

## Matthew 25:14-30

Our readings reflect the approach of Advent, with its themes of judgment and salvation. In our gospel Jesus tells a parable of a man going on a journey, who entrusted his wealth to his three slaves. Each has a different amount of money, and the freedom to use it.

### **They respond in two quite different ways.**

The slave who had been given 5 talents and the one with 2 talents, both **put the money to use, traded with it, and earned more money.**

Jesus is using an example from the world of business to illustrate a spiritual truth.

God is our Master. The '**talents**' are all that God has entrusted to us, our lives, our money and possessions, our gifts and abilities, our time, the days of our lives, our faith, our minds and bodies, our love and care.

Jesus is challenging his hearers to use all they are, and all they have, to show God's love in their lives, and to bring in God's kingdom. So, we can share God's love with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and in this way witness to our faith.

We might share our money and possessions with the poor and needy, to support Christian mission and evangelism so that people across the world will know that God cares, because we care, and God's Kingdom will grow.

Or we might use our money to provide Bibles, God's Word, for those hungry to read it, so that Christians are encouraged and the Church is built up.

We might use our time and energy to work (paid or unpaid) to the best of our ability for the benefit of others in our community and nation.

In a thousand different ways we might use our '**talents**' to benefit others.

If we dedicate our lives to loving God and our neighbour (our text for 2020), we will reap a rich reward, that of finding God's love for ourselves, and his love working through us to others. These two slaves were told by their Master on his return,

*'Well done, good and trustworthy slave... enter into the joy of your master.'*

Surely the sentiment we would all like to hear from God at the end of our lives.

### **But the third slave buried his talent in the ground!**

This is like hiding your light under a bushel, as Jesus says elsewhere (Matthew 5:15); keeping what you have for yourself alone and not using it for the good of anyone else.

This is a **selfish life**. Notice this third slave says, '*I was **afraid** (of his master) and I went and hid your talent in the ground*'. Nothing good can be accomplished through fear.

John says, '*perfect love casts out fear.*' (1 John 4:18) So, this slave represents those who do not know the love of God, who have not tasted the goodness of God. When we act selfishly, we betray our own hearts.

When his master returned, the third slave heard, '*You wicked and lazy slave!*'

He had not used what he had been given by God for any good at all, and has no reward.

He had not been willing to take the risk of sharing what he had, and so had distanced himself from God and his love.

Jesus concludes with some words that can seem puzzling. '*For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*' This continues the illustration from business, the way of the world, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Jesus is saying that spiritually, those who live their lives for God and his kingdom, who sow spiritual seeds of life, will receive more and more of God's love and life. Seeking after God brings the rich reward of knowing him better and experiencing him more closely. While those who neglect what God has given to them will find it has withered away to nothing. Remember that all our selfishness will die with us, only that which is of God will live forever.

So, we have some challenging words of Jesus to reflect on this morning, how will we respond, how will we live our lives?