

DO NOT BURY THIS TALENT

Be a Child of Light

Matt 25:14-30

"It's also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master's investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money.

"After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.'

"The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master's investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.'



She is tired and dispirited. The community has around eighty members and she is in charge. Nobody wants to get involved, nobody wants to take any responsibility. All have their excuses: one is busy, another is not capable, and yet another does not care at all. "The third servant" has corrupted the hearts of many Christians: comfort, mediocrity, laziness and fear. God is sorry for them and satan is smiling. The Gospel is not spreading and the enemy is advancing. Have we fallen asleep?

Lessons

The parable does teach us few important lessons. First, there is a demanding master, who wants to reap where he did not sow, and gather where he scattered no seed (Matt 25:24). Yet, he distributes his talents according to his servants abilities. He knows them well and he knows what they are capable of. The master does not tolerate a cautious way of living. He knows what his servants are capable of and he wants them to achieve it.

Matt 25:14-30

"The servant given one thousand said, 'Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.'

"The master was furious. 'That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest.

"Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this "play-it-safe" who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.'

Second, there are two risk-taking servants who double the amount given to them. How did they do it we are not told, but it is worth pondering. They are talented and creative. They go out on a limb and they are honest. They do not keep anything for themselves. Whatever they gain, they give back to their master.

Third, there is the third servant. The parable pays particular attention to him. Was he lazy, as the master indicates? Was he afraid, as he himself states? We do not know. What we know is that the master was furious and disappointed. The servant was capable of doubling the amount like the first two did it, but, either for fear or laziness, he did not do it. By burying his talent he lost everything and it led to his personal tragedy ending out in "the outer darkness" (Matt 25:30).

Security Seekers

Jesus' entire proclamation was about the kingdom of God, what it would be like if God ruled this world. Looking from this perspective many of us would not be happy hearing the message of the parable. A God who shatters our comfort zones and demands that we do something meaningful with our lives is a good theme for a movie but in real life we prefer not to be disturbed.

Most of us find the third servant rather attractive. We prefer "peace and security" to risk-taking. "Play it safe" is a motto of many churches, communities, and individual Christians. And that spells tragedy.

Our world is in such a mess, because we have buried our talent, the powerful and transforming message of the Gospel. We have slacked off. We are comfortable in our churches and we do not dare to go to the high streets. We allow a few people to run the show but the rest of us comfortably sit in the pews. When asked to contribute our talents, time or finances to spiritual and economical growth of our communities, we decline and so our community also declines. The world is waiting for the Gospel, but it is safely buried inside our churches and communities. He "dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money" (Matt 25:18).

Risk Takers

Christianity thrives on challenges and difficulties. Its message is not for those who want a comfortable life. Jesus challenges our comfort zones. "Enter through the narrow gate" or "sell

everything and follow me” are not for the faint hearted. It is transforming and live-changing but it is also demanding. It is a way of life to be lived out not a set of rules to be protected.

Jesus risked a lot by touching a leper, expelling demons, healing on the Sabbath or challenging the Scribes and the Pharisees. Preaching the Gospel cost Him life. Those who follow Him should expect no less. He is our Master who left for a long journey and equipped us with talents according to our abilities. He has not come yet, so we still have time to put these talents into a good use. If we slack off then we will bear the consequences. Money not used gets devalued; talents not used wither. The risk takers know it and so they are praised by the Master: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt 25:21).

Conclusion

There are so many people who long for God; there are so many people who live in darkness, without hope. There are many lonely and empty Christians inside our communities. We have to reach towards them. Otherwise, they will go somewhere else, searching for God in different religions or sectarian movements. God has equipped us with different talents and gave us the most beautiful story to tell about His love revealed in Jesus. A Chinese Christian song perfectly captures its essence: “the most beautiful blessing that we can possess in this world is to know Jesus, the Lord”. If we do not share that story with the world, but only keep it to ourselves, we will end up like the servant, who buried his talent: ‘throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matthew 25:30).



Let us wake up from our sleep and begin to act as the children of light. Amen.

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team