

J's teaching: Matt 24:36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." and v.42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Parable of wise and foolish virgins. It might take much longer than you think - make provision to keep your light burning brightly for the long wait

Now Parable of the Talents. What is a talent ? not a natural gift but a weight of silver or gold like "a pound" or in fact more like ½ cwt !

No need to repeat story. Note how the master entrusts so much to his slaves. Jesus has gone away and entrusted to us the work of his kingdom. Be witnesses to the love and grace of Christ to all whom you meet.

What particular lessons can we learn?

1. We need to examine ourselves.

Servants looked at this bag of money and asked

- a. What have I got?
- b. what can I do with it?

Not comparing with others envying their huge array of talents So what riches has Christ given to me? It may be a particular gift or skill, it may be a particular kind of experience whether that is professional or personal that enables you to help others. *e.g. bereavement.* It may be the gift of time to do things or time to pray.

One thing all of us have been given is the pearl of great price: the gospel. the gift of eternal life, the knowledge of God's love, acceptance and forgiveness.

Even the 3rd servant was given 1 talent. We might think he was "*only given 1 talent*" but after all, a talent was a very heavy bag of gold. In fact a talent = 75lbs or 34.4 kilos. I looked up the price of gold yesterday = c.£46 per gram, so 34.4 kilos = c.£1.5 million!

We have been given far more than we often realise. So we should focus on that rather than comparing ourselves with others.

2. We need to exert ourselves

Hindrances

a. No vision

I've only got one talent what's the point. A kind of pride

b. Fear.

I was *afraid*. Came from a distorted view of his master

I knew that you were a hard man

Led to servant being too frightened to take risks

Fear of failure leads us to doing nothing at all.

We need to be willing to step out in faith

helping with a children's group or sharing our faith with a neighbour

Curate to 90 yr old Xn: "*Take care*"

"Nonsense young man! Take risks!"

c. Laziness

You wicked and LAZY servant. Claimed he was afraid but couldn't even be bothered to put money in the bank

If we are followers of Jesus we are expected to work.

We are stewards of the gospel. God's people always have been greatly tempted to become concerned only about own safety and comfort. Pharisees, Essenes

The danger for Xns in UK today is seeing church as an enjoyable worship club

It is a grave warning to the church and to individual Christians - if we don't put the gifts God has given us to work then we're in great danger of losing them all together

Master re lazy servant v.28 *"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.*

Seems harsh but it is what happens in reality

Talent is like a muscle in an arm or a leg - *use it or lose it. Of those to whom much is given, much is required*

3. Encourage yourselves

There are wonderful rewards for those servants who are faithful

a. The reward of God's approval

"Well done good and faithful servant"

God doesn't call us so much to be successful as to **be faithful"**

(2nd servant given just as much praise as the 1st)

"God does not ask about our ability or our inability, but our availability".

b. The reward of God's blessing

"I will put you in charge of many things"

For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance - ie we will grow as people

c. The reward of God's happiness

"Come and share your master's happiness" Not just heaven but foretaste now of seeing God's hand at work through us

We don't know when Jesus will return but when He does we shall be accountable to Him for the way we have used the gifts He has entrusted to us. Not just our individual talents but above all the priceless gift of the gospel.

The challenge is for us to examine what those gifts are and ask God how He wants us to use them for His kingdom