That's why both faithful servants received the same reward:

... I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness! - *Matthew 25:21b/23b NIV*

They're both promoted with further authority, influence, and responsibility, but what is their true and ultimate reward? Sharing in their "master's happiness"! This isn't something you can buy, earn, or make. And that's the mistake of those who bury their talents in earthly pursuits. True joy comes as a reward for serving others in Jesus' name.

If all of our energies go into our *own* well-being, that joy and peace that passes all understanding will elude us.

Did you notice Jesus doesn't offer an example of a servant who *uses* his talents and *looses* the master's money? When we risk our talents for God's kingdom, we *can't* lose! The *only* way we *can* lose, is to hide our talents or bury them in earthly pursuits. Because ...

## 3. Buried talents are taken away.



Take the talent from [the wicked servant] and give it to the one who has the ten talents. - *Matthew 25:28 NIV*



Did you see this a few years ago in the news: In 1957, the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, buried a brand new Plymouth Belvedere in a time capsule. And it was to be preserved for fifty years. And on June 15, 2007, the car was unearthed.



In 1957, people had guessed the population of the future Tulsa and the winner (or heir) would receive what was billed as a "priceless antique". But when it was unveiled - to the dismay of those hoping for a pristine Plymouth - it was nothing but "a ruined hulk with rotting upholstery, collapsed suspension, flat tires and an engine that appeared to be a solid chunk of rust."

Turns out, the universe is merciless to buried Belvederes. It reminds me of Jesus' words:

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - *Matthew 6:20-21 NIV*

Buried talents are taken away. It's not a threat; it's simply the factual difference between earthly and heavenly treasure.

If my heart is not intimately entwined with my Father's heart and plans and purpose, I will inevitably treat what has been entrusted to me with carelessness and callousness.

And I will be the one who suffers most. Because ...

#### 4. Buried talents bring regret and anguish.

The parable ends with a frightful warning:

And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be **weeping** and **gnashing of teeth**. - *Matthew 25:30 NIV*

Regret and anguish; sorrow and depression. That's the "reward", both in *this* life and in the life to come, for wasting an incredible opportunity by disdainning the master and disregarding His property.

An unavoidable day of accounting is coming, and we'll be equally accountable for what we did with what we were entrusted.

For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. - *Matthew 25:29 NIV*

Those who risked nothing will lose everything.

But, those who gave all they had will gain even more!