

The Joy of the Lord

(Eschatology Part 7)

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This is part 7. Part 7 The series on the end times. A series dealing with eschatology. Let me just say this at the beginning. Just to put things in proper perspective as we look at this. It is commonplace among pre-millennial folks to speak about different judgments. They want to talk about judgments before the thousand year kingdom, judgments after the thousand year kingdom. On a website called Bible.org I found this. It says this, "not all men will be judged at the same time and place. There are five future judgments." So they say. "The first one, the judgment seat of Christ, also known as the Bema seat, it's the Bema judgment." That is a judgement, they claim, of Christians only. Christians are judged, Christians stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Christians are rewarded. Then, there is another judgment, the judgment of regathered Israel, they say. This comes from Daniel 12:1, the time of Jacob's trouble. They say that it happens during the 7 year tribulation prior to the thousand year kingdom. Then they have the judgment of the living nations. These are the nations that are being judged. They say that this comes from Joel 3, the Valley of Jehoshaphat. This is right at the end of that 7 year tribulation. Right before the thousand year kingdom. Then you have the judgment of the fallen angels. This is the judgment of Jude 6, the judgement of the great day, where it shows angels being judged. And then fifth, the judgment of the unbelieving dead. This is the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11.

But, is this really what our Bibles suggest? Do we see all manner or different judgments? Are there five separate judgments? You see, all along what I've wanted to do is take us to simple passages in Scripture. Does Scripture talk about a bunch of different judgments or does it simply talk of one judgment? The parable that we just read seems to suggest a very straight forward answer.

Think about the parable. Obviously the master is our Lord. What does He do? He entrusts things to His servants and He goes away. And after a long time, He comes back. A lot of different judgments? Nope, just one. Does He judge Christians at one time and then the unbelievers at another time? Nope, it all happens right at one place. And if you're not convinced right here, the next time that we look at this when we pick up at verse 31 you're going to see it all over again. All the nations are gathered before and they're divided - the good and the bad. The believers and the unbelievers, the Christians and the non-Christians. All the nations are divided at once, these over here are commended because of the life of faith that they lived and the works produced. And over here they were the opposite. "I was hungry and you didn't feed me." Is this not the picture? One judgment, that great Day, that coming great Day, the end. When Jesus Christ descends with a shout and it is over and it is judgment.

I would say that that is what this parable shows us. He gathers the faithful and the unfaithful together. The faithful are commended, they are ushered into the joy of the Lord. The unfaithful are cast into the outer darkness. There's weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Notice what is not in this parable. What is not here is the judgment of the faithful separated to a different time than the judgment of the unfaithful. There's nothing about judgment of the faithful, a thousand years, and then the judgment of the unfaithful. Nothing like that. Accounts are all settled at one and the same time. The Lord comes, and all men must give an account. One's faithfulness or unfaithfulness is already established and He comes to take account.

Now brethren, I know men tend to be curious. We're always curious about the future. Men are curious and inquisitive all of the time. What's coming? Prophecy. What lies ahead? They want to create their charts. Have any of you ever come to that kind of church where they want to talk all about what is going to happen in the future? And they have all of the charts and all of the tribulation mapped out and the thousand years mapped out. And what's going to happen... And Satan is bound and then he is released and the antichrist and the rapture. You've got all of that. Some of us were familiar with The Scroll. People like to make these things. Inquisitive. Insatiable curiosity about the end times and what will happen and the order in which they will all happen.

Brethren, I'll tell you. We see the same curiosity in the disciples. Now, what we have to remember is this. Right here in Matthew 25:14, this parable of the talents as it is commonly referred to. This is not the beginning of this conversation with Jesus Christ. I want you to look back at Matthew 24:1. This is where the whole discussion about Christ's coming and the end of the world and also the destruction of the temple. This is where all of this began. Jesus left the temple and was going away. By the way, this is the last time He would leave the temple. Do you know what He said in the chapter right before this? "Your house is left to you desolate." He's done. That temple is done as far as any purposes of God. Christ leaves it. And this last time as He leaves the temple and was going away, His disciples came to point out to Him the buildings of the temple. But He answered them, "Do you see all of these things?" What things? Well, the things that they just wanted to draw His attention to. The temple. The buildings there. Do you see these? "Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. As He sat on the Mount of Olives," (That is outside of the city where they could look back at the temple.) "the disciples came to Him privately saying, 'tell us, when will these things be?'"

Inquisitive! We're curious about this. Lord, we want to know! We want our chart. Tell us, when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age? And there's lots of discussion about what they are really asking and how much they really knew. We know they were in the dark about all sorts of things. They had lots of things not figured out at this point in time.

But, do you know what? What they intended by their questions and what they actually thought isn't the issue. Because Jesus Christ knew what the answers to these questions were. He knew what the proper answers to these questions were whether they knew which questions to ask or not. They are asking: Lord when? When? What are the signs? Men are curious. But, our Lord never let men stay in the arena of the trivial.

Do you notice that? He never allows us to just satisfy our curiosity about stuff. He makes everything into a searching heart issue. That's what happens. A lot of times what we want is to just pack some theological facts away in our head. We're curious! We want a little bit of

knowledge. Give us the chart, Lord, we want to be able to figure all of that out. And the Lord always gives us more than what we bargain for. The disciples just asked, Lord when? When, Lord? What will be the sign? What do they get? Did Jesus bring out His chart? Do you know what they get? They get a lesson in chapter 25, if we just jump forward. It is still part of the same discussion. But in the first part of chapter 25, what we looked at last week, the parable of the 10 virgins, they get a searching message about whether you are foolish or wise. He makes us all have to look at ourselves.

Well, that's not what we wanted, Lord. We wanted the chart! We didn't want to go and have to search our hearts! We didn't mean this to be a time of self examination. But, do you ever notice that that's always what the Lord made everything? Everything. You know how it got to be with the disciples. It got to be when they didn't ask Him about a lot of things that they were curious about. Because they knew that every time they would ask Him, they just wanted a little bit of knowledge, they got a lesson. And it was typically one that hurt. I mean, it was one that crushed pride. It was one that crushed unbelief. It was one that searched them out. You get to where you know if you ask Him a question about that He is just going to crush something in you. It is going to be about life, it's going to be about your heart. And it was.

And you can imagine. Have you ever thought about Jesus looking at you? Can you imagine asking Him a question? And those eyes... they are just piercing! They know. Hey gentlemen, what were you talking about on the way? They were talking about who was going to be the greatest. He knows! You know He knows! Those eyes! He just looks directly at us and He says, boys, do you want to know about my second coming? Do you want to know about the end times? Okay, let me tell you. You're curious to know some things. And He doesn't clearly come out and tell us the thing we want to know. But, as always, He comes out and He tells us what we need to know.

Let's look at the parable. We have four individuals in this parable who fit into three categories. You saw the four. We have the master, we have two faithful servants, and one unfaithful servant. That's it. Just four characters in this parable. They fit into three categories. Now you may remember the parable of the 10 virgins. Even though we had 11 characters in that parable, same 3 categories. What did we have? We had the bridegroom, we had the wise virgins, we had the foolish virgins. Here, we have the same thing, we have the master, in a category all by Himself. We have the faithful, who in the parable of the virgins would be the wise. And then we have the unfaithful servant, the foolish. Same 3 categories. This is commonly referred to as the parable of the talents.

Now, we typically think of a talent meaning a skill or an ability. But that is not what it means here. In fact, I know that a lot of your Bibles have a footnote that say a talent was a monetary unit worth about 20 years wages for a laborer. A talent is a measure of weight. Typically associated with precious metals. Because it had to do with a weight of precious metal it also became a monetary unit, a unit of money. Much like the British pound. You think of a British pound, that is a monetary unit like the dollar. But, a pound is also a weight. Where did it come from? Well, it had to do with a pound of sterling silver. That is basically what we are talking about here. The value of a talent, perhaps of gold, twenty years salary. That is what the footnote says. Let's assume that is right. I looked at the average laborers salary in the United

States of America. Roughly \$30,000. Multiply that times 20, you have \$600,000. It is a big sum of money for most of us. A talent is that which is valuable. That is the idea.

What does the talent represent? Well, let's look at the parable. Notice verses 14 and 15. "For it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them [notice these 2 words] his property." What is a talent? It is His property. Keep reading. "To one He gave." Notice who is in control of this property. Notice who has rights to distribute. "He gave." He's owner. He has the right to give what is His. "To one he gave 5 talents. To another he gave 2 talents. To another he gives 1 talent. To each according to his ability. Then he went away." The talents are Christ's property. Property that He is free to administrate over. Free to give as He determines best.

Do you know what? There is an unmistakable emphasis on ownership in this parable. Look at verse 26. "But his master answered him. You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reaped where I have not sown and gathered where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have invested [notice these two words] my money." It's mine. Mine! Do you notice that Psalm that we read today? Gilead is mine! Manasseh is mine! Ephraim. MY helmet! Judah. MY scepter! It's mine! "Invested my money with the bankers and at my coming I should have received what was MY OWN with interest." Notice the absolute sovereignty of Christ over what He has given you. He takes and He gives as He will. Now notice what it says next. "So take the talent from him and give it..." He ordains what is taken and what is given. "Give it to him who has the 10 talents, for to everyone who has will more be given and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Do you feel the force of ownership? That's an emphasis here.

What is a talent? How might we describe a talent? Do you know what a talent is? One way we might define it is anything that the Lord can take away from you. Anything that He can take. We so naturally like to say, "that's mine!" "I own that!" "That's my house!" "That's my car!" "That's my coffee!" "That's my seat!" "That's my Bible!" "That's my son!" "That's my wife!" We speak that way. "That was my idea!" We use ownership terminology all of the time. And do you know what's worse? It's that we really think we own it. That's what's worse! It's the heart attitude. It's how we think. When we speak this way we need to be really, really clear that those things are only ours in the sense that we are the steward that has been entrusted with them. In the absolute sense, they are not ours.

Do you know what this parable does? It challenges us right at this point, about who actually owns what we have. It is one thing if I'm using terminology, "well, that's my car," but always when I say that, what I mean is that I'm the steward and Christ has entrusted me with that vehicle and He is going to come and I am going to have to give an account to Him for how I used it. And it is mine only in that sense that I am the steward entrusted with it.

But do you know what? We tend to forget that. We tend to forget that we are simply using what belongs to another. We tend to think that-that really is mine. "Stay off that lawn, that is my grass!" We tend to think that way and this checks us. This puts things in proper perspective. We need to be really clear. The Lord doesn't mince words in Scripture. Don't turn there but listen to this. Psalm 50:12, "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness is mine." I own the cattle on a thousand hills! The silver and the gold is mine! Gilead is mine! Manasseh is mine! It's all mine! He has ownership. I was just reading in Jeremiah's

prophecy this week, these words, Jeremiah 27:4. "Thus said the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, it is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the Earth with the men and animals that are on the Earth and I give it to whomever it seems right to me." In all this Earth. He's going to say, we're at a time when I'm giving everything in this known part of the world to Nebuchadnezzar. I'm giving it to him. You bow before him or you will be destroyed. Not because Nebuchadnezzar's omnipotent. But because I am, and I am giving it. And it is mine to give to whom I want. This is what God says to Israel. The talents are Christ's property. That is what is represented.

John the Baptist, he was gripped by this reality. Do you remember what he said in John 3? "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from Heaven." My brothers and sisters, you that don't know Christ, there's only one thing that you can really lay claim to in this world. That is yours. That is your sin. Nothing else. Because every other thing He can take away from you. Bob Jones, at one point in time was into making some of these low grade Christian movies and they made one called, "The Printing." And there is a pastor who is being controlled by the KGB and one of the KGB guys played by Bob Jones Jr., a KGB general. The pastor says to him, "how can you do that in my church?" And that KGB general said, "how can you call this your church? I can take it away from you anytime that I want to."

In a similar fashion, we need to be careful what we call ours. Because as you see, with the unfaithful servant here, everything can be taken away. What you call yours... "that's my son." How many parents have had their sons taken away? You can't keep him. "That's my car." Yeah, watch how fast you lose it. "That's my idea." Have you ever had an idea and suddenly it is gone? Suddenly you can't remember? We've been made well aware in these last days, you can have your sanity taken away in a moment. What do you have that is yours but your sin?

Come on, Lord! We want to know about the end times. You're taking us to this? To ownership? You better believe it. Because it has everything to do with what happens when Jesus Christ comes. We need to be clear. We need to be clear. Our wisdom. Our wisdom, our knowledge, our mind, our sanity, it can be taken away. That thought that is in your head...it can disappear. It was given by the Lord. Money. Money... "well, I worked hard for that." Your money is not your own. Your wealth is not your own. There is not one thing that you possess that is your own.

I remember, I had a very ungodly aunt, my Aunt Peggy. Shortly after I was saved and before I moved down here to Texas, my dad was giving me a hard time. We got into a conversation and he asked me something. He said, "do you ever give your money to that church?" At that time I was going to a little church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I said, "yes, dad, I give." He said, "that pastor is just laughing all the way over to the bank." Craig's laughing because he could picture the pastor that it was, laughing all the way to the bank. I said to my aunt, I said to my dad, "all the money that we have is the Lord's, and He would have us use some of it for ourselves but He would have us give a lot of it to those who are in need." My aunt said, "my money is not the Lord's, my money is mine!" My Aunt Peggy is dead, and I guarantee you that she did not take her money with her. God can take everything away. I think she found out that more than just her money belonged to the Lord.

Do you understand the Gospel? Can you go to this Word and say, "wow! I can understand this!"? That learning, that understanding, that comprehension, that Gospel has been

given to you. You say, "thank the Lord! I found a good church." That church is His. The pastors in this church are His. It is all His. He has ownership. If you understand the Gospel, that is the Lord's trust to you. It's His. His ownership. The Master's goods. Do you have time? Oh! We have time! Time! Though it may be fleeting, though it may be going by like a vapor, you have time. It is the Lord's trust to you. Time. Do you have health? Do you have strength? He can take it away. People are healthy one moment and it is amazing how fast they can deteriorate and be gone. I was listening to Martyn Lloyd Jones last night, he was talking about 244 cases where people had terminal cancer and the medical community gave up hope and they fully recovered. No cancer at all. You see, Christ can give, he can take away, he can give back. It is all in His control.

Opportunity. Our Brother John was talking about opportunities. Do you recognize? The woman that he was talking about with the alabaster box. She used that at an opportune time. Christ gives opportunity. Sometimes when we have opportunity we can take it for granted until the opportunity is gone. Opportunity. It is entrusted by the Lord. All of this is from the Lord. If you have any kind of natural ability, natural skills, natural enablements, if you have any kind of spiritual giftedness, it has been allotted to you by His sovereign choice and by His sovereign wisdom. He distributes to each of us as He will. Do you have children? Do you have a family? Do you have a wife? Do you have a husband? Are you in any position of authority? Do you have those that are under you in any way and in any capacity who serve you? Authority has been given to you by the Lord. If you have family it has been given to you by the Lord. If you have singleness, it has been given to you by the Lord. A lot of single people think about, "what I don't have." No, you have to recognize, your singleness has been given to you by the Lord. It is one of the things you have been entrusted with. Use it well. Whatever you can look at in your life, it is the Lord's.

And I think we just need to stop right here and think for a moment. Lord, You just said that of these stones over here, not one will be left on another. You can imagine them. Can you imagine them? He came out... maybe it's dusk. They are up there outside of the city. My understanding is that they would have a vantage point that would oversee the Temple over the wall. Because the Temple was on a mount, the Temple Mount. They were on a high and raised place. Can you imagine? Just after sunset, you're sitting there with the Lord and the Lord has told you, boys, do you see all those stones? Not one will be left on another. They were curious about this. Lord, when are You going to set up your Kingdom? What is coming? When is that going to happen? The destruction of the Temple? Wow! That sounds catastrophic! That must be the end of the world. Even when they are asking about when He is coming, they may not even know that He is even going away yet. They may be wondering about when He is going to come in His Kingdom? When is He going to set that up? When are you going to take the throne of David? That may be what they had in mind. Lord, give us some idea about the signs. Ask the Lord about when the end is going to come and He says, guys, let me give you a lesson about who owns everything. Everything!

Let me remind you - you are stewards. When He is asked questions, He clears away the fluff. He says, do you know what? There's a deeper issue here that we need to deal with. Boys, you ask me when this is going to happen. But that is not as important as what is going to happen when it happens! You're concerned with the when. You're concerned with the signs of

the times. What you ought to be concerned with is what is going to happen when I return! Not when! Not what the timeline is! Not the chart! Not that we need to carry around our scroll and be able to throw it out there and say, "see we've got it all mapped out and charted out." He says, look, guys, you need to be concerned when I come with what is going to happen. That is what is important. Because when I come, that scroll that you imagined going to be laid out there that is going to tell you all how everything is charted. He says, you think about this, when I come, it is going to be that scroll of your life. All of it. Every careless word, every thought. How did you use everything? It says that He is going to come and settle accounts. When He settles accounts it is about what you did.

You see, none of us can come in here and say, "a series on eschatology! Good! we are going to get some good, fun, facts about how it is all going to be at the end." And Jesus looks at us and says, I'll tell you how it is going to be at the end. Your life - we all must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Your whole life is going to be looked at meticulously down to every single careless word that you and I have spoken. That tongue in your mouth and that voice box. That is Christ's. How did you use it? All of it. All of it is put on the block. What the Lord is saying is that if you really understand His second coming you will understand that what happens to you on that Day is going to be a direct result of how you are using today. And the opportunities that you have and the things that have been given to you, the time that has been allotted to you. The Lord has given you these things. The Lord has bestowed.

When you think about Christ's second coming, don't get obsessed with the headlines and the newspaper. Oh! What's happening over in Israel? Is the antichrist on the scene already? What Jesus says is, no, don't get obsessed with those things. Look at your life. Do inventory. Ask whether you are living the kind of life right now that you are going to wish you had lived when He comes to settle accounts. Brethren, when He appears in flaming fire.

Christ is Absolute Owner

Now, I have 10 realities that I want to draw out of this parable. The first one is this: (We've already mentioned it but I want to mention it here at the beginning.) Christ is the absolute owner. Go out to your car this afternoon and you just stop in your tracks and look at it. And you recognize, that is His. Look at yourself in the mirror. Those eyeballs in your head. Those are His. Your hand. It's His. He can take it away from you. Many of you are familiar with Abraham Kuyper's quote. "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all does not cry, 'Mine!'" It is His.

Have you ever had a thought... Here comes the guy with Legion. The demons say, "Lord, let us go into those pigs!" They are pleading with Him. Okay, go. They went into the pigs. The pigs all freak out and they run down the hill and they all die. You may say, wow! Was that a gracious thing for the Lord to do to these swine herders? He kind of destroyed their produce. But you see, it wasn't theirs. Those pigs are His. They are His to do with as He pleases. And those demons are His and He can do with them as He pleases. He is absolute owner of everything!

You can look at some of these pictures that come back from the Middle East. You look at those pictures of a mosque and all of the Muslims bow down to Allah. You just remember when you see pictures like that, they are Christ's. He is absolute sovereign owner! John Dees has

been talking with me in recent times about this island, North Sentinel island off of the coast of India. One of the darkest places. Savages. Most unreachable places on the face of the Earth. Probably the least reached place. Jesus says, Mine! They are Mine! He owns it all. In this parable all is His. All are His servants.

Do you notice how the gist of this runs? Matthew 25 verse 14, "His servants." Then in verse 14, "His property." That is the flavor that you get here. In verse 27, "My money." He says, "I should have received what was My own with interest." All is His, all shall answer to Him. You see, brethren, we live the Christian life and sometimes we encourage one another, lay everything on the altar. We think about, unless you forsake all that you have you cannot be His disciple. Do you see what Jesus is saying? Unless you recognize the reality of who owns everything, you can't be my disciple. That is what He is saying there at the end of Luke 14. That's the first thing. This is the reality. That's the first point. Christ is the absolute owner.

Christ is the Absolute Standard of Faithfulness

The second thing that I want you to notice. Christ is the absolute standard of our faithfulness. What do you mean by that? Look, whatever we have, whatever Christ has given to you. Do you know what the issue is going to be when He comes to settle accounts? How did you use what I gave you for Me? He is the standard of faithfulness. We have a lot of people running around doing a lot of things. But they don't do it for Christ. You see, He is going to be the standard. He is going to be the standard by which everyone is going to be judged. Everything that is given to you is given to you for one purpose and it is to bring a return to Christ. You notice verse 20, "Master, you delivered to me 5 talents. Here, I've made 5 talents more." Here, Lord, here! It's for you! That's the issue. The 5 talents more are for Christ. The unfaithful servant is unfaithful precisely because He does not have anything more to give back to Christ than what He first received. Notice verse 27, "then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers and at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest." Who gets the interest? Who gets the increase? Christ does. Christ has given you what you have been given in order to bring a return for the sake of Jesus Christ. The only test will be this - how have I used what has been given to me to benefit Christ? How have I benefited His Kingdom? How have I benefited His people? How have I benefited His honor? His glory? That is the only test. You want to ask about end times? This is the answer that Christ will give you. All for Me. That is the test in the end. Worry about what is going to happen when I come. What is going to happen when I come is that I am going to hold all men accountable as to how they lived their life in relationship to Me. That's it. Did I use my heart and my mind to trust Him?

See brethren, sometimes you wonder why would I lead the church at times to do things that we don't have money in the bank for? To step out in faith and then watch the Lord supply. You see, I realize this, I've been given a position in this church, as have the other elders, where our responsibility will be to lead this church in such a way that Christ gets the honor and glory. You see, we don't want to be trusting the arm of the flesh, we want to be trusting the arm of Christ. This is what everything that has been given to us has been given to us for. So that we can draw the attention to Him! I mean, you need to be thinking, if you are a father, what are you doing in your family? You need to be thinking about that hand that is at the end of your arm. How are you using these hands? What are you using them for? Have you ever read in Scripture

about how we are to be offering up our members as members of righteousness? Showing the kindness of Christ with these hands. Or your feet, taking the Gospel of Christ places. How are you using what you have? Your eyes. Are you using your money to further His Kingdom? Are you using what you have? Do you have an inheritance? Do you have anything? Do you have skills?

Brethren, hear me on this. You say, God has given me athletic ability. I use it out on the football field, I use it on the baseball field, I use it here, I use it there, I use it on the soccer field. He has given me money. Someone can say, "hey! I'm investing all of the time, I'm a hard worker, I'm not lazy! This guy was called lazy! I'm not lazy." Listen, what defines faithfulness is not how aggressively you use what you've been given for your own glory, for your own self. You can be extremely active and be unfaithful because you were actively using what Christ gave you for other purposes than His glory and His Kingdom. Look, to bury your talent in the ground is nothing more than not using your talent for Christ. That is what it is to bury it in the ground.

You know what, you show me the most aggressive Muslim. He prays five times a day, He is doing all of these things, but do you know what? In the end, zero to give Christ. You see, he buried it. Because it wasn't used for Christ, it was used for a false god. You can be zealous as anything, aggressive as anything. If you aggressively use it for a false religion, for a false god. If you use it for you. That's another false god. You use it for other purposes. You may do it with vigor and zeal. You may be active in using your skills and abilities and riches that God has given you but if it is not for Christ your talent is hid in the ground. That is the gist of this parable.

Slothful Servants are Wicked Servants

Third thing, slothful servants are wicked servants! Notice verse 26, "But his master answered him, 'you wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reaped where I have not sown and gather where I have scattered no seed.'" Slothful servants are wicked servants. True sloth, like I was saying, is not simply when I'm idle, but when I'm idle in regards to Christ. Idleness towards Christ is the sum of wickedness. Listen! We go door-to-door evangelistically. And you can go to somebody's door and they basically believe that they are a good person and they basically believe that they do good. You say, "Why? Tell me about your life." "Well, I go to church sometimes and I say my prayers and I give to the United Way at Christmas time. I visit my grandmother in the nursing home. I do these things. I buy donuts for the guys at work." But, do you know what? They do none of it for Christ. And can you see from this parable? If you don't bring any return for Christ in all your activity... You may be a very personable person and very moral. You may be the nice guy at work. You may have a great personality. You may be charitable. But you're not doing it because you love Christ. You're not doing it because you want to see Christ honored. You're doing it for other reasons. That is the sum of wickedness here. Wicked! Don't live your life for Christ. He has given you life and He has given you everything. And to turn and use it all for something else. Every privilege, every power, every penny are intended to be put to work for Christ. We need to be doing spiritual inventory here. Am I using everything for His glory?

Not All Servants Receive the Same

Fourth thing, not all servants receive the same. I think you can see that, that is pretty clear from the parable. Christ gives to some more and to others less. To one, five talents, and to the other, two talents, and to the other one. But we need a right perspective. Do you see what the goal of this parable is? It isn't to get as much from Him as possible. Sometimes we think that. Sometimes we can get envious and jealous and we pine over the fact that we don't have what somebody else has. But that is not the goal here. The goal is not to get as much as possible. The goal is to be faithful with what you get. And you may know that the one with two talents didn't run around all of the time complaining and moaning over the fact that he didn't have five like the other. What he did was he sought to be faithful with what he had. And when Jesus came, he got the same commendation and the same glory, the same reward, the same joy of the Lord.

Those With the Least Tend to Make Excuses

Fifth thing, those with least can have a tendency to make an excuse of it. What we see here is the one with the least is the one who made the excuse. I don't doubt that in judgment day, some with the most are going to make excuses as well. But in the parable, it might at least be a good launching point to make this point. It is interesting that the one in this parable who has the least is the one who does the least. Do you know what? Some are lazy. And do you know what their excuse is? "I don't have as much as them. If I had the money that they have..." Do you know what? It is true that I see some people in this church that God has given much money, resource, possession. I see them give a lot. And I see a fair number of people. (Now, I know there are a lot of faithful, a lot of giving people in the church.) But, I see a fair number of people who have a little who hardly give anything. And do you know what? You can make an excuse for it. "I don't have as much as they have." But, let me tell you, that does not fly when Christ comes. You can see from this parable, when He takes inventory... Brethren, there is a blessing, pastorally, if you watch that little old widow walk over to that offering box and throw in her 2 mites or her 2 pennies. The Lord took inventory then, and He is taking inventory all of the time. And as I have said before, this is not an appeal to fill that box back there. This is an appeal for you to live your life recognizing Who owns you and everything that you have.

Brethren, there they are, only one talent to worry about. They haven't been given Spurgeon's twenty talents. There they are, they just have one. Just one to worry about. Not twenty to worry about. Just one. And they neglect that one. The woman with the alabaster box, think of her again, she did what she could. That is the measure, brethren. There is going to be somebody in Heaven who is going to have been given the least who will be most rewarded. In comparison to the least they received. And I can tell you that when one woman came along and did this one thing, and she did what she could do. And this little old lady who did what she could do. Christ recorded both of those accounts as long as this world stands.

Do you want to see what impresses Him? This is not about what you get up front. This is about what you do with what you have and the opportunities that you use. O brethren, there are going to be some really poor people. And I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about far away in a lot more impoverished places that you have ever seen or imagined, most of you. And they are

going to be, as it said, "the last will be first." Brethren, let it be some of us! Let it be many of us that end up being first. As we were faithful, faithful. Those with the least can make excuses.

Two Are Active While One Sits Still

Number 6. In this parable, we have 2 that are active. You see it. Verse 16, "those who had received the five talents went at once" Don't you love that! He went at once! He took what he had and he didn't waste time. You don't have time to waste. You may not have tomorrow. And then whose will these things be? "and he traded with them and he made 5 talents more. So also, he who had the 2 talents made 2 talents more." My sixth point is this, two are active while one sits still. Can you see this in your mind? Two are zealous! They are working and running about. This guy over here, he is laying on the sofa. Two are busy, they are active, they are living for Christ, they are seeking to get Him honor, they are seeking to get Him blessing and glory, they are seeking to serve His people, they want to love His people like He loves His people, they want to give themselves to the things that pertain to Him. Aw! They want to live their lives for Him, they want to lay down their lives for Him. There they go, they are moving all around, they are about their Master's business. They are successful in their tradings, zealous to be about their Master's business.

I just ask you this, are others active and you sit there idle? I'll talk to some of you that are older. Do you know what has happened to me as this church has grown? Time and again, some 20-something year old suddenly makes me feel ashamed, or makes me re-evaluate. Why? Because I look at them and I recognize, they are running faster than I am. There was a day when I ran like that and I want to not quit running like that. Do you find that? Brethren, we ought to be motivated by the zeal of one another. I would hope that nobody in this church could sit and watch others who are excelling, they are investing, they are trading, they are turning their talents into 100% return! Some 30, some 60, some 100 fold. I mean, there are some 100-fold folks there. And you got it hid in the dirt.

Listen! Those who hide their talents in the dirt always have excuses. This guy did, too. There's always excuses. Well, I need a break. See, you can get like that, too. Oh! You're running, you're running, you're running and suddenly, "Lord, I'm going to faint here." Need a little rest and relaxation. Do you know what? That rest and relaxation sucks you in and you never get back on the track again. Or at least never as well. You beware of the rest you take, if they don't end up leading you somewhere you never meant to go. Brethren, our time is short. We've got some active folks here. We've got some people that are running well. Don't sit there idle and make excuses while they run well.

Faithfulness Always Has Something to Show For It

The seventh thing, faithfulness always has something to show for it. Always. What happened? The Lord comes. Notice verse 19, "after a long time" That gives us an idea that the Lord may be gone a long time. Two thousand years, yes, that's a long time! It may be longer yet. We don't know. "After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the 5 talents came forward bringing 5 talents more. 'Master, you delivered to me 5 talents. Here I have made 5 talents more.' His master said to him, 'well done good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little, I will set you over much. Enter into

the joy of your master.' 'He who also had the 2 talents came forward saying, 'master you delivered to me 2 talents here, I have made 2 talents more.'"

My seventh point is this, faithfulness always has something to show for it. The two guys that are faithful can say, "Lord, look." Now this is a parable. If we take the next account that starts in verse 31, that we are going to look at at another time, it is almost like the servants have forgotten what they did - those that were faithful. "Lord, when did we do that?" When, Lord? But, you know what, both accounts are the same. Those who are faithful have something to show for it. What? Here, Lord, 5 talents more. Here, Lord, 2 talents more. Here, Lord, You were hungry and I fed You. By the way, you might just get a feel for what profitable investing of the Lord's talents looks like when you consider, I was a stranger and you took Me in. Boy, that is a good use of a house. I was hungry and you fed Me, that's a good use of money. As much as you do it to one of the least of these, you've done it to Him. Those are the kind of things. It's loving others. It's loving His people. Seeking to expand His Kingdom. Faithfulness always has something to show for it. Christ's good stewards. Brethren, those of us who are good and faithful, let us show it.

Jesus Christ Pronounces Servants Good and Faithful Only If They Are

Number 8, Jesus Christ pronounces servants good and faithful only if they are. I want you to see that. With the doctrines of grace, we can get some people that really want to focus on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. That is a tremendous doctrine and we do want to focus on it. But they can so focus on it to the place where they justify a life that is not faithful or fruitful. Just feeling like, "hey! it doesn't really matter how I live in the end. All my sins are forgiven!" Well, you haven't read your Bible right if that is the conclusion you come to. You want to talk about faith. Show me your faith by your works. You show me your works, I'll tell you whether there is faith there. That's what Scripture says. Faithfulness always has something to show for it. Excuse me, Jesus Christ pronounces servants to be good and faithful who really are good and faithful. He'll call us good only if we've done well. "Well done!"

Oh, don't you desire to hear that? We are going to be like that, "Lord, when did we do it?" We feel the failures. We feel the failures. We feel that we don't do... Oh, to have the Lord just greet you with a smile. "Well done." Live your life to hear those words. He who knows our labors now, He is going to witness to them in that Great Day when He comes, and only those who are found faithful will be called, good and faithful. You know what, you may be counted a fool now, like my dad and my aunt counted me a fool for doing the things with my money that I did. I guarantee you, they are both dead now. They are not mocking me. They would have died the death of the righteous. They may mock and criticize now, but I'll tell you, Jesus Christ, He is going to honor you then. That is what we live for! That is what He is saying! Put away your charts and live for that Day of reckoning! Live for the well done! Live to be approved by Christ. Live so as to receive His smile and His commendation. That is worth living for! That is worth living for.

The Poverty of the Worthless Servant

Number 9, the poverty of the worthless servant. Ah, look at verse 28. "Take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given

and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not.." Isn't it interesting in this parable? The one who has not. In the parable before this, it was those who had no oil. The parable of the soils, it was the one who has no root. The one who has not. "Even what he has will be taken away. Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Worthless! Did you see that? Worthless! Cast that worthless servant! Jesus is saying, he has no worth to Me. He may have served other things, but no worth to Me. Nothing valuable to Me. Those who refuse to bow to His mercy... Our Lord said, "My yoke is easy." "My yoke is easy." And what's at the end? "Enter the joy of the Lord." Abundance!

This guy, he had hard thoughts. "Lord, I think You're a hard man." He is not a hard Master. Your burden will be light and I will never leave you or forsake you. He said, though they may kill you, not a hair of your head will perish. Not a hair! I will protect you, I will help you, I will not leave you orphans. I'll be with you. I'll come to you. I'll manifest myself. You won't be alone. I'll help you all the way through the end. You must abide in Me. Those who refuse that, even what they have are going to be taken away. Oh! What eternal poverty! Take his talent! Take everything! Take it all away!

Do you want the chart of the end times? Do you want the chart? Let's chart it out. Live to yourself now and you can chart it out. He is going to come, and you're going to be found worthless, and everything you have is going to be taken away and then there is going to be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You say, we don't want charts like that. But, that's the kind of chart He gives. Or bow to Him now. Serve Him. He is not the One Who will just call you servant, He calls you friend. He has even more glorious names for those who bow to Him. Live for Him now. Then you can chart that out. He comes, He commends you, you enter His joy. Chart that! That's worth charting.

Enter The Joy of Your Lord

Last thing, enter the joy of your Lord or enter the joy of your Master. What a thought. What a thought! Think about that. I mean, that is what I've called this message. "The Joy of Your Master" Think about this. It is not to enter glory where there will be joy. But, glory is so much characterized by joy ... I mean, we talk about enter a house, enter the building, get into the car. He says enter the joy. It is like, plunging you into a realm and a sphere that is just characterized. The entire realm and state of the blessed can be summed up this way - the Joy of your Master. Ah! What words! First, well done, good and faithful... He doesn't say well done evil and sinister. He makes His people, His workmanship unto good works, truly good, truly faithful. Well done. And then enter. Enter this future, everlasting state. For the faithful, it is just a state of joy.

And it is not just joy because our tears are going to be wiped away. We are going to be where the fountain of all joy is, where Christ is, the fountain of all blessing. It is called the Joy of our Master, the Joy of the Lord. It's a joy that He purchased for us, it's a joy that has to do with all the treasure that we are going to have in Him. The joy of the Lord. He is the fountain of it, He's the center of it. What an eschatology this is! Live for Christ, Jesus comes, commendation, well done, good and faithful servant, entrance! Enter into the joy of your Master. Into! Just swallows you up. And then, forever. With an abundance, He says. Take that from there! Give it to the guy with 10 because everybody who has is going to have an abundance! An abundance!

No paupers there. None of us are going to be poor. Just swallows you! Enter into it! And then it is forever.

That's an eschatology worth talking about. Lord, I pray that we all might be convinced and motivated and helped with our eyes upon Jesus Christ by faith to run this race and to be faithful. We know that He is worthy, He who spilled His blood on our behalf. He who went to the cruel Cross. He who suffered. The crushing of God Almighty, that we might have the joy of the Lord. That we the guilty, the defiled, the unclean, the spiritual lepers, the guilty, the condemned might have the joy of the Lord. We thank You in Christ's name. Amen.