



Sermon: Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant! - Pastor Todd Goldschmidt
Sunday 10:15 am – November 13th, 2011 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Sermon Text:

Matthew 25:14-30 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

¹⁴ “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 five talents^[a] of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one 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 five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five 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 two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two 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 one 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 ten 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.’



Sermon: We Shall See God!

Saints Triumphant – 10:15 am – November 13th, 2011 – **Pastor Todd Goldschmidt**

We've always struggled with the parable before us in this land of the free and the home of the brave. Early on in our nation's history, British preachers used this parable polemically to condemn the Puritans as unprofitable servants, declaring that their emigration to the New World was God's way of casting them "into the darkness" of tear-shedding and teeth-gnashing. Later on, revivalist preachers employed this parable by proclaiming America the "land of opportunity," where profitable servants would surely be blessed abundantly with great wealth from the hand of the Almighty. Faithful stewardship of one's monetary assets would yield financial prosperity. In fact, in the 1920s Sinclair Lewis wrote *Elmer Gantry* as a social satire on how such preachers used this parable to line their own pockets while proclaiming the cash value of Christianity.

We struggle with this parable today for different reasons. America challenges us with the way it perceives God and the way it tempts us to under value God's gifts. In His parable about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus challenges American misconceptions. He doesn't invite us into a world of earthly wealth where faith is driven by profit motives, but into a world of divine love where faith responds in joyful service. When He returns to settle accounts, He longs to say to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Come and share your master's happiness!"

What'll it take for us to hear those gracious words from our Savior on the great and glorious Day of the Lord? First and foremost, it takes trust. Living in our Master's joy means trusting in the God Jesus reveals rather than in the god we may imagine. Today's readings turn our eyes toward the ominous details at the end of time. Daniel envisions "the Ancient of Days" on his throne. "The court was seated and the books were opened." Paul pictures "the day of the Lord" coming "like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labors pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." Yet let's not overlook the most terrifying detail in Jesus' parable: the worthless servant is damned because he fears a master he's imagined rather than serving a master who has revealed his generous love.



In the parable, Jesus pictures a bighearted master, who entrusts all that he has into the hands of his servants. The amounts Jesus mentions stagger the imagination! By conservative estimates, just one talent in His time was worth twenty years of daily labor. Yet the unprofitable servant imagined a different sort of master—one whom he describes as a “hard man, harvesting where [he] had not sown and gathering where [he] had not scattered seed.” When called to account for the mismanagement of his master’s money, he replies: “I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.” Because he didn’t trust in his master’s loving kindness, the “worthless servant” is thrown outside, “into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” What a horrific fate befalls him because of his misperception!

Jesus has revealed to us God’s gracious generosity! His Father’s love isn’t measured in dollars & cents or in the value of our stock portfolio. It’s gauged in the life, death & resurrection of His own Son. The Apostle Peter wrote: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus ushered in a realm of priceless love that didn’t balk at the cost of sin; an enduring love that suffered death and damnation so that mankind’s enormous spiritual debt was paid off completely and every sin atoned for! Because of Jesus, our sin has been removed from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12). We’ve been forever reconciled to God the Father! We are the blood-bought siblings of God’s Son! Even now, here in time, we stand as holy saints in God’s sight!

Sadly, there are still many who consider these saving truths to be the foolish philosophical notions of a by-gone age. Some find them too simplistic. “You mean all I have to do is believe that this Jesus lived and died for me, and I’m good to go? I don’t buy that. It seems pretty far-fetched that if there is a holy God, He’d be far more interested in measuring my morality as the basis for my right standing with Him. I can’t believe that Jesus did it all for me.” Others find the good news too gruesome. “Really? A loving God? What kind of father would sit by and watch his only son undergo that kind of shameful suffering, especially if he were innocent, and more so, if he could’ve intervened at any time?” Such love seems brutal, violent and uncivilized to them. They’d rather live with the god they imagine than the One Jesus reveals in the Bible.



The god most Americans imagine is not a cold-hearted, unloving, judgmental god. He's more of a laissez-faire, hands-off kind of parent who, for the most part, lets them live & let live so long as they're decent, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens who help their neighbors, give to charitable causes, recycle religiously, and support progressive, forward-thinking political candidates. The god of their design is like a kindhearted grandpa: too weak to carry out any threat of punishment, but still strong enough to love them unconditionally. Instead of repentance, he calls for tolerance; in place of forgiveness, he offers acceptance. Turning from sin and seeking God's pardon is a foreign concept to most Americans. Besides, nobody's perfect, & isn't god a loving god anyway? People in today's culture imagine they can stand before God with all their sins & be accepted for who they are & tolerated for what they've done. What kind of loving god would condemn them?

Unfortunately, this god is a figment of the American imagination, and, in the end, he will not save. For God saves us not by our imagination, but by His action. In Jesus Christ, God entered our world and acted to save. His love goes beyond our wildest imagination! He saves, not by becoming the god we *want* Him to be but by being the God we *need* Him to be: our dear Savior, Jesus. Jesus knows the price He paid to ransom us from sin and death—the blood He shed and the life He gave to buy us back from eternal punishment in hell. He recalls that glorious moment when He rose from the dead, cementing our inheritance of everlasting life in the halls of heaven!

We look forward, by faith, to the day when our reigning King returns to welcome us to Paradise with His gracious invitation: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Until then, He wants us to be about His business, steadfastly reaching out to others with the spiritual gifts He's endowed us with. To that end, the Apostle Peter wrote: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:10-11). And so, while one servant in Jesus' parable *fears* the master he *imagines*, the other servants *trust* the master they *know* to be a good, gracious and generous man. Each is differently gifted, but equally loved. The master's one expectation is that they prove faithful stewards of the blessings He has entrusted them with until He returns for the final reckoning.



The fact that God has entrusted us with differing amounts of spiritual gifts can trouble us at times. In our consumerist culture, we're conditioned to believe that having more means being better. We apply that thinking to service in the Lord's kingdom, too. So, obviously the servant entrusted with 5 talents is better than the one given 2. And while that's what we may conjecture, it's not the way God operates. To the Lord, the single mom who struggles to get her children to church and works two jobs to support her family is just as valuable as the member who teaches Sunday School or the one who sings with the Worship Team. Because, fellow servants of God, it's not just what we do here at church that counts. While we need folks to faithfully serve their Savior here *at* Living Hope, it's perhaps more vital for each one of us to faithfully serve Christ in the places where we live and work as light-bearing, culture-leavening members of His body.

To the servant who acted wisely with the five talents as well as to the one who was trustworthy with two, the returning Master remarks: "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Come, and share your master's happiness." He receives both servants with equal joy! God's love for us delights in our differences and rejoices in the various ways He has created us for service in His kingdom. He wants us to rest assured this morning, that whether we serve Him in ways that are large or small—here at church or out in the world—our service brings Him a great deal of joy. Living in our Master's happiness, then, doesn't mean comparing ourselves with others to see how well we're doing or dividing ourselves from each other as though God loves some of us more than others. Living in our Master's happiness means trusting in what God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ: that He loves each one of us the exact same amount. It also means faithfully serving in the various places where God had called us: differently gifted but equally loved.

So fellow saints here below, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-24)—and what a gracious, gentle and generous Master He is! Amen.