

+Vespers+

*Guitar led Lutheran Worship*

# InContext



## *The Parable of the Talents*

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**In Context: The Parable of the Talents**

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*This is only two sections of our usual bulletin. Because of copyright issues, we have only included the study portions of the bulletin.*

**The Parable of the Talents**

**The Gospel According to St. Matthew, the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter**

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, '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.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, '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.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, '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. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**The Parable In Our Context – The Talents**

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

If a master were going to take a long trip, he would establish people who would take care of his estate. He would give them what we would call "power of attorney" today. These people could make decisions on behalf of the master and anything they said was supposed to be just as if the master himself had said it.

- **If your boss left you in charge of where you work or if your professor left you in charge of class, would you feel empowered? Would you be afraid of what might happen? Would you take the job or would you balk and give it to someone else?**



**To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.**

Our English word “talent” comes from the kind of talent mentioned here. One “talent” was a huge sum of money. If converted to coins, it would weigh between 50 and 75 pounds. One talent would have equaled the wages of about 16 years of work. Two would have been about 41 years of work. Five would have been about 82 years of work. For someone making \$40,000 a year this would equal 3.2 million dollars for 5 talents, 1.6 million for 2 talents and \$640,000 for the guy with one talent.

- **Have you ever thought about how much money you will make in your lifetime? What kinds of talents or skills do you have? What is one of your skills worth? Is it worth a “talent”?**

**But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.**

Hiding the master’s money in this case has a cultural aspect to it. Burying the money put the servant legally not at risk. Even if someone had come and stolen the money, the law of the time would have acquitted him because he had done the safest thing with the money – burying it. This servant isn’t just lazy, but he is purposely setting himself up so that he can’t be punished severely.

- **Gains usually involve risk. Even when you put your money in the bank, you’re taking a risk. Some people though, spend all their time trying to stay away from risk. What have been some of the risky things you’ve done?**

**'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.'**

There are people in the world who work with electron microscopes and theatre lighting systems that cost more than what they might ever make in their lives, but they are trusted because they are the best people for the job...even if they screw up once or twice.

- **What do you think the master would have done if the servants had lost the money? Have you ever screwed up and cost somebody something? What was that experience like? Was there forgiveness? Were there harsh words?**

**So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance**

Scholars agree that in Greek this carried the idea of “...to everyone who has [done these things] more will be given...” In American culture we focus a lot on the material things that we have, but not necessarily on the talents that we have.

- **If we judged people on their talent rather than on their accumulation, do you think our lives would look different? When Jesus comes back, do you think He’s going to judge you on how many good works you’ve accumulated or on the talent you have [which He has given you and freed within you]?**

### Contextualizing

- **What elements of this story are foreign to our context today?**
- **What do you think Jesus is trying to say in this story?**
- **Join in writing a contextualized paraphrase of the parable.**
- **How does Jesus express forgiveness for you in this parable?**



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Please don't throw this away. Take it home and use it devotionally or leave it for others.