

Good Work: The End of Work

(Memorial Day Sunday)

May 29, 2016

Matthew 25 – 2 groups: Wise/Foolish; Productive/Wasting;
Sheep/Goats

There are 2 types of work:

#1 = “God’s:” Make a living a secular “vocation” at best, or a “job.”

These can be “good” work (it would stand to reason that it can also be “bad” or “shoddy” work. In any profession, there are “A” level, “B” level, “C” level, “D” level, and there are also “Failure: level workers.

#2 = Good:

While we will eventually “retire” from what I’m calling a “Good” job, we are never to retire from God’s work. “Work” is found 394x in the Bible, but “retirement” is NEVER found. We never retire from the work of the Gospel. (Someone approached me on Sunday and showed me a note he’d written out on lined paper that was in his billfold. It was dated in Dec. 2015 – and was a quote from me on this very point – “There’s no such thing as retirement from the Gospel.”) The “golden years” of ministry may well be in our senior years of life. We have a lifetime of history and stories. We have a family, and a church family we can connect with. While we have limitations, too, that should not deter us from the work of the Gospel. We should never say: “I’m done. It’s someone else’s time.” Admiration for Bill Mason & David Thomas (anyone else???) in particular. But there are many others in our church who have retired from their secular job and found the sweet spot in ministry here. We need you – your prayers, presence, gifts, service & witness.

Even in this secular profession, there are great opportunities to do the work of the Gospel. Callings are different for different people.

Furthermore, just because you aren’t on church staff doesn’t mean you aren’t called to the work of the Gospel. When Christians believe that this work is the responsibility of the church staff, the “devil’s work” has been accomplished.

Matt. 25:14-30

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

¹⁵ To one he gave 5 talents of money, to another 2 talents, and to another 1 talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the 5 talents went at once and put his money to work and gained 5 more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the 2 talents gained 2 more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the 1 talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the 5 talents brought the other 5. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with 5 talents. See, I have gained 5 more.' ²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²² "The man with the 2 talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with 2 talents; see, I have gained 2 more.' ²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²⁴ "Then the man who had received the 1 talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' ²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the 10 talents.

²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

2 different servant attitudes:

1.) **GOOD/faithful** In this parable, the 5 talent and 2 talent guys both got “A’s” while the 1 talent guy got an “F.”

“Put his money to work and gained 5/2 more.” Productive. A good steward.

How’s it feel to do a good job? Pride. Joyful anticipation of the master’s return. How do you feel about the master’s return (you know he will come back)? *‘you entrusted me with 5 talents. See, I have gained 5/2 more.’*

2.) **Wicked/lazy/worthless** Why did he hide his talent? The story itself makes two points:

A.) He blamed his inaction on being afraid. He knew the master demanded a return on investment (why else would he have been entrusted with a talent?). He framed the issue with blame: *‘I knew that you are a hard man* He said he was afraid of the master. Fear isn’t a good foundation for a relationship between an owner and an employee.

B.) But the master called him “wicked” and “lazy.” He was idle, lazy and unproductive. He failed to take initiative. He didn’t dream or create – he buried his opportunity. This was the point Jesus was trying to make: Don’t waste life. Don’t bury your talents. Use whatever gifts you’re given. Be a good steward.

It’s been said that life is 10% what happens to you and 90% your attitude. Indeed, the people in life who are successful are those who love what they do.

What’s it like to hide your gifts? To live with dread? Guilt is often a companion of fear. Knowing consequences will follow.

Regardless of how many talents we are given (5, 2, 1) only having one doesn’t mean we aren’t held accountable.

There’s a blessing when we rightfully use/maximize our gifts. There’s a curse when we don’t. Squandering and wasting and uselessness aren’t God’s intent.

A book by Dr. John Townsend, "The Entitlement Cure," describes how we can get into an "entitlement" trap. That is, they don't take personal responsibility for their lives. Somebody owes them something. It's somebody else's fault. The 1 talent guy tried to put it back onto the master:

We are ALWAYS called to be fruitful! As long as we live we are to be productive in learning, growing, giving, sharing, planting and developing. Life is such a sacred gift, we are never to waste it. The fruit of the Spirit is continually being developed/grown

²⁹ *For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. To quote The Entitlement Cure (p 51): "The more you experience and follow God's principles, the better life becomes for you and those in your life. These principles originate from the God who never shirks from doing things the right way, no matter how hard they are."*

"Talent is never enough" – if I have talent then I don't have to work.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

What's my assignment? Be a Good Steward of God's Gift to you.

Why should I be a good steward? Jesus asked us. Your outcome will be better when you use your influence in a positive way. You must get into

the game. You must make a commitment. There's a serious warning about not getting into the game.

What has God entrusted to you? What are your interests?

How can I do it? Align with God's will. Pray. Learn Scripture. Talk to Others. Experience – do something. Be in relationship with the Master.

Our time on earth is limited but our work here has an eternal impact.

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.