

- A. Can there be a more demeaning and despicable designation of someone's life?! "Worthless." This servant was empty. He had received from God and sat on his gift. His life had been lived for himself. That was his legacy: selfishness, self-service, self-satisfaction. He had no compulsion to serve anyone.
- B. The ironic thing is that when he stands before the Lord, he calls Jesus at verse 24 "a hard man." This is terribly revealing.
  1. When God is seen as "hard," then there is nothing seen in God that is worthy of a response.
  2. That is, this man did not know the Gospel. He did not know that God does not want to be known as "hard," but as our God of love and mercy; our God of compassion, our God of grace, so that **when you know how much God has given you and continues to give to you, and promises to give to you in your future, then how could we ever call Him a "hard" God?**
  3. And not knowing the Gospel, this man was lifeless, and had no compulsion to share God's love. He therefore lived the sad state of living for himself. For him it was "live and let live." That's it. We go through life as if we lived in a gigantic shopping mall. Just walking by, ignoring everyone else just so that we can get what we want. How sad! How empty! How worthless!

#### Conclusion: But Christ Emptied Himself to Save Us:

- A. He left His heavenly glory, and "emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:7) and you know what He became: a servant. Why? To save you from the status of worthless sinner to invaluable (rich) saint!
- B. **He lived to give you everything He had...all of His love, all of His forgiveness, all of His resources, all of His talents...His very blood and it is this royal blood that covers you, that makes you invaluable to God, that forgives all of your sins.**
- C. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:15: He died for you, so that you would no longer live for yourself, but for Him who gives you everything!

#### "Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant" (St. Matthew 25:14-30)

For Your Life in Christ the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost,  
Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)  
Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa

#### Introduction: The Challenge of Matthew 25:

- A. It calls attention to what we have *done!*
- B. But Scripture clearly teaches that we are saved by grace, and not based on what we've done.
- C. This is only a *seeming* contradiction.
- D. Ephesians 2:8-10 describes the relationship between faith and works.
- E. Luther: "Works infallibly follow justifying faith, since faith is not idle." (Plass, *What Luther Says*, 493)
- F. What is done is merely evidence of what generates what is done: namely faith! Works are evidence that faith is living. That's all. So when Scripture zero's-in on works, it is simply calling attention to the existence of faith. It is not, however, the works themselves which save, but the faith behind the works which clings to Jesus Christ.
- G. Augsburg Confession VI: "It is also taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God's sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God."

#### Part I: In the Parable of the Talents, notice WHOSE talents!

- A. Verse 14: "a man going on a journey" is the same as the "master" mentioned throughout the parable. This man in the parable represents Christ.
- B. Verse 15: The master's "servants" = believers in Christ.
- C. Jesus is presented as giving "talents" to believers.

- D. A “talent” was a monetary unit, but this is beside the point. It is here a symbol for **“everything entrusted to us in such a way that it benefits God’s kingdom.”** (The Lutheran Study Bible, see the summary note of 25:14-30, 1639)
- E. Everything you have is a gift from God. These gifts/talents *don’t belong to you, they are on loan; they belong to God.*
- F. But this is the last thing we recognize.
- G. Timothy Keller shares his experience:

“Some years ago I was doing a seven-part series of talks on the Seven Deadly Sins at a men’s breakfast. My wife, Kathy, told me, “I’ll bet that the week you deal with greed you will have your lowest possible attendance.” She was right. People packed it out for “Lust” and “Wrath” and even for “Pride.” But nobody thinks they are greedy. As a pastor I’ve had people come to me to confess that they struggle with almost every kind of sin. Almost. I cannot recall anyone ever coming to me and saying, “I spend too much money on myself. I think my greedy lust for money is harming my family, my soul, and people around me.” Greed hides itself from the victim. The money god’s modus operandi includes blindness to your own heart.” (*Counterfeit Gods*, 52)

- H. But where does this blindness come from? It is a sin that assumes that what we have is our own. This is a fantastic illusion. Consider these Scriptures:

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:6-7:** **“Now there is great gain in godliness and contentment, <sup>7</sup>for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.”**

**Luke 12:20:** **“[God speaking to the rich fool who focused on his wealth] Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”**

- I. The blindness comes from our colossal assumption that what we have belongs to us, but what will we take from this earth? You’ve probably heard the saying, “You never see a U-Haul trailing a hearse.”

## Part II: The Two Wise Servants Who Were Like the Master:

- A. Two of the three servants knew that everything they had came from their master. What they had was on loan and their main task in life was to make it grow in order to honor the master.
- B. Note that the first and second servant had the same margin of profit. The first servant went from 5 to 10; the second went from 2 to 4. It is possible that the first servant may have simply had more time to work with. The point is that they both doubled the talents. That is, they were both faithful in treating their talents not as things to hoard or to treat selfishly, but as talents that were intended to multiply.
- C. But multiple for what?
- D. **To answer this question, get back to the Master.** What is the Master about? Consider that He said of Himself: He didn’t come to be served, **but to serve and to give His life** as a ransom for many (St. Matthew 20:28).
- E. **The Master’s concern is serving and blessing others.** He gives His talent of the sun...and it shines on all people; He gives His talent of rain...and it showers on all people; He gives His talent of food and He feeds us all; He gives His talent of resources, and we have roofs over our heads...why? So that you can cling to these things? No, but so that you can be like Him...share the wealth. Get out of your self-serving box.
- F. The Christian is like an apple tree or an orange tree (you pick which one you would prefer to be today). God gives you life and you grow and grow, but the fruit you bear is not for yourself, it is for others. You grow in order to be a blessing to other people. Next to worshipping God, this is our purpose for living!

## Part III: The Worthless Servant (as God refers to him at v 30)