



Matthew 25:14–18

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.

18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Reflection

(Today's reflection is given by Justin Mof-fatt)

Why did the man who received one bag of gold run away, dig a hole in the ground and hide his master's money? We find out tomorrow that he was afraid. In verse 27, we discover that he had a particular idea of the character of this wealthy man going on a journey, namely that he was a hard man, so he was afraid and hid the gold in the ground. He returns the gold bag to the man. But returning the exact amount with a little dirt on the outside is not what

he was supposed to do with it. He was supposed to make it sing for the king.

How does this help us to live today? Jesus is adjusting expectations about the kingdom of God, and then telling those who listen how to live. If those listening thought that a kingdom would be imminent; that it would come right now with the overthrow of the Romans, then that expectation had to be adjusted. It has been 2000 years since Jesus ushered in the kingdom by his death and resurrection, and we are still waiting. But that's exactly what we are supposed to do. Wait. The king is on a journey, so that kingdom will take time to come to its complete fruition. We need to be waiting, like the five virgins in the previous story that were ready for the long haul; the long wait.

We need to be expectant, rather than sleepy. Let's not, then, be sleepy Christians. So what do we do? Other than wait?

Jesus then tells them this parable:

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

God has entrusted his wealth to us! See that? He has taken a risk on us! God is that kind of God. He shares his goodness with his servants, with us. But the purpose is for us to do something with that ‘wealth.’ Jesus may be talking about money here, and clearly he is talking about so much more. He is talking about the gospel!

He shares his kingdom, his gospel, and his 'wealth' with those who follow. We need to be active in seeing his kingdom grow; to see the gospel grow. What would it look like to advance our king's interests in the world? To see his 'footprint' grow? What would we need to do?

The answer is: we need to take what God has given us and put it to use for the kingdom. Sow it, invest, do what you can to advance the kingdom of this king.

To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability.

Notice that God gives according to ability. So this is not simply about doing the

right thing, which would be required of each person in equal measure. God has made us all different, and he doesn't give us a task that isn't 'according to our ability.' What he does want is for us to use the time well.

Then he went on his journey.

Christ is still on that journey.

16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.

They increased their master's footprint. But one of them didn't.

18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Think

Fear is a powerful motivator. In fact, tomorrow the master is going to say to the one who hid the money: if you thought I was tough, why didn't you act!? Fear can make us run when a bear comes, and stop before the danger arrives. But there is also a kind of fear that can deflate your soul. It can make you do nothing. This man received his bag of gold, dug a hole and hid it.

Does fear stop you following Jesus? Does fear stop you from taking what you've been given and expanding the spiritual

footprint of our king? Worried you might fail? Worried about what others will think of you? Worried about God's approval? In what ways is fear a deflator in your life?

Pray

Write down what you believe you've been given from God. Don't make it a complete inventory! That would take too long. Just three or four things that God has blessed you with. Could you use these things to expand the kingdom? What would stop you from doing just that?

And now bring your fears to God in prayer. Jesus 'went away on a journey' in order to die for our sins, to rise and to begin a new life in each of us, and give us the hope of his return to judge all people and renew all

things. We await his return, going to work for the master.

Why not meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Pray for just this.