

Hanging Out With Jesus: What Does It Look Like To Be A Faithful Man Today?

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 25:14-30, The Parable of the Talents

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study where we always have room for one more man. I want to go ahead and do a shout out this morning. We're going to do it a little bit differently, this is not a group that's actually doing the video Bible Study with us. Instead, these are a group of combat soldiers in Afghanistan who are doing a book study. This picture is worth a thousand words, these are some American soldiers stationed at an unnamed airfield in Afghanistan. They are led by Staff Sergeant Roscoe W. Petty, he's just an all-in guy who is passionate about discipling other soldiers. You may not know it because it's not talked about as much in the work we do, but we work with thousands and thousands of combat soldiers working through chaplains and dedicated men like Sergeant Petty, bringing in resources and encouragement to their discipleship ministries both here and abroad. It's a great pleasure to give this shout out to you guys here this morning. Would you join me in giving these soldiers in Afghanistan a big Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three, hoorah! We're glad to have you guys with us!

We're in this series called Hanging Out With Jesus. The title of the message today is What Does It Look Like To Be A Faithful Man Today? We're going to be looking at the parable of the talents, both as it was then and what it means to us now. I just want to give you a promise: you can be a faithful servant of God no matter what situation you find yourself in. You can be a faithful servant. You can hear those words we all want to hear: Well done good and faithful servant. So we're going to take a look at this parable, probably a favorite for many of us.

The Parable Of The Talents

The first thing we want to look at is the parable itself, so you should be at Matthew 25. We'll start at verse 14. Jesus is speaking and he says this:

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey

He's referring back to the kingdom of God. If you were here for the last lesson, we talked about the parable of the ten virgins and the idea that it was about the coming of Christ and establishing his kingdom. Continuing:

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

All of these three men we're getting ready to look at are servants of the master. These are believers, men who are following the master. Then they are entrusted with property:

To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability.

This word ability here happens to be the Greek word *dunamis* which is the word for power which we have talked a lot about in this Bible Study. We talk about why is it that men are leading such tepid lives in Matthew 22 and 29. Jesus says here's the problem, the problem is you do not know the scriptures and as a result you do not know the power of God. It's that kind of power, *dunamis*, it's dynamite! *Dunamis*, power! So in this text it's translated as the work ability, but I think it would be wise to think about these abilities as being those kind of abilities that God gives us. It's not that we created our own DNA, it's not that we delivered ourselves and cut the umbilical cord and we pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps and are what we are today because we did it by ourselves. We had a little help. Continuing:

Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more.

I'm just going to say this as a side bar. It sounds like a big deal, but it's not such a big deal. The guy had five grand, basically, and put it in the stock market. The master was going to be gone for a long time, and so he doubled his money. Big deal! It's not like this incredible accomplishment, it's really not. How many of you are familiar with the rule of 72? Quite a few of you are. Basically, you take the number 72 and you take the interest rate that you're earning, divide it into 72 and that's how many year's it will take to double your investment. If you took five thousand dollars and you found an investment that could earn 7.2% interest, 7.2 into 72 is 10 so you would double your investment in 10 years. So if the guy was gone for twenty years you would only need to earn 3.6%. So you see it's not like Jesus is talking about some man the master gave these talents to who did this incredible thing like create Google. It's not quite that, so don't get too carried away with this doubling thing. Verse 17:

So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

So he did less than the least. He could have done something with it, but he did less than the least you could think of. Verse 19:

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 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.'

Who knows how long it was? Now look, even me if I gave you five grand and I went away for twenty years and you came to me and said look Pat! You gave me five thousand dollars, I invested it wisely and now I have ten thousand dollars! See here it is! I would think, okay my little three year old child, I appreciate that. This is not some rock star, this is not Warren Buffet. This is just a regular guy. Verse 21:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!

It doesn't say successful, does it? Was he successful? Yeah. For a three year old. It doesn't say well done good and successful servant, and that's because the point of this parable that we will see as it develops is that it's not the results that you can produce that make God happy. It's the effort you put in to doing whatever he puts before you. What God puts before some men leads to incredible worldly success, but some men have tasks put before them that as the world would see it, God has lead them to poverty! For

example, someone who is a substitute teacher for a career. As the world would see it, he would not be considered successful. But he might be a five talent guy that hears well done good and faithful servant because he took the talents that he had and he invested them wisely in the lives of those kids! So the word is well done good and faithful servant. Don't miss the word servant because we talk about that word a lot here, too! The idea is that we are first and foremost, sons of God. We are adopted into the family of God. Heirs and coheirs with Jesus Christ! He is our older brother and we are sons of the father. That's so crucial as a first step! But we are also servants of God and Jesus said in Luke 17:10 when you have done everything I have told you to do, you should say we are only unworthy servants who have done our duty. We're always asking what does the master need from us. Does he need us to be successful? Not so much. He can take some of his cattle and sell them any time he wants if he needs money. He doesn't really need your money. What he does need is faithfulness in the efforts that we put forth.

You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.

Did you see that? If you are faithful with a little, you get some more to work with! Dwight L. Moody said it best when he said the reward of service is more service. Service is its own reward! Getting to help more people is the reward for helping a few people. You know that, those of you who have walked with God for any period of time. Those of you who have not yet gotten to that place where you can resonate with that, you will! Some day you're going to realize that service is the reward! Getting to help people is the reward, not just the duty!

Come and share your master's happiness!

C.S. Lewis has written that in this world we really don't know the joy of God like we will someday. The way C.S. Lewis puts it is that in this life we feel stabs of joy. Every now and then in this world you do something and you feel a stab of joy. It's the real deal, but it's like an hors d'oeuvres. This one tiny thing on a tray the waiter gives to you and then he's gone. But it's real and you know that! Think about this: you have stabs of joy, but the master's happiness, this joy we get to enter into, imagine how much joy and happiness is that which belongs to Jesus! Right now! Someday, if you are successful, you too will get to enter into that happiness. Not so much. All you have to do is be faithful with a little bit! And as you are being faithful with that little bit, you'll have these stabs of joy that will make you want more of that joy. You'll realize that service, being its own reward, will make you want to do more service. Then eventually, instead of getting stabbed by joy you get slayed by joy! It's joy all around, joy all the time! It's the master's joy! We get to be with him and share in his joy!

"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.'

The man with two talents says the same thing, gains in the same proportions. They had the same stock broker!

"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!'

It is no small coincidence that the Lord Jesus used exactly the same wording, because what he wanted us to see and what is also the Big Idea today is this: **God calls us to be faithful, not successful.** He's not calling you to be successful! He may want you to be successful, he may give you success, but not as the

world gives will he give you success. What he does want you to do is to be faithful. **God calls us to be faithful, not successful.**

When I was in business, and thank God I'm not in business anymore, especially right now. But when I was in business I thought that my job was to be successful. I thought that my identity depended upon being successful, I thought my worth as a human being depended on my being successful in the world; from a worldly perspective. That when people respond to me, they respond to my success, not to my character. I thought that because of the queues I got from the wisdom of this world as opposed to the wisdom of God that if I wanted to be somebody, I really needed to be successful. So, I became successful. But was I faithful? Well, I had integrity. Does that count? Yeah... But was I fully faithful. Was I doing it for the glory of God? Was I doing it to serve him or was I doing it so I could get the applause that I was looking for? To, as C.S. Lewis said, win worship? If I could get you to worship me, then my identity and self-worth would be okay. I figured that it wasn't good enough just to put in the faithful effort to do what God had called me to do, I thought I had to be successful at the thing I had called me to do, too. Some of you know what I am talking about. The Big Idea, though, is **God calls us to be faithful, not successful.**

What Is The Question This Text Puts To Us?

Second up, what is the question this text is putting to us? The question is what is it we can do to hear those words well done good and faithful servant? What is it that you and I can do to hear these words? Let's talk about first what is not being faithful. Let's read on in the text:

"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. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold 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.'

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

If you are a believer and God gives you talents, they could be time, talent or treasure, whatever they are; if you take them and don't deploy them when God prompts you by the Holy Spirit according to your abilities, not according to your disabilities or inadequacies, but your dunamis, the power that you have. Not the next guy's, just yours. You may just be a 5, you might have 5 units of ability or 2 or 1/10 of one, but use that ability you have faithfully. This guy didn't do that. He thought if I did no harm, even if I did no good. God's perspective is different. God's perspective is if you are not doing good, then you are doing harm. It's a different perspective. I didn't make things better, but I didn't make them any worse. God says no. If you're not making things better, you are making things worse. That's the point of this third guy. What can we do then to hear these words? Again, the Big Idea is this, **God calls us to be faithful, not successful.**

What Should You Do?

What should we do? What can we do? First is to ask where is good and faithful needed today? Duh! Where is good and faithful needed today? Think through the roles of a man. It could be in your role as a husband if you're married, as a father if you have children, as a worker if you have a job, or as citizen and everybody's that. It could be in your role as a friend, a brother, a son; so you can think about where good and faithful is needed today. You won't need a mission trip to India. Maybe for some of you, you will, but chances are you don't need to go to Ecuador, you can just go home! So it's needed everywhere! It's not losing your cool at the gym when some guy reams you out unfairly. I saw that guy again yesterday. There's another guy here at the Bible Study that goes to that gym, too. We were actually talking about him, I was working out on that same machine I got reamed out for. For those of you who didn't hear it, we talked about this last week. Anyway, we were talking about it and in walks the guy! We made eye contact and I smiled and nodded. He looked away. But then within a few seconds he was looking back. I smiled and nodded again and he looked away again. Then he avoided me the rest of the week, except that when I was leaving we happened to be walking out at the same time. He didn't seem angry this week, he seemed embarrassed. That's a good thing, it shows you he has a conscience. I consider that another step in being faithful to that man. Smiling at him, trying to get his attention, letting him know and sending him some queues. I consider that to be faithful, certainly not successful! But maybe that will come, too! You just never know!

What does good and faithful look like for you? It could be driving a bus. It could be a chance meeting with an old High School chum that doesn't know you're a believer now. It could be just anything! However, I want to suggest to you that where good and faithful is needed most today is in the area of making disciples, and particularly of men. When I say where is good and faithful needed today, I want to read to you a quote from my own book that is somebody else's quote, so that makes it okay. It's called *How God Makes Men*, and this is the quote: If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I might be professing Christ. Where the battle rages (and I'm going to say to you that is the area where our men problem is consuming and engulfing our country, the collapse of Biblical manhood, the collapse of the once dependable Judeo-Christian value system), the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all of the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace to him if he flinches at that one point. What should you do? Make disciples. We're all becoming disciples, many of you are already making disciples. We've talked about this, Jesus did not say go and become disciples, he said go and make disciples. Of course, you can't give what you don't have so you have to become one first, but you're not making disciples until your disciples are making disciples and that's what discipleship is. That's where the battle rages today! What does good and faithful look like for you? You can find it in every venue in which you operate but especially in this venue of where the battle is raging for men's souls, so just keep that in mind.

Finally, what is good and faithful going to look like for you? If you take up making disciples, it might look like our friend, Jim Seibert. I have told this story before here. For those of you who have not been around long, Jim Seibert was the administrator of this Bible Study for seventeen years. He became a disciple here and learned how to make other disciples here. Jim had a son named Timmy. Timmy died of AIDS. Jim had the privilege of leading his son to Jesus two days before he died. Beautiful story. One of the men in our Bible Study heard this story, and he also had a son with AIDS. His name was Butch. So Butch's father asked Jim if Jim would go and meet with his son and see if he could make some headway with the boy about Jesus. Jim said yes. He walked into the hospital room, introduced himself, and the first thing Butch says after Jim said he'd like to come visit regularly is okay but none of that Jesus stuff.

Jim said okay, but would it be all right if I prayed at the beginning and end of our visits. Butch said okay to that. Over the next eight weeks, Jim went by to visit somewhere between eight and ten times, he said I was able to slip in a little of that Jesus stuff. Every time I was with Butch, he talked about how his train was coming into the station, referring to his own death. Finally, after eight weeks of building some rapport, one day Butch said do you know anything about AIDS. Jim had not said anything about his son up to that point, so you can imagine the impact on Butch when he explained how his own son had died from AIDS. Jim said that gave us a level playing field from that point forward. The next week he asked him a similarly large question, he said what do you think about gay men? Jim said Butch, what do you want me to think? God loves all people and he may just love you best of all. Butch seemed to like that answer. Jim said, Butch your train is coming into the station pretty soon. You can go to the left, or to the right. If you go to the left, it's total darkness, but if you decide you would like to go to the right, God is waiting there for you with an outstretched arm if you will take it and invite Jesus to come into your life. A few days later, Jim saw a blinking light on his answering machine. It was the hospital letting him know that Butch was about to die, so Jim went down. Butch said it's my time now, I am getting ready to die. Jim, would you go ahead and tell me about that Jesus stuff, and show me how I can have what you have? Jim was able to lead him in a prayer of faith and repentance and Butch chose to go to the right. He died one hour later. That's what it means to be faithful, **God calls us to be faithful, not successful**, but in fact isn't being faithful success? Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, thank you for this parable which helps us understand what it is you are looking for from us so that we can hear those words, well done good and faithful servant. For any man who is here hearing this or will ever hear this, who has thought that in order to make you happy or to be more spiritual or more acceptable to you, that they had to work harder for you, help them understand that that is not what you're looking for. Lord, I pray that you would help each and every one of us to realize that just because we don't have a lot in the world's perspective doesn't mean that we can't do a lot by being faithful. I pray that you would spur and inspire us each to be faithful with whatever it is you have entrusted to us, and we ask this in Jesus' name, amen!