

### Entrusted with much

**Call to worship** To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!  
Our eyes look to the LORD our God, until he has mercy upon us. *Psalm 123*

**Hymn StF 340 Ye servants of God** by Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ9j3e8\\_yQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ9j3e8_yQc)

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad his wonderful name ;  
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol ;  
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save ;  
and still he is nigh, his presence we have ;  
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

'Salvation to God who sits on the throne !'  
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son ;  
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right ;  
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing, with angels above,  
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love

**Prayer** Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ, to be the light of the world. Free us from all that darkens and ensnares us and bring us to eternal light and joy; though the power of him who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen

**Reading Matthew 25:14-30 The parable of the talents**

#### Reflection

This parable of the talents is in a block of teaching about the end times and the return of Christ. Last week's parable concluded with an instruction to keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour (Matt 25:13). This parable has a man with much wealth and property, going away on a journey and returning after an unknown time. I think we are meant to read that this is Jesus, who has entrusted to his servants the responsibility of being wise stewards of the master's property, and that one day he will return and call us to account for how we have been stewards of his property and wealth.

The word talent gives us an idea of aptitude or skills, a talented musician, an artistic craftsman, an erudite speech writer. At the time, it was a measure of property or wealth and so some translations use bags of gold, others say that one talent, in monetary terms, was 20 years of a labourer's annual wage (so 5 talents 100 annual wages). In other words, a very significant amount of money. They were, to use a modern term, Fund Managers, tasked to put that money to work – for an unspecified period of time. The first two servants got to work immediately and made some wise investment decisions and increased their worth. The third was afraid of losing money in the investment market and buried the money. To me, that sounds even more risky, what if someone found it, or dogs dug it up, or there was a mud slide or earthquake. Servant one and two commended, the third dismissed and what he has was taken away. What does this parable say to us.

- 1) God **invests** in you, with skills, talents, money – all we have comes from him. God tasks us to use what he has given for the sake of the kingdom – to be good stewards. We don't all get the same amount or same skills, he distributes them according to each's ability.
- 2) What is our **performance** like with the gifts he has given. We know that at some point we will be called to account for our use of the resources at our disposal. The first servant traded with the 5 talents he had and over time doubled them – a good return. Likewise the second, a solid worker, faithful and putting the work in and he too doubled the talents. Someone has likened Abraham and his grandson, Jacob, to being 5 talent men. But you don't get to Jacob except through Isaac, perhaps a 2 talent man. If we only preached Abraham and Jacob, and perhaps illustrate with Wesley and Spurgeon we might think there is a hierarchy in God's kingdom – that there are greater or lesser heroes. But both our 5 and 2 talents servants are commended for being faithful with what they have. The 1 talent man was too afraid to risk anything and did nothing, he avoided responsibility.

That did not need to be the case – if he has used his one gift for the glory of God, he could have been commended in the same way the 5 and 2 talent people. The question is not, did you have 5 talents or 2 or 1? But what use did you make of the Lord’s gifts for his kingdom?

3) The final part of the story is the **reckoning or accounting**. The first servant is commended for being faithful with what he had made of his talents and was rewarded “You have been faithful with few things; I will put you in charge if many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord!” For the second servant the commendation is identical. He has the same reward to enter into the joy of the Lord!- there is no hierarchy in heaven. The third servant made his excuses, a) he tried to blame the boss, b) he had no courage, c) he had no imagination, d) he has no motivation but did nothing. There was judgement on this man’s failure in being a steward of what was entrusted to him. The master had not expected him to make 2 or 5 additional talents. A simple attempt to use the gift would have earned the same reward as the two other servants.

Most of us reading this are not 5 talent people, but we are all at least 1 talent people and many of us more. Are we keeping our talent intact and returning it undamaged and unused, or are we inspired to play our part in sharing the good news and experiencing the joy of the Lord.

For your reflection.

- 1) What has God entrusted to you to be a wise steward? An inspiring speaker/story teller, a generous heart, a love and care for children, a growing knowledge of God’s word, a tragedy through which you have known God’s grace and blessing, a love of cooking etc
- 2) Have we made excuses for ourselves to justify in-action?
- 3) God doesn’t call us to be brilliant, he longs for us to be faithful stewards!
- 4) When was the last time you used one of your God given gifts to serve or encourage others?

**Prayers** Gracious God, thank you for those who offer service to others, especially those who do it without any thought of reward.

Lord of love, **hear us.**

Thank you for those in the caring professions, ministering to body mind and soul: for unsung carers who commit themselves to looking after partners, children, parents or other loved ones, sacrificing so much of their time and energy for their wellbeing; for volunteers working for charities and good causes, without whose efforts so much important work could not continue.

Lord of love, **hear us.**

Teach us to appreciate what such people contribute, and to be ready to make our own contribution in turn. Remind us though we need to focus on spiritual things, it is possible to be too heavenly minded to be any earthly use; that though daily devotion is important, so also is rolling our sleeves up and practising what we preach.

Lord of love, **hear us.**

Help us, then, to get the balance right and to be ready to serve whenever you call.

**Amen**

**Hymn StF 564** Take my life, and let it be \_

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wFuk3Q\\_bPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wFuk3Q_bPk)

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love;  
take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King;  
take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold,  
not a mite would I withhold;  
take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine;  
take my heart — it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure-store;  
take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.

*Frances Ridley Havergal.*

**Blessing** We go into the world in the power of the Spirit to fulfil our high calling as servants of Christ.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen**