

The Blessing of Opportunity

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Text: Parable of Talents, Matthew 25

Introduction

A parable from my experience with lawnmowing as a youngster: Blanche Suiter vs. small yards, gardens, difficult locations, and those who did not call until the grass is far too high. Her name doesn't matter, I will just call her the Widow Williams (not her real name).

Reading: Matt 24:14-15

Before talent meant ability, it meant money. Largest unit of Greek currency, 10000 denarii. According to parable of workers (Matt 20), a denarius represented a day's wage. Multiply your daily wage by 10000. Or if that is too hard, since most of us work about 250 days per year, multiply your annual wage by 40. It will come out the same. You have just determined the value of a talent in your life. If you make \$30000/year, one talent is for you about 1.2 million. Since many people expect to work about 40 years, put another way, a talent is a lifetime of earnings, to have the same amount you would have to save every penny you earn. This is a lot of money, a lot of value, and that is a key point in the parable.

Your God-given design, uniqueness, ability and person have great value in heaven's marketplace. We are not talking about God giving one person \$1, another \$2, another \$5. We are talking about God making a million-dollar investment—perhaps a multi-million investment for most of us. God has abundantly gifted us; even the one-talent man received a fortune.

Three Principles

God gives gifts abundantly, not miserly.

God gives gifts not randomly, but carefully, according to ability.

God elevates you from commonplace life by matching your unique abilities to custom-made assignments.

The first two servants rewarded their master's trust.

The five-talent man went off and started trading. He studied investment magazines, watched the business channel, he heard about a franchise opportunity, he identified a prime piece of property, he studied the options, crunched the numbers, gulped, and took the plunge, but he didn't stop there. He paid attention, he checked progress daily, he made adjustments, he worked at it, he knew his master, and he was honored by the trust bestowed. His master had given him a great opportunity and he did not want to disappoint his master.

The two-talent man took equal risks, he was also eager to help his master. He also negotiated and traded and worked. Both dared to fail, both seized opportunities before they went away. There were no guarantees, failure was possible, but opportunity demands great risks.

Their master commended them. They used their opportunity as a blessing. Opportunities are blessings, but the blessing is not automatic. Not everyone uses opportunities well—as we will see in just a moment. But the five-talent man received the applause of his master: v. 21.

Do we not long to be numbered among those who hear those words: well done, good and faithful servant. To have Jesus call us good, when he said none is good but God, when he refused to have the words applied to him. To have Jesus say, you did a good job. Good and faithful, not good and flashy, not good and famous, not good and fashionable, not even good and fruitful, just good and faithful.

Then the master turned to the two-talent man, what will he say to the \$2 million man? Exactly the same words! v. 23

No phrase altered; no honor omitted. The two-talent person who faithfully fills communion cups receives the same applause as the preacher who fills church buildings. The two-talent person who tells his neighbor about Jesus receives the same praise as the five-talent preacher who tells hundreds in mission campaigns.

The one mistake is that of not making one.

So we come to the one talent man. Did the master notice him? Certainly, he did. After all, he had given him over a million dollars in today's economy. And we learn a sobering lesson about blessings and opportunities, opportunities missed, blessings missed or sacrificed. V. 24-25

The faithful servants went and traded; the one-talent man went and dug. The first two went eagerly forth into the world and worked in the affairs of the master. The other buried the treasure. The first two went out on a limb, the last hugged the trunk, wouldn't even climb the tree.

He made the most common and tragic mistake of giftedness—he failed to benefit his master with his opportunity. He failed to bless his master through his opportunity, after the master had blessed him with the opportunity. Opportunities and blessings are for using to bless others. Everyone has talents, opportunities, blessings. There is no no-talent person. God gifts all. But how many people use their opportunities for the master? How many invest their gifts to profit the Master?

Sin confiscates heaven's gifts for personal use or selfish gain.

C. S. Lewis: *Sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us, an energy which, if not thus distorted, would have blossomed into one of those holy acts whereof "God did it" and "I did it" are both true descriptions. We poison the wine as he decants it into us; murder a melody he would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait he would paint. Hence, all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege.*

Some invest talents and give God credit. Others misuse their talents and give God grief. Some honor him with fruit. Others insult him with excuses. "I knew you to be a hard man." Is it true? The master wouldn't so much as honor the excuse. Vs. 26-27

The master repeated the assessment of the servant, but excluded one phrase. The master would not accept the description. Hard = the word Jesus used for the Pharisees, and the Hebrew writer used for the wilderness wanderers. The one-talent man called his master stiff-necked, stubborn, hard, and harsh.

His sin is not only mismanagement, although that is involved, his major problem is misunderstanding. He doesn't understand the master he serves. Is his master hard? He just gave multi-million-dollar gifts/trusts to undeserving servants. He honored the 2-talent man as much as the 5-talent man. The 1-talent man was in line for the blessing of the opportunity. Is this a hard master? Infinitely good, graciously abundant, yes. Hard, no.

The one-talent man did not know his master. He should have. He lived under his roof, at times ate at his table, shared his address, knew his name, his face, but not his heart. As a result he broke it. He could have known his master. The other servants did. He could have asked them, asked their advice. But he did not, and the master rejected him, he lost the blessing of opportunity his master had provided him.

False servants populate the master's house yet today. Enjoy his universe, benefit from his earth, know his name, his habits; frequent his presence. But never know his passion, never know the blessing, never see the opportunity, never seize the day, and as a result misuse their talents.

Who is this unprofitable servant? Who is the one most in danger of missing the blessing of opportunity? If you never use your gifts for God, you are the unprofitable servant. If you think God is a hard God, you are.... You will live a life of buried assets and lost opportunities, a life of missed blessings.

Go ahead, stick you million dollars in a coffee can, hide the can, and fail to multiply the blessing and the opportunity. Our God is in the business of multiplying blessings. Our God is in the business of multiplying opportunities.

I had a breakthrough with the Widow Williams, she invited me into her little house for a pop one day. She showed me the pictures of her children who seldom came to visit. She shared a little of her heart. She started coming outside and telling me how important certain flowers and shrubs were. It was still hard work, but I liked it better. She still didn't pay very much and it took me even longer to mow her yard, but it was more enjoyable.

Great lessons are to be learned.

God gives you opportunities according to your ability.

God gives you opportunities to advance his cause, for his profit, not for yours

God gives you opportunities so he can bless you even more abundantly in the future.

Opportunities are only a blessing if we can see them, if we use them.

Not everyone sees opportunity as a blessing, as the one talent man, but the problem is that we don't know the Blessor.

God has lavished us with strengths and a promise for the future. Go out on a limb, find the blessing of opportunity and use it. He won't let you down. Risk big things for God. Dream of his cause. Live to hear his "well done."