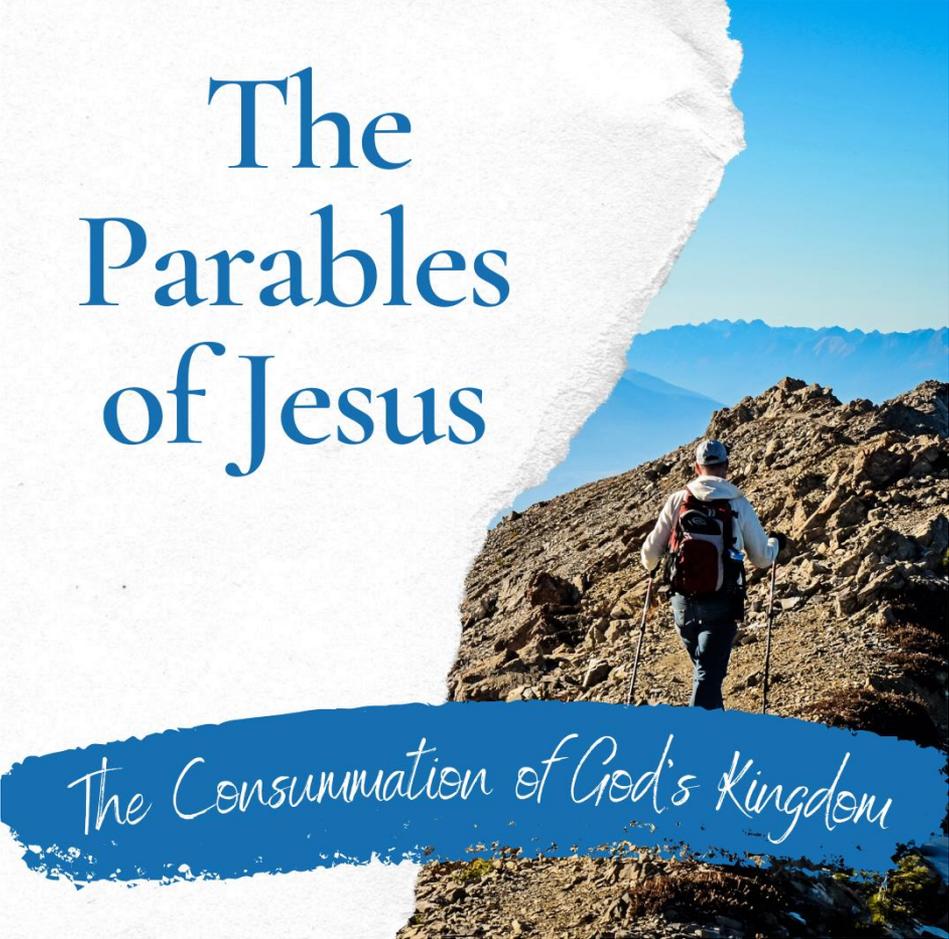


Daily Worship Booklet

5th February – 9th February 2024



The Parables of Jesus

The Consummation of God's Kingdom

God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and the people of God were filled with joy!

Catechism for this week:

Mrs. M. Braden (ages 4-5):

Q17. Of what were our first parents made?

A. God made the body of Adam out of the ground, and formed Eve from the body of Adam.

Mrs. H. Quigley (ages 6-7) & Mrs. V. van der Meer (age 8):

Q121. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. That God would keep us from sin.

Miss. L. Zuiderveen (ages 9-10):

Q17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Mr. C. van der Meer (ages 11-13)

Q81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

Psalm of the Week

Psalm 104A. The words are on page 8.

Please pray for:

Mon - Damir & Sonya, Huxley & Ponette Karaturovic

Tues - Oliver & Milly, Elisa & Amelia Lam

Wed - Pierre & Jocelyne Landry

Thur - Joel & Anneke, James, Everly & Silas Lendore

Frid - Katrina Marshall

Rev. Dr. Quigley has written the notes
based on Rev. Gorden Keddie's book on the parables.

CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

Monday – Matthew 25:14-15 – Responsibilities in the Kingdom

At first glance, the parable of the talents in Matthew's Gospel looks very similar to the parable of the ten minas we recently considered in Luke 19:11-27. Both have the same basic outline, apparently the same cast of characters, similar language, and points of application. When preaching, the Lord Jesus was not beyond using the same material more than once. But as is the case when a preacher does that with a prayerfully invested heart, there will always be something new for the hearts of those listening through the leading of the Holy Spirit. A closer look at this parable reveals a subtle and significant difference in how Jesus applies it. Comparing the two parables, we find the following:

The parable in Luke was addressed to both his disciples and the crowds and emphasized two things. First – Jewish opposition to the prophesied Messianic King. Second – the responsibility of those following him to remain faithful to the gospel as they waited for their King to return.

The parable here in Matthew finds Jesus addressing just his disciples and doing so 'privately' (see Matthew 24:3). Consequently, the focus here is much narrower – directly at them. They are to take their God-given abilities and apply themselves to the tasks that would soon be coming their way. The immediate context – the parable of the ten virgins taught us to be watchfully ready for Christ's return. We are now confronted with the need to be at the King's work as we do.

What are these 'talents'?

There can be confusion when interpreting this parable, and a lot of it comes down to an unnecessary misunderstanding of what the term 'talent' means. Whenever we hear the word 'talent', we think of someone's natural ability – a special gift that sets them apart. When the word is used in Scripture, it refers to a standard unit of measurement applied to both weight and money. So, this is not about the distribution of special gifts of ability to people. How can it be when the one talent given to the 'wicked servant' was taken from him and given to the man who by that time had ten talents? Gifts of ability are not transferable. So, talents represent the ability to invest in a commodity, i.e., attitude towards service in the kingdom and not a person's gifts. Get that wrong, as people often do, and you'll end up heading in a different direction from where Jesus is going with this parable, which is never wise.

Q1. How does this parable differ from the one in Luke 19?

Q2. What do the talents represent?

Tuesday – Matthew 25:14-18 – How are we to engage?

Yesterday, we saw that the ‘Talents’ represent the opportunities God gives His people to serve in the kingdom of heaven. But how are we to engage with those opportunities?

There are numerous opportunities to serve God in the church and as believers, living as salt and light in the world, and we must engage as God permits. The two servants knew what they had to do, and they did it. Each believer must seek the Lord and the counsel of others to discern what they are tasked to do. No one can sit back and just wait until they’ve been asked to do something. It’s not just that there is ‘no room’ for passengers or spectators in the kingdom; people who observe while others do the work – the bottom line is that being a passenger or spectator is not permissible. God has prepared works for every one of his blood-bought servants to fulfil (Ephesians 2:10), and He expects us to invest ourselves in discharging that responsibility conscientiously and faithfully.

We must engage because it’s not our business to be concerned with or covet the opportunity the Lord has given someone else. The two servants didn’t get into what the other servant’s task was; they focused on their own responsibilities. Our business is to please the Lord by focusing entirely on doing what He has given us to do – not on what He has given someone else to do.

We must engage and understand that no task is more important than another. This investment of oneself is to be undertaken regardless of the nature or significance of the task assigned. The servants didn’t allow the difference in the value of their respective tasks to get in their way; our calling is to commit passionately to the task the Lord grants us, irrespective of its perceived level of importance. Gordon Keddie, in his book on the Parables, recounts an experience Professor G. N. M. Collins had when preaching in the Corrie Free Church on the Island of Arran as a student for the ministry in the 1920s. He writes of how Collins would always feel a particular measure of ‘liberty’ when preaching in this church but could never quite figure out why. Then, “one Sabbath before the service, he discovered the reason. He had to go back to the house where he was staying to pick up something he had left there and needed for the service. As he went into the house, he heard a voice praying aloud, asking the Lord to bless the service and the young man who had come to preach the gospel to them. This was the blind, bedridden matriarch of the family! She could not be ‘at the gate’ of Corrie Free Church, but she could ascend to the gate of heaven and serve the Lord’s kingdom in a ministry of intercessory prayer! When people have the heart to work for God, they will find that task and do it.”

Q1. How are we to view the responsibilities God gives us?

Q2. Are we to be concerned with the responsibilities God gives others?

Q3. Are there responsibilities more important than others?

Wednesday – Matthew 25:14-23 – How the talent is to be used.

First, we are to do what we can. The two servants who invested what they had did what they could. They knew what they were supposed to do and invested themselves in investing their respective number of talents (and remember that ‘talent’ represents role and not gifts of ability). The man with ‘five-talent’ responsibilities exercised ‘five-talent’ faithfulness and reaped a ‘five-talent’ return. Similarly, the man with ‘two-talent’ responsibilities effectively executed his charge.

We are to do all we can to invest in the opportunities God gives us. Remember how when Mary anointed the Lord with an expensive ointment before his death, the disciples led by Judas Iscariot harangued her for ‘wasting’ such a large amount of money that could have been given to the poor (John 12:1-8). What was Jesus’ response? He rebuked the disciples, saying that Mary had done a beautiful thing for him and that “she has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). Literally, she had done all that she could, and all that was required of her. We, like Mary, are to apply ourselves wholeheartedly to doing all that we can, whatever the cost, to fulfil the opportunities granted us by the Lord. Nothing more, but importantly, nothing less will be acceptable to the Lord, for His was a life characterized daily by the commitment – “not what I will, but what you will.” (Mark 14:36).

Second, in doing what we can, we must have an eye to fruitfulness. The two servants who invested the ten and five talents did so because they wanted a return they could give to their master. They weren’t simply going through the motions of task fulfilment regardless of outcome,

We need to be careful when considering what exercising one’s charge or responsibility means. Early in my ministry in Scotland, almost 30 years ago this year, my fellow older ministers told me on several occasions about their commitment to being faithful in the face of decline in the Scottish RP church. My direct but gentle response was always, ‘Faithful to what? Faithful to the idea of being faithful or faithful towards the end of being fruitful if the Lord blesses.’ Hiding behind the statement ‘but we are being faithful’ isn’t acceptable. We are called to use our gifts in a way that seeks to be as productive as possible, so we must never forget that any fruitfulness will only be as the Lord wills. We must hold in balance the twin truths that “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48); and the knowledge that it is only as we abide in Christ that the Father will enable us to bear much good fruit to His glory (John 15:8).

Q1. How are we to fulfil our God-given responsibility?

Q2. Is it a case of merely seeking to be faithful?

Thursday – Matthew 25:14-28 - There will be a reward.

We read in verse 19: “Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.” This was not a short-term investment this master had in these three servants, but a long-term investment.

Each of the men came forward in turn. First, the servant who had been given the five talents, then the one who had received the two talents, and finally, the man who had been given the one talent. The response of the Master to the first two servants, the men who had doubled the investment made in them, was to give them a reward that went far beyond being commensurate with the profit made. The master said the same thing to both of them, “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.” (25:21,23). This clearly indicates that when we do what we can, with what we have been given, and we do it with an eye to fruitfulness, regardless of the amount of responsibility with which we have been entrusted, the reward will be of the same order, albeit of a different degree.

The exception to this, and it is a sobering exception, is the man who had received the one talent. The response he receives is that it's all down to him, his attitude, his lack of application and ultimately his heart, for he did nothing. Well, he dug a hole and put the talent he had received into the hole, which amounted to doing nothing. He invested nothing of himself in the task given him, in the opportunity afforded him, and because he ventured nothing, he inevitably gained nothing. Why? Well, he did work on something – his excuse. He says, verse 24, “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground.” So, his reason was down to fear. He feared his master. If he really feared his master, why not decline the opportunity when given it? If he really feared his master, would it not have been better to have at least tried? If it didn't work, he would have at least shown that he made an effort. And, of course, the return of the one talent not only confirmed his lack of desire to do what he was told, but it also laid the blame for his failure at the door of his master for being a ‘hard man.’ Is that a unique allegation, or is it one that finds constant repetition among the ungodly? I don't think so. It's common to hear statements like - ‘If God really is a God of love, then we wouldn't read about the things He allowed to happen in His name in the Old Testament, and He certainly wouldn't allow all the pain and hurt there is in the world today.

Q1. Will there be a reward for those who fulfil their responsibilities?

Q2. Will everyone be rewarded, and if not, why not?

Friday – Matthew 25:14-30 – The one-talent man ‘identified’.

We’re left in no doubt as to how the ‘one-talent’ servant is characterized – “wicked and slothful”, and his ‘reward’ is to lose what had been given to him. “take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents” (verse 28).

Gordon Keddie writes, "Jesus is, of course, arguing from the lesser to the greater. The logic of the business world is clear and well-understood. Money follows productivity and a good return. In spiritual matters, the same principle applies with infinitely more profound results. God is patient with us, but he will never reward contempt for himself, his Son, his people, or his kingdom. God sent his Son to die for sinners, and those who have trusted in him for salvation can be expected to show some evidence that they actually love him for what he has done for them. It is not even that the task of faithfulness is so hard or that the Lord is a slave driver. Jesus said, ‘Come to me all who labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light’ (Matthew 11:28-30). Generations of committed Christians have found this to be true. The work of simply serving the Lord in terms of the opportunities he opens up (putting God’s ‘money’ in the bank) is less arduous than covering up your laziness (digging a hole and burying it)! The real taskmaster is your unbelief. The real bondage is your sinfulness. Loving God, in Christ our Saviour, is freedom from all that.”

Keddie says, “Why did Jesus choose to use the one-talent man as his example of failure? Do men with five or two talents never fail? Yes, they do! People can neglect any kind of responsibility, great or small. What, then, is Jesus’ point? Surely, it is this: he uses the man with what seems to be the ‘least’ responsibility precisely to show that faithfulness and not relative importance is vital. No one can say, ‘My task is so insignificant that it doesn’t matter if I don’t bother too much about getting it done.’ The parable challenges us at the deepest level of our personal commitment. Jesus’ application could hardly be more practical or more pointed.”

Next week, we will conclude this parable by looking at the fact that the faithful will be blessed while the faithless will be punished.

Q1. How is the ‘one-talent’ man characterised?

Q2. Will God give us responsibility greater than what we can fulfil?

Psalm 104A

1. My soul, bless the LORD! LORD God, You are great,
With honor arrayed, majestic in state!
You cover Yourself with a garment of light
And stretch out the sky as a curtain by night.

2. The beams of Your courts in waters You laid;
On wings of the wind Your pathway You made.
The clouds are Your chariot; the winds do Your will;
The flames and the lightnings Your pleasure fulfill.

3. You set up the earth on foundations sure,
That always it should unshaken endure.
Deep seas like a garment about it You cast;
The waters stood high; over mountains they passed.

4. But at Your rebuke the high waters fled;
Your thunder they heard and from there they sped.
The mountains arose, and the valleys sank low,
And went to the place You ordained them to go.