**No Excuses**

Based on [Matthew 25:14-30](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt25.14-30)

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The Twenty-fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Proper 28

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In the gospel reading today, Our Lord Jesus tells us another parable about the final Judgment. And its central teaching, though shrouded in parabolic form is really quite simple. **Jesus is coming to judge, and those who try to make excuses for their sin will be cast into hell forever.**

It is a parable about a man who went away for a long time, and entrusted to servants his property in “talents.” **Talents are coins—extremely valuable coins, valued at roughly 20 years’ worth of an average wage.** The master gave five talents to one servant, two to another, and one to another. When the master returned, the first two servants were commended, **because they *traded* with their talents and made more**. The third servant was chastised by the master because he neglected to *trade* his talent, nor did he *invest* it with the bankers. Instead he *hid* the talent **and then made excuses**. The final score…the faithful servants enter into the joy of their master…his grace and favor and all that he is and has. The worthless servant is cast into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In this parable, the "man who went away for a long time" is Jesus, the servants are the church. The talents are gifts that Jesus gives to his church. It might be that talents are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit. That interpretation is where we get and how we use the word talent today. To call someone talented is to point out their extrordinary natural abilities, not their wealth.

Now talents could be natural abilities, but I am not aware of any Scriptural license to limit the parable in this way. Also, Jesus says in the parable that the talents were given “to each according to his ability” making it paradoxical to say that each person was given ability according to their ability. Regardless, Jesus doesn’t specify what the talents are, leaving them open to represent any and all good things that God gives his church. Abilities, sure, but also money. And not only earthly treasures but also heavenly treasures: His Word and Teaching, His Sacraments which you may be tempted to bury in the ground and hide, because the world will persecute you for them. Talents are anything and every great gift God has given to you, and that includes everything you have and everything you are.

You know what good things you have, what God has given you. The central teachings of the parable is this: (1) God gifts his church so that they will use what he has given them to extend his kingdom on earth. (2) He gives gifts according to ability, so that no one is expected to wield or produce more than he is able, (3) The good and faithful servants are commended, not for making a profit, but for using their talents (4) The wicked and slothful servant is condemned, not for failing to make a profit, nor even for having buried the talent, but for the shallow excuse he have his master for burying the talent he was given.

(1) God gifts his church so that they will use what he has given them to extend his kingdom on earth.

When St. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he rebukes theirself-congradulatory spirit by saying:

**[Do not] go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.**[**7**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/4-7.htm)**For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?**

A central message to the Church in corinth is that whatever they have, they should not use it to their own glory, but to God’s; not to puff themselves up, but to boast in the Lord. He even begins his letter to the Corinthians in this way “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesusu Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul doesn’t thank them for their grace, he thanks God for what He gave them and the rest of the letter is instructing them to use what he gave, not to divide from one another and glorify themselves…but to unite in one Spirit to spread his kingdom of Grace until Christ comes to turn our faith to sight.

So the Catechism teaches, “How does God’s Kingdom Come” answer: “**God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity**”

We are not called to spread God’s Kingdom on earth through the sword. We are not to wage holy wars, and convert everyone to Christianity or else kill the infidels. But we are given gods grace, and with it he uses his church to live in this grace, and to use this grace. When we do that, we trade with the talent, and God gives increase and spreads his grace in the world, sanctifying and preserving people until the day Jesus returns.

(2) He gives gifts according to ability, so that no one is expected to wield or produce more than he is able,

This is a parable, Jesus made it up to teach something and so he chose how to tell it. Why did he make it so that the servants who were given more were the faithful ones, and the servant who was given little--though one talent is still a great amount—why was he the wicked and slothful one? It only further drives home the point that no one was given more than he could handle. Jesus says “To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, *to each according to his ability*.”

Were it the man with five talents who were lazy he might have an excuse that he was given too much to manage. No, that the man with one talent was slothful shows that the master not expect too much from him. And **on judgment day, that will not be an excuse for anyone.**

Moreover, the small amount shows that faithfulness is not measured in how much you have been given, but how you use it.

**21**Jesus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2021:1-4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-25818a)] looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, **2**and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2021:1-4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-25819b)]**3**And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. **4**For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Talents were distributed by God according to ability. Even someone with little ability, only little was expected, showing that it’s not that the master demands more than he provides, but that the servant is lazy unwilling to work.

(3) The good and faithful servants are commended, not for making a profit, but for using their talents.

This aspect of the parable teaches that there are sins of omission that are just as damnable as sins you actively commit. This morning and every Lord’s Day we confess our sins, not only what we have done, but what we have left undone.

(4) Finally, the most consequential teaching in this parable is this: the wicked and slothful servant is condemned, not for failing to make a profit, nor even for having buried the talent, but for the shallow excuse he have his master for burying the talent he was given.

I’m sure we bury our talents all the time. We daily sin and deserve nothing but punishment. We confess every Sunday, “**We have sinned against God by what we have done, *and by what we have left undone.*** What we have left undone means the talents God gives us that we have failed to trade with. So the difference between heaven and hell is not between who has sinned and who hasn’t. It is whether we make excuses for our sin, or whether we confess them and ask for mercy.

The wicked and slothful servant was not cast into hell because he was slothful, or because he failed to trade with his talent and make a profit. He was cast into hell because he presumed to justify himself by blaming his master for his sin.

[**24**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-24.htm)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, [**25**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-25.htm)so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’

The master is settling accounts here. This is what Scripture says in 2 Cor. 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.

Jesus says elsewhere, By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matt. 12:37). Maybe you’re not good at public speaking, doesn’t matter; everyone will have to give a verbal account of their deeds to God, and he’s given everyone ample time to prepare for the examination.

The wicked servant was asked to give an account, and he doesn’t say “Lord have mercy”, He doesn’t say “I have sinned against you by what I have left undone. He says…”**I buried my talent because you are hard and upredictable, It’s your fault I didn’t make a profit with your coin. Here you can have it back now**”

[**26**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-26.htm)But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? [**27**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-27.htm)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.

The wicked servant is not rebuked for burying his talent. He is rebuked for the account he gives, and the master sees through it. “**If you really believed me to be unpredictable, mercurial, then you would have tried even harder to please me. You wouldn’t have buried the talent but found some predictable way to make even a little return on my investment.** No, you are a liar and are lying to my face. In giving me an account of your deeds you lie to me to cover up your own wickedness. But your account does not hold up under my cross examination. And in catching you in a contradiction, I judge your deed to have been unfaithful, and because you have not believed you are condemned.”

[**28**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-28.htm)So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. [**29**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-29.htm)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. [**30**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-30.htm)And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

These end-time parables are not warnings to the world, they are warnings to the church. It is ***members of the church*** who has received talents and will have to give an account of how they use them. Just as it was the man at the wedding feast who was asked, “friend where is your wedding garment.” He was speechless when asked to give an account and was cast into the outer darkness, the same result as the slothful servant (Matt. 22:12).

By your words you will be justified…and by your words you will be condemned.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don’t ever get mad at another Christian for judging you, you will have to stand before God someday and give an account for whatever that person is asking you of now. If you can’t explain to a brother or sister in Christ why you do what you do, and run away…how are you going to explain yourself to God at which time there is no escape? “Oh I treat other people like garbage but don’t judge me, I have PTSD.” Oh really? if you really have PTSD then why don’t you try even harder to avoid stress and treat people respectfully? No you don’t have trauma, you have sin, plain and simple. Your excuse does not justify your actions, it only exposes your unrepentance, hypocrisy and unbelief.

No excuses are allowed at the Judgment Seat, only repentance and pleas for mercy. On account of Christ, there is no need to make excuses. He died and paid your ransom, so that through repentance and faith you may enter into the joy of your master. You will inherit heaven with God. And all the sufferings of the present evil day on account of using the talent God gave you will be seen for the good work that it is, and He will reward you and welcome you into eternal dwellings.