

Taking Kingdom Risks

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[0:00] If you've been around for the last few weeks and you have not been hiding under a rock, you will probably recognize this image.

! This was a problem around the world because of how close the planes got to the top of the stadium. About 14 meters the closest plane was just above the stadium roof.

This shocked many people around the world who considered this maneuver to be far too risky. But the airline company, Air Link, responded and they said it was all part of the plan. They had rehearsed this maneuver and it was done by very skilled pilots and there was nothing to worry about.

Now, opinion is divided over that maneuver but whatever you think about that, and people differ, some think it was too risky, some think it wasn't. But whatever you think about it, one thing that you can't deny is that those pilots achieved the purpose they were given those planes that day.

You see, the company, Air Link, gave those pilots a task with those planes, which was to create a spectacle and to get exposure for their brand, Air Link.

[1:37] And you can't deny that they achieved their mission. Even though they took a risk to do it, and I mean, any flyover over a packed stadium is going to have a certain element of risk.

And even though they did take a risk to do it, they accomplished the mission that they had been given those planes to achieve that day. Now, in today's parable that we have in front of us, Jesus is going to teach us that every one of his disciples has been given something to do in this world and resources to do it with.

But to achieve the purpose for which Jesus gives us what we have will require a certain amount of risk. And the challenge to each of us from this parable is to ask ourselves whether we are willing to take the risk before Jesus comes back.

Or whether we just want to play it safe with our lives. And so let's see what he has to tell us this morning. Now, this is the third and final parable that Jesus is using to teach his disciples how to be ready for his return one day.

He had already been teaching them throughout Matthew 24 and now Matthew 25 the importance of being ready for his return. And this is the last parable he is using to teach this point.

[3:06] And so let's see what he says from verse 14. He says again, it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. And then he went on his journey. Okay, so Jesus is teaching here about what he's been teaching for a few parables already.

He's teaching about the time in between his first and second coming to earth. Which is this age we're living in now. And he's teaching here that in that time, in this age, he has given each Christian, each of his people, each of his servants, something that he wants them to use for him while he's gone.

And the first thing you'll notice is that he doesn't give the same to every servant in the parable. The servants are given different amounts depending on what they're capable of, according to their abilities, according to what they can do with it.

But I think it's really important to notice in this parable, everyone is given something. And everyone is given something significant to use.

[4:21] Okay, so in the parable, depending on your translation, it's a bag of gold. Whatever it is, the original word meant something very, very valuable. And even the guy who has the least still has a whole bag of gold.

Now, I don't know if you've ever had a bag of gold. But that's a very valuable thing, right? And that's worth a lot of money. That is enough money that it would be wrong to do nothing with it, to just sit on it.

It's got the potential to do things, to invest, to build things, to do significant things in the world. And that's the point. In the same way, every Christian has something that can make a significant difference for Jesus, for the kingdom.

Every Christian. It might not be as much as someone else, but it's something. Every Christian, that's the first thing this parable is teaching. Every Christian has something that can make a significant difference for Jesus' kingdom.

And so, for some people, it might be money that they've been able to earn with the career and the job and the skills God has given them. And they've got money beyond what they need.

[5:33] For some people, it's opportunities they have in government or in business or in society. For others, it's abilities or gifts that they have. But everyone has something.

This parable is teaching us. Jesus has given every one of his people something to use for him. And the reason is, the reason he's done that, the reason he hasn't just given it to the most skilled people so that, you know, the rest can just relax and wait for heaven.

The reason Jesus has given every Christian something to do is actually out of his mercy. It's because Jesus wants each of us to have the privilege of doing something important with our life. And that is a huge privilege, if you think about it. That we get to do something that really matters for eternity with our life. And Jesus wants each of his people to have that privilege.

And it is a huge privilege. If you are not a Christian here today, if you have not come under the Lordship of Christ, then you do not have that.

[6:40] If you're not a Christian, all you can do is live for this life. This very short life on earth. And put all your toil and energy only in things that will last for this life.

Maybe, if you have enough, something you can pass on to the next generation. And maybe the next after that. But that's it. Eventually, everything you do will pass away.

But if you're a Christian, you get to do things that matter for eternity. You get to be part of promoting the gospel and bringing people into a relationship with God that will last forever.

And that is a huge privilege. And Jesus wants each one of his people to have a part to play in that. To live a life that matters. So, if you're not a Christian here this morning, and you're listening to the sermon, or you're here in church this morning.

Maybe you've been dragged to church by that irritating Christian who's been telling you to come to church forever. And now you've finally given in. If you're not a Christian, maybe you're here for a reason. Maybe you're here to hear the truth that you should be a Christian.

[7:54] Okay? And the reason you should be a Christian is not only because you receive eternal salvation from Jesus who died for sins. And can bring you into a relationship with God.

And into a new creation one day through resurrection from the dead. I mean, that's enough reason to be a Christian. Right? But not only do you get that if you're a Christian. You also get to live a life now that matters.

That other people don't get to do. And if you are a Christian here this morning, then realize what privilege you've been given.

You can now use what you have in life, not just for this life, but you can use it for something eternal. You can use it for something that really matters. If you choose to.

If you take heed of what Jesus is saying here. And that is why each Christian needs to look at what they've been given. Needs to do a stock take of their life.

[8:53] Because we all have different things. Abilities, skills, resources, opportunities. And each of us needs to stop and say, what have I been given? What has God given me?

And how can I use this? How can I use this talent or this opportunity or this money that's in my bank account to advance the cause of Christ? How can I use this to invest in what really matters?

It's not going to happen unless you choose to do that with what you have. And so do a stock take of your life. Ask, what do I have? And how can I invest it?

And if, by the way, you have gifts to actually teach the Bible, which is a key activity of God's mission in the world, don't sit on those gifts unused.

And don't wait for some writing in the sky for God to tell you to go into ministry. The fact that he's given you those gifts is enough indicator that he wants you to use them.

[9:53] And so use the gifts he's given you, whether it's that or whatever it is. And use those gifts or those resources soon. Don't wait. Don't sit on them.

Verse 16. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work. He didn't wait. Don't wait. And just like with, you know, the financial world, everybody knows if there's an investment to make, you make it sooner rather than later.

You don't wait. The sooner the better. And it's the same with what God has given us in this life. But sadly, as we read on, we realize not everyone chooses to do that with what they have.

Even Christians, even servants of Christ might still only use what they've been given in this life for this life. And that is a very sad situation.

Because it's exactly what we go on to see happens in the parable. Verse 18. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

[11:02] He sat on it. He didn't make it do anything. He didn't put it to work. He didn't put it to work. And as we go on the parable, we see what a big mistake that is.

Because of the next thing we learn, which is that Jesus will hold his people to account for what they've been given. Let me read from verse 19.

After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five.

Master, he said, you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I've gained five more. 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. Notice what those two servants say.

[12:12] The third servant doesn't say it, but the first two servants say it. They start by saying, you entrusted me with this money. You entrusted me with five bags of gold.

You entrusted me with two bags of gold. You see, the faithful servants are the ones who immediately recognize that what they have is from their master. It had always belonged to him and it was never theirs to do with as they pleased.

They recognize that. And in the same way, faithful Christians are those who recognize that all they have belongs to God.

Not just what they give in tithe at church in the bag, but everything they have. Their job. The abilities they have to do their job.

Their house. Their family. Their resources. Everything is actually from God. And it has always belonged to him. It never belonged to us. Everything we have is from God.

[13:12] And the faithful servants recognize that. Right at the beginning. You have entrusted me with this job. You have entrusted me with these children. You have entrusted me with this house.

You have entrusted me with this car. And it was those servants who took the risks necessary with those things to put what they had to work for their master.

And what is the result for them? Well, let's have a look. Verse 21 is the result. This is the outcome. 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. That's the result of faithful use of what has been entrusted to the servants.

And notice, if you compare the result for the one with five bags of gold and the result for the one with three bags of gold. Notice, sorry, two bags of gold.

[14:21] Notice the result. Verse 21, verse 23. It's exactly the same word for word. It's the same response. They have different amounts given to them to invest. And yet they get the same reward from their master.

And it's important to notice that. Because, you know, we live in a world where everybody is looking at the person next to them. And comparing their life with someone else.

It's social media. It's what we do naturally without even realizing. We compare how far we've got in life with the person next to us. We compare the success of our life with someone else.

That's how we do it without even realizing. And that's why we've got to remember, as Christ's servants, in our work for our King, Lord Jesus.

What matters is not how successful we are compared to others. You might never, you know, be a missionary or preach the gospel and cause thousands of people to be saved.

[15:22] But all the master is looking for is whether his servants have been faithful with what they've been given. That's what matters to him.

Their faithfulness based on what they've been given. You know, which means that the poor widow who used her resources faithfully will be right up there with, you know, George Woodfield and Charles Spurgeon who used what they had.

The reward that the master gives is based on the faithfulness of their use with what they initially had. What they were given. That is what the master is looking for in his servants.

And if they do that, if the servants use whatever they've been given faithfully, they put it to work for their master, then this happens.

We see the reward. Firstly, they are given more. Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things.

[16:28] They are given more so that they can do more. Now that makes sense, doesn't it? If you're a boss in a business place, in an office, and you identify an employee who uses the resources you give him or her really, really well, you're going to give them more responsibility.

That's how it works. That's exactly what Jesus does as well. Jesus does that with those who use what they have in this life for his kingdom.

If they use their opportunities for Jesus, he will give them more opportunities. If they use their money for Jesus, he will give them more money.

Yes, you heard right. That's what the Bible teaches. And I've actually seen it happen in real life. People who are faithful with what God has given them, they get more.

They get entrusted with more so that they can do more. And so those are the immediate consequences of good stewardship in this life. There are immediate consequences in this life.

[17:37] But there are also eternal consequences. Verse 21 at the end. Come and share your master's happiness. Literally, in the original language, it's enter into your master's joy.

And Jesus here is alluding to his disciples' place in the new creation that Jesus is coming to establish one day. And the whole reason he came and died on the cross so that we can have our sins forgiven and come into relationship with God is so that we can have a place in what is coming for this world.

Because this world as it is now is never what God intended. God has a plan for this world, a new creation that is coming. And Jesus, in his physical resurrection from the dead, has proven that that is on its way.

And he is coming to make that. A world where we get to finally live the lives that God intended us, created us to live, with no death or sin spoiling that. A world where we will experience joy without end.

And which all the risks that we take in this life with what we have will be worth taking because of what's coming. And that is the reward for the faithful servant.

[19:00] And it is a great reward. But look what happens to the servant who is not faithful with what they have.

I am going to read from verse 24. Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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 seeds.

So I was afraid. And went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you. 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. 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.

So, take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have even what they have will be taken from them.

[20:10] Okay, so you see the result for the servant who does not use what he has been given is the very opposite than the servants who do. It is, he is not given more.

In fact, what he has, little as it is, is taken away. He loses any future opportunity to serve his master in this life. But even worse, there is an eternal consequence for him too.

You see that? He is also separated from the life that his master could give him in future. And this happens, verse 30. And throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is a very sobering verse. Because Jesus is talking about his servants and now he uses the language of hell to describe the outcome for the servant who is not faithful with what they have. Jesus is saying here that his disciples who do not use what they have been given won't be saved, ultimately.

[21:33] Now that is shocking and that seems to not make sense. It seems to go against what we believe that we are saved by grace through faith and not works, right? This sounds like salvation by works, doesn't it?

That we have to earn our way. And the gospel is clear that we can never earn our way into heaven, into salvation. And that is why Jesus had to come. That is why we are saved through faith in him, not through works, right?

So what is going on here? Well, I think this servant, this last servant, never truly knew his master at all.

I mean, look at how he caricatures him. Master, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. This guy never actually knew his master.

And the reason he didn't use what he had been entrusted is because he didn't know his master.

And because he was afraid of his master and he was afraid of punishment from his master, he didn't want to risk the money he had, so he buried it in the ground so he didn't get into trouble.

[22:44] That was all he was worried about, getting into trouble. And so who is this third servant? What is, who does he represent in our world? Well, I'll tell you what I think.

I think this servant represents people who are Christians out of fear. Where their Christianity is just about staying out of trouble.

Coming to church, ticking the box, keeping the rules so that they don't get into trouble with God, but they never really wanted to do their master's work in the first place. That's what I think this third servant is.

And that is not actually true Christianity, according to the Bible. That is not true discipleship.

Because true Christianity is not about just doing nothing wrong and keeping the rules.

It has never been about that. True Christianity is about actively doing what Jesus wants us to do with our lives. And so, if you are doing nothing for Jesus with what you have, you are not using your money or your abilities or your opportunities for Jesus in any way, then don't pretend that you are one of his servants just because you come to church.

[24:02] And don't think that you will be okay when he comes back. You won't. And that is what this parable is warning us. And that is why we must all do a stock take of our lives.

And we all need to listen carefully to what this parable is teaching us. Which is that if we are saved, we are saved to do something in this world for Jesus.

As he says in John 15, verse 16, to his disciples, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

And so, I think each of us this morning need to go away and ask ourselves, what has Jesus given me to use for him?

And how can I use it, not just to tick the box, but how can I use it to the maximum, to bear the maximum fruit for eternity? Because we only have a very limited time here.

[25:22] How can I invest the money I have, the opportunities I have, the job I have? How can I invest my retirement in the kingdom of Christ before he comes back?

Now, you might ask yourself that question and your answer might be, I don't know. And if you don't know how to invest what you have in the kingdom, then ask your pastor.

Okay, pastors are here, Dylan, myself, other pastors in other churches, we're here to, yes, teach the Bible, but we're here to do other things as well. Did you know we are also investment advisors? Did you know that? Us as pastors, we are investment advisors. You can make an appointment. You can get advice on how to use your money. You know, investment advisors in the financial world are people who give you advice on how to best use your money to maximize your profits, right?

Well, did you know that pastors are authorized financial services providers? We are. But we are not authorized by the state. We are authorized by God.

[26:31] And we are authorized to advise you how to maximize eternal profits, things that matter for eternity. And we can. And we know opportunities that are out there. We know missionaries in the field who need help.

We know that there are pastors in townships trying to plant churches so that more people in the townships can be saved. We know what in the church is needed and how you can use your skills. We are authorized financial services providers to advise you how to best use the resources you have.

Make use of us. So that you can maximize what you have for what really matters. And so if you need that, you know, if you need to know, if you need, you don't know how to put to work what you have, come get some investment advice.

But don't delay. Don't delay. Because there is only so much time before our master comes back. And in his final parable that he tells.

This is the final parable Jesus gave. The next one about the sheep and the goats. That's not actually technically a parable. So this officially is the last parable Jesus gives before he goes to the cross. And it's in this parable that he teaches us the vital truth that it is up to each one of us to use what we've been given for what really matters.

[27 : 51] So that one day we too can hear those words. Well done. Good and faithful servant. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for teaching us.

We thank you that you came down not only to take our place and die for our sins, but to teach us truth in these words that you gave your disciples that we can read 2,000 years later and hear you speaking to us today.

Lord, would you help us to listen to what you're saying to us and not to ignore it and to put it into practice so that we too can experience the joy that you have prepared for us.

Lord, would you pray for us both in this life and in eternity. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.