

More About How to Be Ready (25:14-30)

What's up church fam. If I haven't met you yet, my name is Marcus Williamson and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. If you have your bibles, go ahead and turn with me to [Matthew 25:14–30](#).

This morning we will be continuing our journey through the book of Matthew and specifically we will be doing a *Part 2* of sorts based on last week's teaching on How to be Ready. Now I highly recommend you check out what our friend Jake Blair had to say, but in a nutshell last week's talk was focused on how many of us live unaware of the idea that Jesus will return one day. And that can be a problem because the scriptures teach that Jesus is in fact coming back as he stated¹. And as followers of Jesus, we must be ready for his return.

Now before we get started, our scripture reader, Joe, just read these verses and I wanted to get ahead of some terminology before we jump in. The term master and servant in this passage is different from a culture standpoint than our own. Typically those two words used closely to one another denote an unhealthy dynamic in our day and rightfully so with this country's history of slavery. But based on the context of the parable, this dynamic would have been more akin to an investor and a money manager, so you'll hear that language being dropped a lot more in this sermon, so try not to get hung up on the master/servant language as we move along. I just wanted to say that for my black brothers and sisters in the room. I see you fam.

Alright, with that being said, let's start at the top, walk through it line by line, unpack it a little, and then see what it looks like for us as his followers in today's world. Y'all ready?

[Verse 14:](#)

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."

To give us a little context, so we can get into the frame of mind for how much this man has invested, one of the going theories for how much a bag of gold would have been worth was around 20 years of salary for a day laborer. Now in Tennessee, the average salary for workers is around \$50k. And if we were to extrapolate that out, you're looking

¹ John 14:3

at about a million dollars for each bag of gold. So if you were originally thinking: “oh, a bag of gold, how cute.” Nah fam, these cats got millions.

So in our story, 1 servant gets 5 million. Another gets 2 million. And the last one gets 1 million. And the text says the reason he gives different amounts to each person is based on ability. Remember that. **Verse 16:**

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.*

So the first two guys go to work. The one given five million uses that money to generate five million more. The guy with two million doubles it up as well and generates two million more. But the last servant who was given one million, decides to bury the million he was given.

Now, hear me say, if you haven’t read this story before, at face value, what this last servant does might not feel like a big deal. A little unorthodox, but not a BIG deal. Sometimes you like to be a little conservative with money right? Maybe he’s just somewhat risk-averse. Maybe he was like, I can’t lose money, if I don’t invest it. **Verse 19:**

19 *“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 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 have gained five more.’ 21 “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!’ 22 “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ 23 “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!’*

So the master is back. And the text says he’s ready to settle accounts; he’s ready to see what his servants did with his money. Apparently the master did not gift this money as much as he invested it. So the first two servants show the master how they doubled what was given, and then the master replies to each with:

‘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!’

I want you to notice something about the master before we move on. First, the master is intentional and purposeful. He knew they could handle what he had invested to them. Second, he's also generous. We know this, because he says at the end, come and share in my happiness. This would sort of be like getting an invite to the always talked never duplicated end of the year party from your boss because you reached a certain metric or goal for the year. You get to be at their house and hang out and enjoy in their happiness.

Something else I want you to notice. It's small but it's right before he puts them in charge of many things. He says this: "You have been faithful with a few things..."

*'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!***

So if we remember, the master gave based on ability. He was very intentional with what he gave to each of them. And now we see he is both re-investing and rewarding based on faithfulness. This is the type of person the master is.

Alright let's see how he responds to the last servant. [Verse 24](#):

***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 seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'*

So here we get a reason from the third servant as to why he didn't do anything with the money. According to him, it was because he believed that the master was a "hard man", and because he was the type of guy who "harvested where he had not sown and gathered where he did not scatter seed." Ok so, let's discuss this.

Based on what we have read so far, this doesn't sound at all like the master we just read about in the story. That phrase, *hard man*, is better translated into a *harsh, stern*, or even *violent man*. And from the looks of it, the master is none of those? Even though he came to settle accounts, he says thank you for being faithful to the other two and then re-invests with them. Not only that, but then he says come and join in on my happiness. That doesn't sound harsh or stern at all to me. That sounds like a pretty great dude to work for to be honest. He gave each a task, when the first two accomplished said task they were rewarded and given more. If this were your boss I'm sure you'd be happy with those kind of results right? So I'm not sure what this servant was thinking, or who he was envisioning, but it seems like he was very confused about who he thought he knew.

The other part that he claims the master to be is someone who *harvests where he has not sown and gathers where he has not scattered seed*. Now I know it wasn't that long ago but just so we are all clear, the master gave each of his servants money as an investment? I don't know about you, but to me that sounds very much like *sowing and scattering*. It's not like he just pulls up randomly on these cats, and says: "where's my money?" without actually investing anything. That's harvesting where you haven't sown. So again, this is not a very accurate description of the master by the third servant. **It's almost like he's describing the exact opposite of who the master is in the story.** Let's keep reading and see what the master has to say. [Verse 26:](#)

26 "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? 27 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.

This is exactly the opposite of the way he described the first two servants. They were both 'good and faithful,' while this one was 'wicked and lazy.' Remember the master invested according to ability. So he knew this particular servant could handle a million dollars. It wasn't like he gave him more than he could handle. It's not like this third servant was just somebody that the master pulled off the streets, someone who had never managed or invested money before, and was like '**here—do something awesome with this million dollars.**' Nah. Just like the guy with five million and the guy with two million were given based on ability, so was the guy with one million. He was someone **capable** of investing and using that money to make more money. He just chose **not** to.

So for this servant to do nothing with the investment, except bury it, seems weird. But I would argue it actually shows us exactly who he is, and that's what the master said: he's wicked and lazy.

But let's assume for a second that what the third servant said about the master WAS in fact accurate. To that, I would say **his actions** with the money that was given to him, *still* don't match **his belief** that his master is a harsh man who harvests and gathers where he hasn't done anything. And the master argues, in verse 27, that if he really believed he was that way, he would've done something entirely different with the money. **If your boss gives you a task and you decide to not do it because you know your boss is a harsh man. How do you think that conversation is going to go when your time is up? If you know he's a harsh man, if he really has this rep about him, then do you think you need to start work'n on whatever you were given? Even if you feel paralyzed, wouldn't you talk to your coworkers out of sheer panic and ask how they would do said job, or at least ask**

them to help you out. Think about this for a second, he could have asked the other two guys how they were able to double their money. Instead he dug a hole. I feel like it's a lot easier to talk to someone else and ask for help than it is to dig a hole. I mean I've never put a million dollars in the ground, so maybe I'm wrong..but I don't think I am. Here's the deal, this reads much more like superficial excuses than actual reasons for his inaction. He sat on his hands and the master snuck up on him. Plan and simple. And now he is scrambling, trying to throw together a rational excuse for his inaction.

Now I know this whole set-up might still feel a little foreign to us. So let me hit you with a modern-day parallel. This would be like if you went and invested a million dollars at Edward Jones, or the equivalent financial planner. And after a long time, let's say, close to retirement time, you ask them how the investment of your money went and they respond by saying. "Well here's the thing, we were timid about the market, so we didn't actually invest your money at all—we just held onto it." "Um...come again? You did, what's that again?" "Yah, we didn't invest in the market like you thought we would." "So here is your precisely one million dollars back. Minus a few fees for our work." Now if that's what you heard from your financial planner, how would you respond? I mean I know how I would respond. I would imagine it would be something along the lines of anger and confusion. Matter fact, I bet you'd respond in a similar way like the master in the story: you'd tell them in probably different words, "if I knew you were gonna do that, I would've just put my money in a savings account or a CD, I mean even the Robinhood app could have given me a little something. The whole reason I gave you my money was so that you could use it to *make* money, not so you could sit and stare at it! If I wanted my million to just stay a million, I could've done that perfectly well myself." Do you sense the anger and confusion from the master now? Wicked and lazy starts to make a lot more sense right?

Okay, that's the response of the master in the story. He's a tad upset, and we are about to see just how upset he really is. [Verse 28](#):

28 "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 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. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

So he says: "Since you didn't actually do anything with my money then let's take that away from you...and thank you." So the master gives it to the one who had been given ten million dollars at this point. Again, he knows this servant can handle another million. Then the master calls the third servant worthless, and to throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be quote "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Now normally I'd

be all for explaining that last quote, weeping and gnashing of teeth, but seeing how Kent has now been off for three weeks and the sermon next week talks about this idea too...I'll just go ahead and...shall we say, punt that one...to him. So if this is your first time to City Church, and you're really curious, tune in next week. But not to leave you hang's fully, here's the point, the master tells the third servant that because of his wickedness and laziness, he's done with him. It's like with Edward Jones right. You'd be done with them. To the point where if you saw their name in the news you'd be like 'I remember when they blah blah blah.' You'd tell them off in a heartbeat.

Ok, let's talk about the core of this parable: this is a story about **a servant who uses a misunderstanding of the master, to justify his inaction**. He didn't invest the master's money because he felt like the master was too harsh, when in reality the third servant was just wicked and lazy. He just didn't want to do anything with what the master gave him. And then he decides to blame his inaction on the character of the master.

Now, if you haven't picked up on it yet, this parable is a parallel to how we as followers of Jesus interact with God the Father. **So this parable is one way of Jesus showing how to follow and how not to follow after the Lord in light of knowing the Lord is coming back one day.**

So my question for us, and what I want us to work through today, is **in what ways might we use misunderstandings of the Father, or of Jesus, to justify, whether conscious or unconscious, our inaction?** Let me give you three common ways that I've seen this.

First, I've seen people believe that God is love, so repenting isn't a big deal. Alongside this, you'll hear things like: "God loves you exactly as you are" or "He loves you for you" This understanding of God, says that I can just be myself around God. That I don't need to change because Jesus loves me as I am. It essentially is built around not looking at our sin, or not being upset at our sin enough because Jesus loves us anyway. Sometimes it's not outright blatant either, it can also be sneaky. For some of us in the room, it might look like a sin that we don't think is a big deal; which can often get pushed to the side. Maybe we see someone else's sin in LifeGroup and think to ourselves: **"Well my sin isn't as big as theirs, so I guess I don't really need to say anything about what happened last night. I'll just let this one slide. I'll repent if it continues or if it gets bigger. Next time I'll confess and deal with it."** Maybe for some of us we say things like: **"I know this is wrong but Jesus will forgive me." "I know I shouldn't do this, but his grace is enough..." "I know I should change, but God is gracious...."**

All of those things are us using a misunderstanding of God (that he is loving and gracious) to justify our inaction (i.e. our unrepentance).

We are very quick to make excuses and latch onto words like grace and mercy, when we feel even a little guilty or feel a little of the weight of our sin. And hear me say, amen to grace and mercy. And also, here's what the scriptures would say to grace and mercy. This is Paul in [Romans 2:4](#):

*4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's **kindness** is intended to lead you to [what church fam?] **repentance**?*

So Romans just said that God's kindness shouldn't be the justification for not repenting. Rather, God's kindness is the very thing that leads us to repentance.

Hear me say, God does in fact love you. So much so that his son died for our sins, so that we could be in right relationship with him, and also, he calls us all to repent. He does forgive you, and also he calls us to repent. He has so much patience for us, and still he calls us to repent.

Alright, here might be another way we might justify inaction. For some of us we might say this outloud or in our head: that we don't spend regular time in the bible because we don't want to just be "checking off a box." Ever heard people say that before? Maybe we've said it. We don't want to be "legalistic." If I don't desire to read, pray, go to lifegroup, or church, then I won't because that would just be "checking a box."

And our thinking behind this is that God knows our hearts. He cares about our hearts. God doesn't want me to phone it in. Hear me say, God does care about our hearts. But the problem, again, is that we are using a belief about God, to justify our inaction. And really, it's a misunderstanding about God. Because what we're operating out of there is actually an understanding that God **only** cares about our hearts' motives. And that because our hearts aren't where they need to be, that he somehow **doesn't** care about us spending time with him, or time with his people, or time talking with him or listening to him. And that's not true at all.

I'm all for making sure our heart motives are right. I believe we should all peer behind our motives for doing things, especially things concerning following Jesus. And also, here's what I want you to see; if you currently hardly ever spend time in the scriptures, going to lifegroup, praying, or going to church consistently, you are not currently in danger of legalism based on the definition of the word legalism. [That'd be like if you were a billionaire, and someone told you you should try to give a hundred dollars per year away](#)

and you responded with “well I don’t want to be POOR” It’s like my man: “I’m not sure how to tell you this but you are in no danger of being poor.”

So I would venture to say that if you haven’t “checked the box” much at all in a couple of years then you might want to start checking a box. God wants you to spend time with him. He wants you to spend time with his people. To grow and learn how to follow him well. And sometimes, not always, but sometimes that looks like checking a box.

Do you see how our misunderstanding of God, him caring about our hearts, has led to months or years of inaction because we think that means he doesn’t want us to check a box. We’ve conditioned ourselves, paralyzed ourselves, to where we don’t commune with the Lord, because of a misunderstanding.

Last one. Sometimes I’ll hear people say stuff like I don’t need to pray because God will do whatever he wants to anyway. Has anyone been here before? We convince ourselves that things like prayer or possibly even giving doesn’t matter because God will do what he does regardless.

We use God’s sovereignty as means to justify our inaction. And what’s funny is that if we truly believe that the Lord is sovereign, wouldn’t that actually bring us closer to God? Wouldn’t that be a clue to be like: “Oh yah, God has the power to do what he wants, and he’s given me the ability to pray to him for various reasons.² Maybe I can bend his ear a little. Maybe I can gain insight since he is knowledgeable. Since he’s in control and he calls me his child, and I have right relationship with him because of Jesus, maybe just maybe I can talk to him. Maybe he’ll hear me out like 1 John 5³ says.”

So in all three of those ways, and probably way more, we often do something very similar to what the third servant did in the parable. We sometimes will use understandings and misunderstandings about God to justify our inaction, just like he did. So the million dollar question is what’s the solution to that right?

First we need to understand that Jesus is the master who is coming back. And he won’t say did you believe in me, no, what he will ask is this: [what have you done with what I have given you?](#) That’s the question he asks the three servants in the parable, and that’s the question he asks and will ask each of us: what have you done with what I’ve given you?

² Philippians 4:6; James 5:16; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–18; Hebrews 4:16

³ 1 John 5:14

Now maybe you're in the room and you're thinking to yourself: "Man, that sounds very performance-based Marcus, not sure I like that. I thought I didn't have to perform because of grace." And hear me say I get that frame of thinking and would most certainly agree, in part. You were bought with a price and are loved unconditionally. Yes there is grace, and also, grace is not meant to stop with you. It's not meant to impede action. On the contrary, **God's grace was meant to go through you.** James 2 would say it like this:

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

As followers of Jesus we are meant to act on our faith. To show it off. To put it on display for others to see and know who the Lord is. To help a brother and sister by encouraging them. By giving when there is a need. God's grace was meant to go through you, not just to you.

Here's where I want us to land. I want us to ask ourselves two simple questions:

What has God given me? And what am I doing with it?

What has God given me? Is it time? Maybe you're in college or retired and the Lord has blessed you with a lot of time on your hands. What are you doing with that time? Are you spending it wisely? Are you building God's kingdom? Are you multiplying God's kingdom? Or is your time, your own to distribute? Are you protective of your time, even at the expense of God and what he would have you do? Are you consistently using your time for yourself or spending it with the Lord, his people, or people he wants to know him. So is time what the Lord has given you? If you are blessed with it then ask yourself what am I doing with it.

Maybe for you it's some sort of ability. Maybe you're really talented in certain areas. And like, you know you're talented right. Some of us might even be blessed to use our talents at our jobs. Like we get paid to do what we're really good at. If that's you, do you only use your talents for yourself or do you also think about what it might look like to invest it for the kingdom? Now I'm not saying this as a ploy to get y'all to serve here at City Church, unless you're really talented with kids...joking, but I am saying maybe your

talents can somehow get you into closer proximity to someone who needs to see and hear about Jesus. Maybe the Lord gifted you so others might see him. Maybe just maybe. Could it be that person at work the Lord keeps nudging you to talk to. Maybe it's at a shelter or another org that could benefit from your talent for kingdom purposes. Whatever it looks like, how are we investing our talents not just for us but for the kingdom of God?

Maybe it's resources or money. Maybe the Lord has shown you favor in one of these and you are able to quite literally invest what the Lord has invested in you. *One of the joys I have as a pastor here is seeing this lived out in our church vividly. To see how often people in LifeGroups give to people in their community, at work, to family and friends, in moments of crisis or just because, it really is beautiful to witness.* Also hear me say, I understand the flip of resources, especially money, being hard to part with because of us working for it. We worked for it, we should own it right? To that I would just say, remember who has given you the ability to do what you do. Who has orchestrated things so that the ball falls your way more times than normal. The one who has given you the mind and know how to do what you do. Don't forget that.

Here's the deal, however we slice it, because Jesus is in fact coming back, we should all be aware of what the Lord has given us and then examine whether we are actually building his kingdom or building our kingdom. Are we only using his investment in us, for us, or for others? Does our faith stop with us, or does it impact others?

Now, when you leave here, I don't want us to use this passage and turn it into Jesus is a harsh master because he is asking me to do all these things. It's an easy mistake to make. Don't make this passage into something that it is not.

This is a story about a generous master who gives, then expects, then says "come share in my happiness. In that order. Sitting on your hands, doing nothing with what he has given you, is not a faithful way to respond to God's generosity. And remember, just like in the passage, God has given you what you have based on ability. And he knows that you can handle what he's given you. Hence why he invested in you in the first place. There is work to done for the kingdom. Don't be like the last servant and bury what the Lord has given you to do. Let's invest in the kingdom.

Pray

So we're gonna do what we always do and respond to the teaching with communion. Jesus invites us to participate in his kingdom and if you are a follower of Jesus you're

invited to come to the table whether I individually or with others. You're invited to stand as we sing.