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Use it or lose it!

Matthew 25.14-30

Is there something you're waiting for?

What are you waiting for? For some paperwork from the government? For a job? For a husband or wife? To be able to visit loved ones? Jamie and Gizem are waiting for their baby to be born!!

We've been looking at parables that Jesus has told about his second coming. He's told us that even he doesn't know when. But, it'll be sudden (like a thief coming in the night). All the world will see it, like lightening which flashes across the sky. Everyone will know when Jesus comes again to this earth. We are to be ready for his coming - like five of the ten bridesmaids who were ready with oil in their lamps, to light the way for the bridal party. We are to be ready to welcome King Jesus!

But before he comes, there will be great turmoil around the world (wars, famines, earthquakes). Ch 24.6. These are birth pangs (24.8) of the new heaven and the new earth - groaning as it waits the coming of the Messiah! Christians will be persecuted, tortured, killed because of Jesus. **Many** will be deceived by false teachers; the love of **most** Christians will grow cold because of these difficult times. But if we stand firm to the end we will be saved - and the gospel will be preached to all nations. The end of the world as we know it will come. Jesus will return coming on the clouds with power and great glory.

How are we to live as we wait?

Have you been in a doctor's waiting room recently? If you look around, you'll probably see a lot of very bored people. Fiddling on their phones; checking their texts every minute. But, you might see one of two, who have their computers open. They're not watching a movie or music video or playing a game. You can see that they are working. They are using the time.

In today's parable, Jesus tells us that we must use the time and gifts he has given us as we wait for him to come again. **Use it or loose it.** Open your Bibles or your App to Matthew 25.14.

The master (v14) is going on a journey. He's going to be away a long time v19. He wants his property well looked after. So, v14, he calls his servants and gives each of them some money.

A talent was a weight of money. A heavy weight. One talent was what a workman earned in about 15 years. In France at minimum wage, 5 talents is one and a half million euros. A lot of money!!

The master gives his 3 servants each a huge amount of money.

I found out something very interesting as I looked into this parable. Some of you will be interested in this. I never knew that the useless servant stands for the Scribes and Pharisees. God had given them the law to keep. They wanted to keep it exactly as it was.

This useless servant (v18) hid the money in the ground. That was the safest way people kept precious things! So this servant was doing what everyone did to keep money 'safe'.

Roger remembers visiting an old lady in Scotland, in Edinburgh, from the church. Peggy was quite a character. Once, when she didn't agree with someone, she hit him over the head with her stick!! Peggy said to Roger, 'Come round, I want to give you something!' From under her mattress she got out a whole wodge of money - and counted it out. One thousand pounds. She didn't keep her money in the bank. She didn't trust the banks - but under her mattress! That was her safe place...

To the scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish religion must be kept safe. No change. Jesus came to bring change! So they were horrified when Jesus came healing people on the Sabbath, teaching not 'an eye for an eye' but 'love your neighbour', he came claiming to be the Messiah. Jesus condemns them because they did not accept him. He said they will be put (v.30) in outer darkness, outside God's kingdom.

Jesus praises the other two servants who use the money they've been given.

What is Jesus saying to us today?

First, **The Lord gives us gifts.** The master is rich, generous. He trusts them with his gold. Jesus is talking here about the responsibilities the Lord gives his people. God has made us all different. Look around. Look at the people in this church. Some are great at singing, or making music, or leading, or preaching. Others are wonderful at greeting, noticing people, remembering their names, have a heart for the children. Others want to help in practical ways - good at putting the PA system together, or serving. That's just in the church. Outside, you know those who make you laugh, those you go to when you are in trouble, wise mothers, those who are amazing engineers or business people. God doesn't make two of us the same. He gives all of us gifts.

The Lord invests in us! Think of it, you are the Lord's investment. He's put his money on you - because you can help build his kingdom!

What has God given you? Do you know, everything we are and have, have been given by God - our money, our abilities, our children, the jobs, our education, the house and home, the friends, the opportunities? We have been given incredible blessings, each of us - even if we think we have very little.

Can God rely on us? - Like the first two servants to use wisely what he has given us? **Use it or lose it.**

Secondly, **The Lord holds us accountable** The master comes back after a long time v19 and he calls his servants. Imagine him asking, 'What have you done with what I gave you?' We are caretakers of what God gives us. We aren't owners. Everything we have, we've been given by God.

He starts with his manager.' I gave you all this. What have you done?' Has he used it? He shows his master, not five talents but ten talents. 3m euros.

Go back to the passage. What does it say this servant did?.... v16.

*'he went **at once** and **put his money to work.**'*

Can you imagine he and his wife having this huge discussion... We've never had so much money. What shall we do with it? Buy a field, no, a huge farm, set up a business (like Amandine is doing), buy a taxi, start a preschool day care. He went at once. He got going!! He didn't wait. He didn't procrastinate. He got on with it!!! He used it!

I know that some of you want to work but can't because you haven't got the papers. Don't look at what you can't do. Look at what you can do.
What have you got?

We visited our daughter in Cape Town this year. She said, 'You must meet Natasha.' Natasha is a refugee from Zimbabwe. Her husband spent all their money on drink. Then he got sick. Then, very sick. She couldn't look after him and work. So she gave up her work. Then he died. And she had nothing for her two daughters to live. She couldn't get work. She was desperate and was crying to God to help.

And God said, 'What have you got? Look in your cupboard.' Nothing, it was nearly bare. But she did have a bag of oats, some oil and some sugar. So she made some flapjacks and sold them at the school. More people wanted to buy them. So she made more. Soon she was getting orders from shops and she bought a bigger oven.

It all started when God said to her, 'What have you got?'

Use what you have. Be faithful in what God gives you.

First servant doubles his master's money. He used it. What does the master say? '*Well done, good and faithful servant.*' He praises him. The second servant. He also doubled his money. He used what he'd been given. Use it or lose it! The master says exactly the same, '*Well done, good and faithful servant.*'

What a wonderful thing to have God say to us! '*Well done, good and faithful servant!*' Imagine God saying that to you. Here at St Marc's are many people who I can imagine the Lord will say that to. You have been my good and faithful servant. Let's say it, '*Well done, good and faithful servants.*'

Faithful. That's what God wants us to be. Faithful. He's not asking for success. He's not asking us to be the best. He's asking us to be faithful - to do what we can, not what we can't. If we use our muscles, they get stronger.

A few years ago, my daughter said to me, 'Mum, let's run a half marathon together.' I was rather scared but she said, 'Mum, you can do it!' Mary Jane got pregnant so she stopped running. But I decided that I would still do it. So I started training. I got a program off the internet and ran every day. It became winter. The days got shorter - and colder. But, I could run further and further.

If we use our gifts, like our muscles, they grow! God holds us accountable for using our gifts... *Use it or lose it.* Jesus said to his two good servants, v21, '*You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.*' Jesus says, he will give more responsibility to the one who is faithful.

And then what does he say? '*Come and share your master's happiness.*' The Master was so overjoyed by what the 2 servants had done, he says, come and share.

It's so exciting seeing God's Kingdom grow. I think that is what Jesus means when he says, 'Come and share my happiness'. It makes Jesus happy when he sees people enjoying what he gives them. He's happy when people find he loves them and cares for them. He's happy to see people fellowship together. 'Come,' he says, 'Join the party.'

Lastly, and finally The Lord judges us

The 3rd servant, thought that his master was a hard man and greedy. He'd got it all wrong. The master was incredibly generous.

The servant was timid, didn't even try. Maybe he said, 'I have so little compared to the others; it's not worth doing anything.' Didn't take any risks. He didn't use what he'd been given. He buried it. There are people I know who haven't used what they've been given. They've lost it.

God loves to use the poor and the weak. If we bring what we have to God, he uses it. He uses us - and multiplies what we have. Gives us more responsibility! You don't have to worry if you're not a ten talent person. You've got one talent. Use what you've got. Bring it to God. Trust him. He'll develop you, giving you more opportunities. **Use it or lose it!**

Jesus calls this servant lazy and wicked. He took the talent away and said this servant will be cast out from God's presence, from God's kingdom - into outer darkness v30. A picture of hell.

All Christians will have to give an account of how we have lived. We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ and give an account of our lives. 2 Cor 5.10. Have we used what God has given us? Use it or lose it. Are we using gold, silver, costly stones or wood, hay and straw to build God's kingdom? (1 Cor 3.10-15)

Let's pray

First, for those who have worked faithfully for God and his kingdom. The Lord wants us to know his joy and delight - and his favour. Whether what we do is in secret (like prayer or giving) or more public, he sees. His eyes are on us and one day, we will hear those words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.

Secondly, to those who feel they have very little, or are burdened, or depressed. Do you know, when we come to God with the little we have and a willing heart, God will multiply it. Like our friend Natasha. Lay it before him now. Give him your heart. Maybe he is saying, you **are** doing a great job as a mother, as a father, as a friend, - in different ways. God sees. Tell him you are willing. Maybe there are things you can do. Let God show you - and then be obedient.

Lastly, for anyone here who is not yet a follower of Jesus. This story is not about earning our way to heaven. It's about serving our Lord and Master with all he has given us - which aren't ours anyway. We open our hands to Jesus and say, 'Take me as I am. I have lived and worked for myself all my life. Now, I give myself to you, all that I am and all that I have I give to you.' - rather like in the marriage service. 'Take my heart and make it wholly thine.'