

July 11, 2010

INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

MATTHEW 25.14-30

The time between Jesus' leaving and his return is a test of faith for his disciples. Faithfulness is determined by how they handle that which was entrusted to them by their Lord.

1. THE LORD GIVES HIS SERVANTS A TRUST AND DEPARTS (14-15)

Entrusting and departing (14): Still dealing with the kingdom of heaven.

The Man = the Son of Man, the one who has authority over the house and possessor of all things.

Long journey = after the resurrection ascending to the right hand of the Father. Will leave a trust to his disciples.

Theme in Scripture: establish the man, entrust with goods, depart with the promise of return & evaluation.

E.g., the Garden: Adam is created and placed in the Garden. Garden is his trust. "Tend and guard." "Don't eat of the TKGE." YHWH leaves and will come back to evaluate faithfulness.

Is a sense of real absence (even though God is all-present).

Our relationship: salvation is not simply getting out of hell. We are set up to work, maturing and maturing/glorifying things around us. We are growing up to be like him.

What belongs to the Son of Man when he goes on his long journey? Mt 28.18-20: everything in heaven and earth. Disciples are left with the trust of discipling the nations ... his nations.

Also, and more specifically, the church. Tend and guard the church.

All belongs to the Master. No one else has absolute authority. All delegated authority to stewards.

To each according to his ability (15): initial evaluation of the servants: some can handle more responsibility than others.

He does not give his servants more than they can handle, but they can handle what he gives them.

Talents = money (not unique abilities). Talent = 6,000 denarii; approx 20 years of income.

Monetary exchanges = liturgical imagery (cf. Isa 55.1; Rev 3.18).

Priestly theme. Jesus' disciples are entrusted with the riches of worship and all that it entails. This is just like it was in the beginning in the Garden. Tending and guarding the riches of God in the Garden was a priestly duty.

They need to tend it so that it will grow and guard it so that it will not be taken by attack.

Some have more responsibility, some have less. But *all* have a trust.

Spiritual gifts = trust to be used for the building up of the body of Christ (1Cor 12-14; Eph 4; Rom 12). Gifts are vocations, callings to specific tasks within the church.

2. THE SERVANTS INVEST THEIR LORD'S TRUST (16-18)

Diligent investing (16-17): 5-talent and 2-talent servants "worked with" them and doubled the Master's money.

Both were faithful. The amounts were not the most important thing.

Slothful investing (18): 1-talent servant hides the Master's money in "the land."

"The land" could be a reference to Israel. Some disciples would invest everything in Jerusalem instead of doing

commerce with the nations. They return to the land and eventually lose everything.

3. THE LORD RETURNS AND SETTLES ACCOUNTS (19-30)

After a long time (19): Delay is emphasized.

“Settle accounts” - he is coming back for evaluation and consequent distribution of rewards and punishments.

Jesus’ disciples will give an account for how they handled the trust given to them.

2Cor 5.10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

When Jesus saves you, he saves all of you, including all that you do. What you do, your works, along with the rest of you are redeemed so that they can be accepted by God as they are joined with the sacrifice of Christ.

We are not saved by our works. Apart from Christ our works only condemn us. It is apart from Christ that all of your works are unclean rags. But that is not the case in Christ and works done by faith.

Once you are delivered, your works matter b/c you were created to be like God, a worker. This is part of what it means to be created in the image of God. Christ saves us to restore that image so that we can grow into the likeness of God himself.

Once Christ saves us by the application of his shed blood and resurrection, our works in developing the parts of creation entrusted to us become acceptable to God and are used to build his house.

The Father receives them b/c they are in-Christ works. He puts you in a position to do these works and he expects the work to be done.

He will come for evaluation one day. Each of us will give account for what we have done in the body whether good or bad. You are saved by grace through faith unto good works (Eph 2.8-10). So, there is coming an evaluation day.

The faithful servants (20-23): “See” - evaluate.

“Well [done]” - he praises his servants. He commends them for their faithfulness.

“Good” and “faithful.” This doesn’t preclude the fact that these servants are sinners. It means that they have done well according to what the master required of them as his servants.

The reward for faithfulness in the trust given is more trust.

“Enter the joy of your Lord.” This relates to the previous statement about being set over much. The joy of the Lord is the kingdom of heaven. It will be there that they will reign with Christ, which means more responsibility.

The wicked servant (24-30): “Hard” or “stern” - Master is demanding; he expects productivity from his servants.

He leaves fields (gardens!) to be planted, tended, and guarded. He expects fruit.

He fears the Master’s expectations and takes no risks with the money. Judgment: wicked and slothful servant.

He has not fulfilled his responsibility. (Slothful is not just inactivity, but failure to fulfill one’s responsibilities.)

1. *We have been entrusted with our Lord’s goods and are expected to invest properly so as to make a profit.*
2. *Investment means taking measured risks.*
3. *Your work matters to God.*