



On the road to Emmaus.

THE STORY: PSALM 111

How else can we respond to God's blessings that He has showered on us by grace, besides multiplying what He has given to us for His glory? How can we show that we understand that everything we have comes from His hand? How can we prove that we fear God, and are willing to obey Him, and practice what we know to be true? How can we show our gratitude to God, and our submission to Him? We can look at the work of His hand, and sing of the mercies of the Lord forever (2Chr 5.12-14) as Psalm 111 beautifully expresses. Yet words are not enough (Mat 15.8). At some point, each of us is called to glorify God in our deeds as well as our words (1Pet 2.12), to love with our hands, and not only with our hearts and minds. God tests our hearts and minds (Psa 7.9), by looking at the work of our hands, and graciously multiplying it, so we may share His joy (Deut 16.15; 2Chr 15.7). His covenant with us is forever; and so our praise will endure forever.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What can you say about Jesus' love, the Church, the Gospel, or God that you can also show to someone by your actions, as James illustrated? (Wed.) (Rom 12.6-9; Tit 3.1-2; 3Joh 1.4-7.)

PRAY:

Praise God for the work of His hands that you personally have seen and delight in.

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*To bring glory to God
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*building children into their parents...
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GET INTO The STORY

LIFE OF CHRIST • LESSON 22

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Learn to make use of the blessings God has given you.



The Lord entrusts talents to us

THE STORY: MAT 25:14-18

It's easy to misinterpret the *Parable of the Talents* to mean that we must "earn our keep" in the kingdom, or else be thrown out. Keep in mind that the question is, Who is Israel, i.e. who is an heir to the kingdom of God? (Mt 8.11-12) The kingdom belongs to the descendants of Abraham who are heirs by faith, not heritage (Rom 4.16). This parable says we can show that we are heirs of Abraham by faithfully doing Jesus' work, by multiplying Abraham's Seed (Joh 12.24; Gal 3.16). But some claim to belong to Jesus who don't faithfully do his work. Jesus will tell them, "Away from me you evil-doers, I never knew you." (Mat 7.23). They won't lose their salvation; they never had it: Jesus "never" knew them. In this parable, we are the servants that Jesus entrusted his "property" to, his kingdom-work. He gives 'talents' to each believer (skills, gifts, opportunities, etc.), enabling us to do his work (1Cor 12.11; Joh 14.12, 17.4). But whatever he has given to us, we are expected to "multiply" it (Mat 13.8), that is, to use it to advance his kingdom, in his strength and grace, each according to his ability.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What has God given you to enable you to advance His kingdom? (Eph 3.10; 1Pet 5.2-3; 2Pet 1.4; 1Th 2.4, His church, His shepherds, His promises, His gospel.)

In cooperation with God's Spirit, how can you "multiply" your intellect, talents, skills, knowledge, money, time, or effort to further His kingdom?

PRAY:

Ask God to show you how to multiply what He gave you, so He receives the glory for all you do.



The Lord evaluates our faithfulness to him

THE STORY: MAT 25:19-23

There will come a time for all believers to account for the life we lived, and what we did with our time on earth. Did we live for ourselves, or for God? (Gal 2.19). What did we do with our time, money, and talents? There's no telling when we'll have to give that account, whether today, tomorrow, or many years from now. But the day will surely come. In the parable, each servant accounted for how much he received to invest, and what he gained as he labored in his master's name. The first two servants doubled their master's property; even though they received different amounts; it was according to their ability, i.e. according to how much their master gave them. They were both "faithful" with what he entrusted to them and would receive a corresponding reward – not of merit, but of grace. And each would be entrusted with greater responsibility, "I will set you over much." Each would "enter into the joy of his master," equally and without distinction.

TALK ABOUT IT:

If you had a year to live, would it change the way you live? Should it make any difference whether it's a day, a year, or a lifetime? Why? (*Ps 90.12; 2Pet 3.8-9*.)

How do you measure the "return on investment" of your labor for Jesus? Some of it may not "pay off" till after you're dead. (*1Cor 15.58; 1Th 1.2-7*.)

PRAY:

Submit your labor to God's judgment. Thank Him that your labor is not in vain.



Where is the Gospel?

THE STORY: JAS 2:14-26

What evidences that we belong to Jesus? That we are his faithful servant? Jesus said we should love one another (Joh 13.35). James gives us some practical things we can do to love another, and evidence who our Master really is. Our works don't merit eternal life, or even a reward (Luk 17.10). But they prove our faith; and they honor Jesus. We're saved through faith alone, but not through a faith that is alone. We can say we love, but if we don't actually love by serving others, is it loving? We can *show* our love for others by giving them what they need for their body. We're Christ's hands at work, multiplying fish and bread (Mat 14.19-21). We can say we believe in God, but belief is more than knowing something; it is acting on

what we know to demonstrate our belief. Abraham acted on what he knew of God; he put his son's life on the altar to prove his trust in God. Faith is completed by works. Faith that is *exercised*, is our righteousness in Christ (Rom 4.5). Rahab put her life at risk to prove her faith in God. Faith apart from works is dead – it's empty, false, and meaningless – for how can it be faith if we will not act on it?

TALK ABOUT IT:

What risks have you taken, or would you take, to prove that you trust in God and that your faith is in Jesus? (*Rom 16.3-4; 2Cor 11.25-28; Phil 2.25-30; Jas 5.5*)

How should you respond when God supplies your needs through someone else? What is *their* reward (i.e. their blessing)? (*2Cor 9.10-14*)

PRAY:

Thank God from whom all blessings flow, whether thru you, or thru others to you.



The Lord will judge our work

THE STORY: MAT 25:24-30

Now it's the turn of the one to whom little was given, and little was expected. Yet if he had invested it, multiplied it, however little he gained for his master, he would have received the same reward as the others, the same commendation, and he would have been entrusted with much. But he buried the talent, unused, while he went off to see to his own business, ignoring his master's business, which was to invest and multiply. He was afraid and wouldn't risk failure; he gained nothing. He admits that he knew both his master's business, and his expectations. He gave his master back only what he had received from his hand. His master called him a "wicked and slothful (lazy) servant," *not* a "good and faithful servant." He did not gain an abundance (Mat 13.12; Joh 10.10), but lost even what he had. He was removed from his master's presence, having proved that he was *not* his servant.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What two words described this servant who refused to do his master's work, and tried to justify his inaction? How could you be more diligent or "ambitious" for Jesus? (*Tit 1.16-2.8; Heb 6.10-12*.)

Prov 14.12 says there are two ways to live, your way and God's. Now read Tit 3.8; 1Tim 4.8; 2Tim 3.16-17. These are "profitable" to you. How are you "burying" them (like the talent), or how are you "investing" them to Jesus' glory?

PRAY:

Ask God for the wisdom to choose well between Jesus' ways and his blessings, and the world's ways and blessings, so you'll be a profitable servant to him.