

**Russell Kelfer**

**Well Done,  
Thou Good  
and Faithful...**

**#1361-A**

**Series: The Parables of Scripture**

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

# Well Done, Thou Good and Faithful...

Jesus' parables were fictional stories. They were told of make-believe people, but they told real live truth. Sometimes, however, when you read these parables, you cannot help but think of people you know. In the case of the parables we will look at in this lesson, my mind races back to lives that had so much potential, and yet somewhere along the way, other things entered in and stole away the freshness, or the zeal, or the single-mindedness that characterized their lives in the early stages. Maybe it was decisions they made (or didn't make). In some cases, it was moral compromise that stole away their heart.

Still others come to mind who, seemingly by divine design, had nothing going for them. I think of one dear friend in particular, who is legally blind and unable to walk. He has lived in bondage to a wheelchair all of his life. Never has he seen a majestic mountain or run across a field, or watched a sunset the way we have. Today he is pastor of evangelism in a growing church, teaching others to lead others to Christ. Because he can't see, he has to memorize every Scripture he teaches or preaches, every illustration, every thought.

Never does there come a bitter word from his lips, not even when his wife died of cancer at the age of 38. The only desire of his heart is for Jesus to be seen and heard in his every deed and word. Handicapped? I think not. I think it is the rest of us who have handicapped ourselves by determining what God can and cannot do that is acceptable.

Jesus is continuing His look at the latter days and the call to be ready for His coming. In our last study, we listened as He cautioned His disciples (and us) not to be caught napping. He warned us:

Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.  
(Matthew 24:42)

He then told us a story about ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom to come, so they could celebrate the wedding

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feast with the bride and groom. Five of them were wise. They had oil in their lamps, so they could go out and join the procession, for no one without a lamp was allowed to participate. Five, however, were foolish. They had no oil, and as they went out to buy or borrow some, the time for the wedding came, the doors were locked, and they missed it all. Once the groom arrived and the doors were shut, no one was allowed in.

With that, the Master concluded by repeating:

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour  
wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:13)

Watch, indeed. The Christian life was to be a life of certainty. We could be certain of our salvation. We could be certain of the Holy Spirit's presence. We could be certain that Jesus had risen and was seated at the right hand of God. And we could be certain that He was coming again.

What we could not be certain of...is the day or the hour when He would come, and for good reason. God wanted us to be... ready. He told us of the signs and the seasons that would precede His return to earth, but He added "the day and the hour knoweth no man, not even the angels in heaven, only My Father". "Watch, therefore," He said. Be in a state of anticipation and preparation. With that, He told still another story, a story that would further amplify what you and I are supposed to be doing while we wait. It causes us to think of those people I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson, some who took God's life for granted, and others who had so little and saw it turned into so much. Listen, as Jesus continues:

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour  
wherein the Son of man cometh.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

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After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(Matthew 25:13-30)

The story is a familiar one. We like to call it the “parable of the talents”, and for good reason. The problem with that title is that we tend to think of talents, not as temporal examples of how someone spends his life, but as physical and mental abilities that set one apart from another. The real meaning is much broader

than that, as we shall see.

The Master had clearly made His point “to those who had ears to hear”. The point was that He was returning to the Father and at an hour and day they knew not of, He was coming back. The purpose of that first parable was to teach them that they were to be ready. Now, He tells them another story, and the purpose of this one is to define what it means to be ready. Having accepted the fact that He will return, the disciples then needed to understand what they were to be doing in the meantime. Generations have come and gone. Churches have been hewn out of the strongest rock and the ravages of war have taken them to the ground.

But *the* church itself, the body of Christ, is alive and well. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Yet, somehow, there is not universally a vibrancy, a spiritual awakening, a commitment to the person of Christ that seemed to typify the early church. Something has happened between then and now. Jesus knew it would. And truly, as we get nearer and nearer to the day of His return, that something becomes more important than ever.

The illustration He gave was one of a businessman who was leaving the country on a long trip. He needed someone to look after his investments in his absence. Carefully, he chose three of his most trusted aides and called them to his office.

Interestingly, he didn't divide the funds evenly between the three. He gave five talents (about \$150,000) to one, he gave two talents (about \$60,000) to a second one, and about half that to the third. It says that he had a reason for the way he parceled out the money—“to every man according to his several ability”.

In other words, the more trustworthy the men had proven themselves to be, the more with which they were entrusted. Please remember that principle. We will get back to it later on.

So each of the three men had a job to do while their master was gone. It was a specific assignment. Each had a different level of responsibility, but the challenge was the same. The one who had been given the five talents did some smooth investing and doubled the master's money. The one who received the two talents did the same. The one who was entrusted with only one talent, however, dug a hole in the ground, buried that which he was entrusted with, and waited for his lord to return.

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Each of them had a job to do. The key to the parable is not how much return each of them had on their investment; don't miss the point. The key is the attitude with which they approached their task. The rewards were based, not on the return they gave on the money they had, but on the faith they exhibited in exercising the gifts they were given.

The two who invested their gifts were told the same thing. There was no differentiation. They were given a congratulation and a commendation. The congratulation was:

Well done, thou good and faithful servant;

They were still servants; but their servanthood is described in two words: *good* and *faithful*. *Good*, remember, is a word that is often used to describe anything that is in total harmony with the Lord's words. *Faithful* is a word that has to do with the consistent exercise of faith. These men were elevated in their master's eyes to the role of men of integrity and consistent dependability. You could count on them.

The second half of the congratulation was this:

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things.

Their faithfulness was to be the source of still more responsibility. It wasn't time to rest on their laurels and strut around bragging about their investments. They had earned something by being faithful. They had earned the right to be trusted with still more. Much more, actually. The phrase speaks of a multiplication process. A few things would lead to many things.

The commendation followed:

enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Literally, "You have brought joy to your master. Enter into a new relationship of trust with him, a relationship founded on how faithfully you took whatever it was he gave you and invested it into kingdom currency."

In Luke, chapter 19, Jesus gives a similar, but different parable that teaches the same truths, but adds an element or two to the story.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

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And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

(Luke 19:10-26)



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Jesus begins this parable with a reminder of why He came to earth in the first place. It was to seek and to save that which was lost. He didn't come to earth to make earth a better place to live, though indeed He did that. He didn't come to earth to solve life's political or economical problems, though, by following His word, many complex issues become simple and soluble. No, He came for only one reason: to redeem fallen man. The church through the years seems to have lapsed from time to time into a state of forgetfulness where that singular purpose is concerned.

To seek. That means that the Body of Christ is a seeking body. It is not simply passive in its quest for evangelism. If the Living God laid aside His robes of righteousness, took the cloak of a slave, suffered all kinds of rejection and persecution, was beaten, spit on and died in order to redeem man, the body of Christ we call the church can certainly afford to suffer, to be misunderstood, to be inconvenienced, and to be commanded to go into all the world and seek the lost.

We do the seeking; He does the saving. We aren't keeping score. Some plant, some water; God gives the increase. If it becomes a game where we keep score, we rob God of His rightful glory and miss the reason we are seeking. On the other hand, if we stop seeking rather than take that risk, we have been deceived, indeed, for that is why we are here. It is the reason the King left us: to build the kingdom.

There is a second truth that comes out in this second parable. Jesus and the disciples were nearing Jerusalem. They thought that once there, the Master would set up His kingdom, and they would be installed on twelve thrones, each ruling over one of the twelve tribes. The promise was a real one; but they did not understand that God has some promises for now and some for the future, and unless you get the sequence correct, you will get the kingdoms confused.

Jesus, then, explained in verse 11. "He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

They still were trying to take future promises and make them happen now. They were taking spiritual promises and trying to use them to overcome and remove physical obstacles now. They were trying to take the very pressures God was allowing to make them into His likeness, and use future promises to remove them.

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We still do that today. So Jesus told them a parable. In this story there were ten servants, not three; and each received the same amount to invest, not different sums. His statement to His followers was classic: “Occupy till I come.”

The cast of characters in both of these parables seems clear: the King of the Kingdom and the Master of the servants is Jesus. The servants entrusted with the responsibility of taking that which is given them and investing it represent the church. That which they have to invest is the gospel. The process of investing is the touching of lives. It is seeking and saving that which is lost and pouring the water of the Spirit from their lives into other lives, allowing the kingdom to prosper and grow.

In one parable all are given different amounts; in the other they are given equal sums. I believe the reason for that is simple: we are not created equal. Some are more appealing, more charismatic in their personalities, more talented in their abilities than others. God knows that. He made them. He is not comparing them, one with the other, *He is commending them based on what they do with what they have*. So important was it that we get that truth, that He said to us, “To whom much is given, much will be required.”

Back to my friend in the opening illustration who is blind and crippled, but incredibly used of God. While we all have differing abilities, *we all have a spiritual gift*. I believe each of us has only one. And I believe, that in the spirit realm, the playing field is level. The world may be more quickly attracted to the one with the greatest talents, but those talents may eventually be stumblingblocks that steal glory from God. When God brings something out of nothing, only He is glorified.

In both cases, the issue wasn't the amount. It was the faithfulness and the obedience with which the servants invested what they had to help the kingdom grow.

With that in mind, let's see what truths surface from these two parables to help us “occupy till He comes”. Here are a few that seem obvious:

1- Stop comparing yourself with someone else or your ministry with someone else's. There are no two people alike, and God is not in the comparison business. Remember what Jesus told the Corinthian church:

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For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

(II Corinthians 10:12)

Measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves”—that was the sin. (They are dum-dums.) That’s the conclusion. The Body of Christ on planet earth has gone from a singular body working in harmony, each part giving honor to the others, to a beehive of competition, trying like the world they are emulating, to outdo each other, and thus win the acclaim of God. Fools. That’s why in many cases, the first shall be last. The ones who are tooting their horns and advertising their numbers may well be at the back of the line in glory. Why? They already have their reward. They got what they were looking for, the plaudits of men.

Your spiritual potential is not measured by your natural ability to teach or preach or sing or inspire the hearts of men and women. Your spiritual potential is unlimited. It is as far-reaching as the power of the Spirit who lives in you. Your success in the kingdom will not be measured by outward popularity or outward evidences of success. God looks on the heart. To what degree have you invested your time in the word of God? To what degree have you invested your heart in spending time with God? To what degree have you taken whatever He has given you and poured it into other lives? Your children? Your neighbors? Your Sunday school class? To what degree is your life holy and blameless before God? That is the measure of a man or woman. And when those things are pure and clear, you will produce lasting fruit, and He will one day say to you, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Remember, before He can reward you as a servant, you must have lived like one. You will one day rule over angels. You will one day exercise your authority, but for now you are a servant, and you are being measured by servant guidelines. Stop lording it over anyone—your family, your employees, your disciples. A servant serves. You can’t be good and faithful unless you are truly one with a servant heart.

2- Remember the greatest reward for faithfulness is more responsibility. In the first parable, those who were faithful in the few things were made rulers over many. In the second, they were given dominion over cities in the kingdom. They may not have

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been the natural leaders. But they did what God asked them to do, and they did it faithfully. His reward was more to do. We need to watch for the trap of plateau Christianity. That is when we quietly obey, and God seems to be pleased, and we can all but hear the “well done” from His lips. At that point, we become, in our own eyes, faithful men and women. In some small way, God has honored what we have done, and we are sure that He has given us a platform from which to build our own little gospel.

Look out. If God is pleased with your heart, crawl up into Him and let Him gently carve out the next stage of miracles for your life. Chances are, it will be cut out of a different bolt of cloth lest you patent the cloth and forget that God is the author of all things. Here is a good rule of thumb. Every time someone applauds your work in the kingdom or your abilities in the church, go home and ask God to take away any semblance of pride that is forming in your heart. Offer the compliment to Him. Give the credit to Him. Transfer the glory to Him. Every time. Otherwise, one little bit of acclaim will linger in your spirit and you will begin to believe that it is partly God and partly you. “What a team,” you think. “What a team.”

No, beloved, God isn’t looking for players for His team. He is looking for slaves; men and women who aren’t keeping up with how many touchdowns they’ve scored, but with how many times they have pleased the coach’s heart.

We try so hard to take the world’s measuring sticks and apply them to the kingdom. We want to judge spiritual success by religious affluence or popularity. We tend to gauge our spirituality by what others think of us, rather than by what God thinks of us. God looks on the heart.

3- Try to understand the principle of diminishing power. Those who have will be given more, and those who have little will have that taken away. That is what the parable says. What they have is an opportunity to invest what God has given them. As they give away (that’s spiritually investing) what they have, God supernaturally multiplies it, as He did with the loaves and the fish. And they have wisdom and power they never knew before. Those who bury their lives, however, and live them for their own pleasure, seeing Christianity as a tool to meet their needs rather than as a vessel to change others, will lose what they have. They will experience the law of diminishing power. Those who give

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away what they have will have more given. Those who clutch at it will see it gradually disappear. Their salvation will be intact, but their rewards will be limited and God's power will cease to flow as once it did.

You may be saying, "But what have I to give away?" You may see yourself as a one-talent man. Listen, beloved, you aren't a good judge of how many talents you have, and how many you have is not an issue with God. That word *talents* is what confuses us. It was a form of currency in Jesus' day, so it could be used to signify something you possess. We have confused it with the word *talent* in our day which means a natural ability or skill. That word used here means "that which you have to invest in others". It includes your time, your money, your energy, your reputation, your spiritual gift, your availability, your vulnerability, and yes, how you use the talents God gave you, as well. They all fit into the mix. If you are one who has a great deal of time, but you clutch at it as though it was your right, and you don't have time to pour your life into others or into God's word, you are not a faithful servant.

If you have been gifted with prosperity, but you are slow to invest it in eternal things, you are not a faithful servant. If you are hesitant to do anything that will make you vulnerable, even though God has called you to do it, you are not a faithful servant. It is not only your talents: your musical gift or your speaking gift or that ability to organize that are involved, but they, too, are given to you by the King to invest in the kingdom. If you have time to use them for your own pleasure or your business or your hobby, but cannot find the time or become vulnerable to use them to seek and to save, then you are not a faithful servant..

I'm not sure how many faithful servants there are. I doubt if there are as many as we think, and I'm nearly sure they are not at all who we think they are.

4- The bottom line is entering into the joy of the Lord. In heaven, we will be overcome with joy when God says to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." That is for sure. But I believe that the process of entering into His joy comes much sooner than that, and I believe that this is the whole purpose of the parable.

I believe "the joy of the Lord" is the joy we bring the Lord when we are good and faithful servants. I believe the context of the

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verse indicates that what we have done by wisely and faithfully investing what He has given us so that it will multiply and cause the King's eternal assets to blossom has thrilled the heart of the Master of the Kingdom. I believe it implies that He is so filled with joy at our obedience that He actually gives some of that joy back to us. "The joy of the Lord" is the joy the Lord has when His servants are good and faithful.

If you were to strip away everything else from these parables, wouldn't that be the one thing that mattered? Wouldn't the bottom line be that you wanted to bring joy to the heart of your Master? Isn't that what brings joy to the true slave, that he has made the Master's heart glad?

That's why we long to hear, "Well done". It is because that means we have thrilled His dear heart. And one thing that thrills Him, I am convinced, is when the character qualities only He produces in us—love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, are so manifested in us that they are reproduced in those we give our lives to. What joy that brings to His heart. And what joy then boomerangs into ours.

The Master is looking at us right now. He sees the things He has given to us to invest. Some may seem meager to us, yet when given away for the kingdom's glory, how great they become. He isn't measuring us one against the other. He is measuring us based on what we do with what we have. And oh, how He longs for us to bring His heart joy by pouring ourselves into a lost and needy world. It may mean going to the mission field. It may mean knocking on a neighbor's door. It may simply mean more hours in prayer, more attention to those we love.

He'll tell us.

He always does.

And He'll watch us.

He always does.

And if we are faithful, He'll say to us, "Well done".

He always does.

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### A Challenge to Further Study

1- Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:13-30 and the parallel parable in Luke 19:10-26. What similarities were there in the two stories? What differences? What do you think was the central principle in both?

2- Rewrite either of these parables, using today's language and today's background. Place yourself in the story.

3- Why do you think God allowed man to be so diverse in affluence, appearance, abilities and personalities? What has He given us as a balance? How does that equalize our spiritual potential?

### A Challenge to Further Application

1- The master entrusted to his servants different amounts "to every man according to his several ability". What do you think that means? How does the principle found in Luke 12:48 apply? To what has He entrusted you? A family? A ministry? A business? A place of authority? Do you take seriously each area where you have been given responsibility? What areas have you taken lightly? What are you going to do about it?

2- In the spirit realm, we have all been given equal footing. Do you feel inferior to those who seem to have great ministries or a rich legacy of spiritual treasure? Do you tend to take your own faithfulness more lightly because you are a "nobody"? Be careful. The issue in the parable had nothing to do with how much they were given; but with what they did with what they had.

3- If the only gift you were entrusted with were your time, how faithful do you think God would consider you to be? What if the only measuring stick were your giving? Ask God to show you how you can become a more faithful servant.

### A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize II Corinthians 10:12

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