

## Matthew 25:14-30

*“Well done, good and faithful servant!”* What joy it will be to hear these words from Jesus, and to hear the words that follow them, *“Enter into the joy of your master.”* This is what you have to look forward to. Judgment Day will be one joy after another. You will rise from your grave. Your loved ones who died in Christ will rise; the reunion will be simply wonderful. The angels will gather you together. They will bring you up into heaven where Jesus will smile upon you, and with open arms say, *“Well done...enter into the joy of your Master.”*

What is there to fear? Nothing! Nothing to fear then, and so nothing to fear now. But the third servant in the parable does not share this joy. Instead, he is full of fear. *“I was afraid,”* he confesses to his master. Afraid of what? Afraid of his master because he saw him to be *“a hard man.”*

Friends, I want you to have comfort right now. You are not that third servant. He had no reason to be afraid, but he feared anyway. And out of his fear, he buried his master’s talent in the ground. You are not that servant. You are not afraid of your Master. You love Him. You love Jesus because you know that He loves you.

This parable in Matthew 25 explains the first one in the chapter. Why did the five foolish virgins have no oil for their lamps? Because they buried in the ground what was given to them. This third servant is given one talent from his master. The first two begin at once to make use of what their master has given them. But this fellow does nothing of the sort. He digs in the ground and buries his master’s talent.

Why not at least put it in the bank? In other words, why not at least go to church? Even if he was not called to be an apostle; even if he was not going to win others for Christ; even if he was not going to teach others the Faith, or become a rock within the church, at least he could bring his family to church with him; at least he could bring his children to Sunday School. But this worthless servant buries his one talent. It was all he needed to be a Christian all his life. But he buries it away from himself. He does not even want that talent of his master near him. He does not treat it with respect. He buries it as if it had no value either for himself or for others, not even for his own family.

Friends, you are not that servant. You make use of the talent, or talents, God has given you. He gave you faith in your baptism. He gave you His Holy Spirit. You have, from God, opportunity to hear His words of life. You can “read them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.” You have opportunity to come to the Supper of your Lord. You are given abilities with which you can serve your Lord in His church. You have a mouth to speak His name. God has placed others into your life, and you can lead them to Christ. You are making use of the talents your Master has given you. You are not burying all these in the ground as if they had little or no value. You are not that worthless servant who was afraid of his master.

But can I be honest with you? And then, perhaps, you can be honest with yourself. There are times when I see myself more like the third servant than like the first two. There are days when I resemble him more than I resemble the first two servants. Sometimes I am spiritually lazy. Sometimes I do bury God’s Word as if it didn’t have what I was needing for my life. Sometimes I blow opportunities to lead others to Christ, and instead, I lead them away from Him. And sometimes I am afraid of God because I know that I have offended Him with my behavior. I know that I am not that third servant. But nonetheless, sometimes I act like him. Do you?

You and I are not that worthless servant, but we must be willing to admit that worthless servant lives in us. Our sinful flesh is all those things that worthless servant is. And we need to repent. We don’t want to live like him, do we? We don’t want to bury in the ground that which God gives us. We don’t want to treat His words of life as if they had little value for us. We don’t want to disrespect His Sacrament. You are Christians. You are God’s people in Christ Jesus by virtue of your baptism. You are not worthless servants; you are His saints, precious in His sight.

And because you are not that third servant, but the first two, it is important that we keep straight the words that are spoken about them. “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” It is for Jesus to say these words...not for us. We do the work that Jesus’ servants do, but we do not boast of the work we do. At the close of each day, if we are tempted to say to ourself, “*Well done, good and faithful servant,*” then we are living like Pharisees, and we should be afraid, for we are boasting in that which we do, not in that which Jesus did for us.

The only reason God will say to you on the Last Day, “*Well done, good and faithful servant,*” is because He spoke these very words about Jesus. Jesus lived a holy life free from sin...not us. Jesus suffered and died on the cross, fulfilling the will of His Father...not us. Jesus conquered our enemies--sin, death, and the devil...not us. And so these words, “*Well done, good and faithful servant,*” apply only to Jesus, not to us.

But friend, Jesus did all this for you. He came to be your Servant. He came to live perfectly, to suffer, die, and rise again for you. And He joins Himself to you so intimately and completely in your baptism into Him, that whatever is true of Jesus, is also true of you.

“*Well done,*” God will say to you on Judgment Day, not because you did enough to get into heaven, but because Jesus did what God required for you. Jesus is the “*good and faithful Servant*” who earns you a place in heaven. Your sins are forgiven because of what Jesus did. Your God is at peace with you because of what Jesus did. You are God’s “*good and faithful servant*” because of Jesus. And you, friend, will hear the words, “*Enter into the joy of your master,*” because of Jesus.

Do you hear these words? As joyful as heaven will be for you, our text calls it your Master’s joy. There is no greater joy for God than to give you a place in heaven with Him. Not only will you be rejoicing on the Last Day, God will too. He will have joy over you to be able, for Jesus’ sake, to bring you into your eternal home.

Think about this whenever you think about the end of life. Think about this when you wonder how the Last Day will be. Think about this when you live more like a worthless servant than a good and faithful one. You are God’s joy. You are forgiven of all your sin. You are not worthless to Him. You are His good and faithful servant. You can live your days in joy now without fear, for when that last great day comes, you will see Him who died and rose again for you--Him in whom you trusted. And this Jesus will tell His Father on your behalf, “This child belongs to Me, Father. He, she, is My good and faithful servant who now is entering into the joy of their Master.” Amen.