

Lesson 22: Chapter 25 “Well done, faithful servant”

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_25.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson was Matthew 24, it provides a prophecy about the end times, focusing on the destruction of the Temple, the signs of the end of the age, and the second coming of Christ. It emphasizes the need for watchfulness, preparedness, and endurance in faith amidst tribulation.

Memory Verse:

25:23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Lesson Opener:

In the parable of the talents, we notice that the last servant was fired from the job, and we have a job opening!!!

What kind of help-wanted advertisement might the master place to replace the servant who hid the talent? *(Let students speculate and have fun with this. One possible advertisement would read "Help wanted: A servant who is trustworthy, hardworking, willing to use what's been given to him or her and knows about business investments.")*

What do you think Jesus is trying to teach about the abilities He has given us?

Some of your students may not feel as if they have any talents at all, while some might have inflated ideas of what talents they have. Stress the idea that God has given everyone, without exception, some special quality, talent, or gift to use to honor God and bless others.

Ask students to list any talent or gift that they can name (not just ones they believe they have) and write on the board. Encourage students to think beyond the typical church setting to include business, the arts, and other areas. Feel free to add or suggest abilities that students don't mention.

Give an index card to each student. On the blank side of the card, let each student write down one talent from the board that they have or think they have and fold it in half like a greeting card. If they would like to use that gift to honor God, have them write a short prayer on it.

Lesson Goal:

God expects His followers to use their gifts, talents, and resources to serve others and advance His Kingdom. This lesson emphasizes that people will be held accountable for how they use what God has entrusted to them.

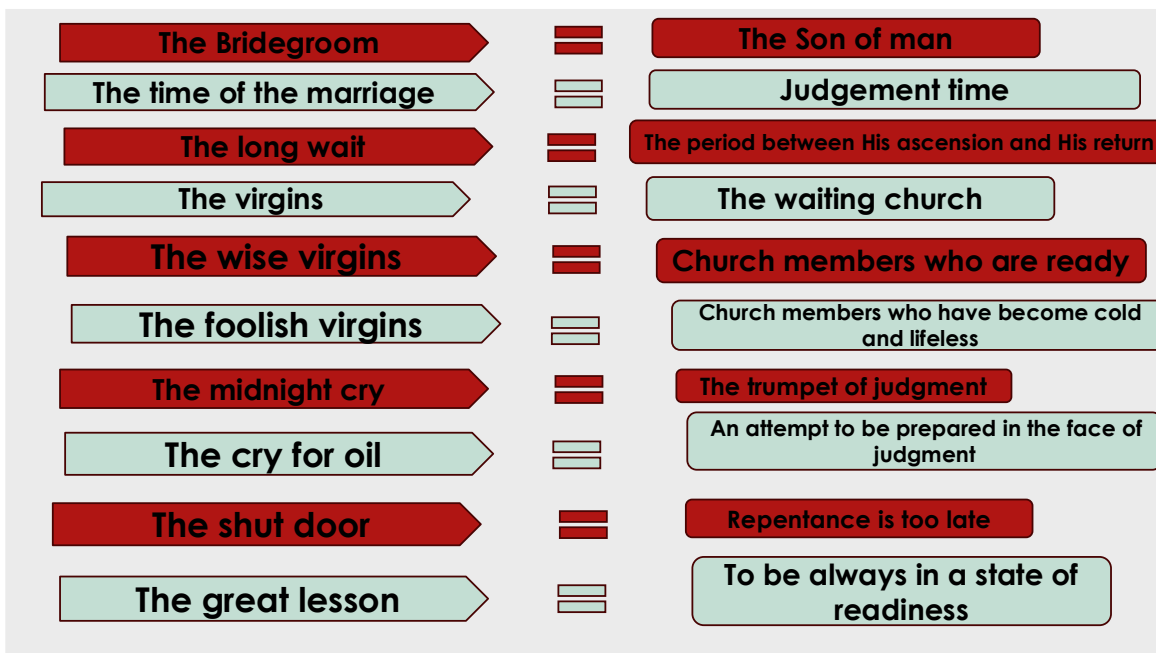
Lesson Body:

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

The Lord Jesus offers us three parables when He was in Jerusalem as a lamb to be presented as a sacrifice for the Passover in our place. He spoke of live concepts for the kingdom we are awaiting .

1. The Wise Virgins 1 – 13
2. The Parable of the Talents 14 – 30
3. The Coming of the Son of Man 31 – 46

At every midnight, we read this chapter of the gospel in the first service of the midnight prayer. We are careful to be one of the wise virgins who enter the eternal wedding.



St. John Chrysostom believes that this oil refers to the good and righteous deeds that distinguish the living man from the dead one. The believer offers his sanctified senses to the Groom in faith that works in love (Gal 5:6).

The ignorant ones carried their lanterns, but were unable to possess the holy oil, that is, the good deeds in the Lord. The oil is the grace and salvation of God or that faith which works by love. They carried dead faith, and worshipping appearance. The foolish virgins had little oil in their lamps at first,

enough to make them shine before men by showing off to get their respect but they did not have enough oil in their hearts to produce good works that lead to salvation.

The wise virgins will have their oil ready, and their lamps trimmed and burning and soon prepare themselves to give their accounts to their Lord. The foolish, having made no provision of the oil of good works, are compelled to seek it at the time they are to be judged.

When daytime is over, and the nighttime comes when no work can be done, it is not possible for anyone to borrow oil from someone else, and thus they are unable to encounter the Groom. They remain outside when the door is shut. The son of man will appear on the clouds; the foolish virgins will see Him only as the fearful Son of Man and will only see His eyes kindled in fire. As for the wise ones, their hearts, or rather their inward eyes are pure, and could see God and could enjoy His splendor.

It is not surprising that the Lord says, “I do not know you,” for they have not entered with Him in real partnership, and neither have they seen His glory inside them.

At the final day of judgment, there will be no room for prayers and good works (St. Jerome).

What a miserable thing it is, not to discover the emptiness of one’s heart of all good till it is too late to make any changes. The door was shut - dreadful and fatal words! No hope remains!

Takeaway:

Perhaps the virgins had been waiting for a long time and some of them thought *“He is not going to come tonight; let’s sleep first and get more oil in the morning.”*

Satan often does not tempt people by saying, “Don’t get ready. Don’t be prepared. Don’t do that good work.” Instead, he would tempt us by saying, *“Sure get ready, just do it tomorrow.”*

Procrastination is bad enough when you know a specific deadline to finish something. But we do not know the time or the hour of Jesus’ return so procrastination in this case is much worse than on a test exam or a business project when you may still hope to cram what you need to do in the last day.

God does not ask us not to sleep physically. But we should be ready all the time for His return, which means we should not sleep spiritually. We should not become complacent like the foolish virgins.

Also, your salvation does not guarantee your children’s salvation. You cannot pass oil to them.

There is a limit to God’s patience / at some point there will be no more chances – For those living at the time of Noah, they could have repented and entered the ark with Noah at any time before the door closed. But they did not. Then God closed the door. After that it was too late. It will be the same at the Second Coming.

Now there is still a chance. Tomorrow there may be a chance. One day there will be no more chances. Therefore, keep watch.

When ?
“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”.



The Parable of the Talents (Read 25:14-30)

In this parable the Lord offers His servants money. He gives to one five talents, to the other two talents, and to the third only one talent. Each one is given according to his capability (Matt 25:14,15). He knows how to distribute to each one according to his potential. What God has given us as talents has not been given haphazardly, for He knows what is appropriate for each member for his own salvation.

God wants us to use the resources He has given to us for building His kingdom. Some of these resources include our spiritual gifts, our natural talents, our time, our money, our knowledge of the Bible, etc.

God is not expecting any gain, and He is not concerned about the quantity; He is rather concerned about the loyalty of His servants or their negligence. What the servants of the five and the two talents have profited is only ‘the honesty in the job.’ They were worthy to be in charge of a big amount. But as far as those of the one talent, their problem is their carelessness, for they have hidden their talents, and have led idle lives.

The one who had the five talents, because he gained five more talents, he was appointed over more, by entering His master’s wedding. Moreover, he was given the talent that the careless servant had neglected. As for the owner of the one talent, because he was careless and lived an idle life, he not only did not gain another talent, but he also lost the one he had and he fell into another sin, which is his accusation of His master by saying He was cruel and unjust. Each sin led to another one.

When the master began to condemn His servants and asked them for the account, He began with that who had the five talents, then the two talents, and lastly him who had the one talent. Whenever the talents are more, our condemnation begins ahead of others, and we are asked for more.

The servants give what they made back to the master because it was from Him, and it was His.
Application: Everything we have is from God. We must not try to keep it for ourselves.

The temptation to view God as being harsh and unfair goes all the way back to Satan’s conversation with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). Here Satan introduces the idea that God was unjust and keeps them from obtaining something good and useful, which they would enjoy, and Eve falls for it. Today you don’t need to look far to see people questioning God’s goodness and accusing Him of all sorts of terrible things.

The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations (25:31-46)

In the first part of chapter 24, Jesus tells the disciples about His second coming, specifically what the signs will be. After that, He shares several application-centered parables reminding believers of the need to be ready. Each contain this basic point of being prepared for the second coming and not being surprised. Being prepared means living our life with the knowledge that He will return, and we should give an account for our lives.

The parable of the sheep and goats contains this same basic reminder of being ready, but from a slightly different angle. In the other parables, Jesus mentions that there will be a separation. True believers will be ready and will be rewarded. False believers will be punished for the wrong they have done. **The twist in this parable is that many of the false believers will not even realize that they are in the wrong group and are unprepared.**

Sheep and goats are quite similar. They have similar sizes. Both have wool coats. Their diet is very similar. Even the sounds they make are difficult to distinguish. Jesus picked two very similar animals to highlight the fact that many people who think that they are believers or in some ways act like a believer in fact are not. A goat living with a flock of sheep could go through his life thinking he was a sheep. Likewise, a person could have knowledge of God and think that he/she is going to heaven, but in fact he is not.

St. Kaprianous says, “How can Christ declare this more clearly? How can he urge us more to do righteousness and mercy than His saying that all what you give to the poor and needy is only given to Himself. If anyone is in the church and does not give for the sake of his brother, let him think of Christ and he may be touched. He who does not think of his colleague, the suffering poor person, might think of His God who dwells in this rejected man.”

Jesus will praise the sheep for their selfless behavior. Note the types of things He praises them for: feeding the hungry, showing hospitality to strangers, visiting the sick or the prisoner. All these things are acts of kindness shown to people who very likely cannot repay you. What is more, they are acts of kindness demonstrated in largely private places like prisons and hospitals or your own home. He does not commend them for their public and popular services.

The Lord has not prepared man for the outer fire, but rather for the eternal kingdom. The wicked ones have chosen themselves to be thrown out into what was prepared for others, that is, for ‘Satan and his angels.

God is invisible. Thus, it is sometimes difficult to know how to love someone who we cannot see. The answer is right here. We serve God by serving those around us. We love God by loving those around us (1 John 4:20). Simply put, this is the way God has designed for us to show our love for Him.

Takeaways and Lesson Delivery Ideas:



Five Lessons for Our Lives from the Parable of the Talents:

1. This parable teaches us that success is a product of our work:

We were made to work. As Christians we have a mission that our Lord expects us to accomplish in the here and now.

Far too many Christians today see their salvation as simply a “bus ticket to heaven.” They believe it doesn’t matter what they do while they “wait for the bus.” The Parable of the Talents teaches us what we are supposed to do while we await the return of our King. We are to work, using our talents to glorify God, serve the common good, and further God’s kingdom. The spiritual success is working diligently in the here and now using all the talents God has given us to produce the return expected by the Master.

2. The Parable of the Talents teaches that God always gives us everything we need to do what He has called us to do.

A talent indicates a large sum of money, maybe even as much as a million dollars in today’s currency.

We are tempted to feel sorry for the servant who received only one talent, but in reality, he received as much as a million dollars from the master and buried it in his back yard. He was given more than enough to meet the master’s expectations.

The servants were given enough to produce more – it is the same with the gifts God has given us. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

1. The Parable of the Talents teaches that we are not all created equal.

The master understood that the one-talent servant was not capable of producing as much as the five-talent servant. We want to protest this as unfair, why give someone less than others? Yet we know this is true from our own experience. Diversity is woven into the fabric of creation.

Equality in this parable comes from the fact that it takes just as much work for the five-talent servant to produce five more talents as it does the two-talent servant to produce two more talents.

2. The Parable of the Talents teaches that we work for the Master, not our own selfish purposes.

The money that is given to the servants is not their own. The money they earn with the capital is not theirs to keep but to honor God and give back to Him.

3. The Parable of the Talents shows that we will be held accountable.

The unfaithful steward in this parable didn’t so much waste the master’s money – he wasted an opportunity. As a result, he was judged as wicked and lazy. We are responsible for what we do for God with what we have been given, and one day we will be held responsible.

What we hear from the Master on that day is up to us.