

## Parable of the Talents

In this series I wish to go over parables of the utmost importance that have been used so often in their tertiary forms that most members don't understand or even know the primary interpretation of the parables. Can parables be interpreted or likened in multiple ways for the benefit of man? Yes. Can washing the vase and the dishes and placing them on a clean cloth add symbolic weight to traditions and ordinances (Mark 7:4-23)? Yes. The problem comes when the washing of the dishes in the eyes of the participant becomes the primary activity and they neglect the actual primary purpose. Jesus, pointing the Jews towards their behavior in doing this very thing, said you "have omitted the weightier matters of the law" (Matthew 23:23-28). Understanding how the Lord teaches is crucial to understanding the primary intent of the parable. Joseph Smith had a laugh at a member who thought that the beast kingdoms described in Daniel's vision were symbols of God's kingdoms. Joseph Smith said, "the Lord would never make use of a figure of a beast nor any of the brute kind to represent His Kingdom" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 289). Joseph Smith taught that every jot and tittle of the word had to be literally fulfilled and this included parables, visions etc. Joseph Smith in identifying that the Lord even in a parable or vision wouldn't use something ungodly to represent something godly clarifies that even the symbols in parables have to make sense. Joseph Smith also taught on another occasion the best way to go about trying to find this primary purpose; "I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I inquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.276-277) Joseph then goes on to explain that the question being answered is the primary interpretation and "all straining on this point is a bubble" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.277).

### The Question

Firstly, what drew this parable out from the Savior?

1 Then understood his disciples that [Jesus] should come again on the earth, after that he was glorified and crowned on the right hand of God.

4 And Jesus left them, and went upon the Mount of Olives. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world?

JSM 1, 4

The parable of the 10 virgins and the parable of the talents both begin with "the kingdom of heaven will be likened..." The JST makes this crystal clear, "And then, at that day, before the Son of Man comes, the kingdom of heaven will be likened as..." The kingdom of heaven is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It is not referencing the world. Jesus, in these parables, is describing the state and events that will transpire in the church preparatory for the Second Coming.

In summary, the questions was, "when are you coming back and how will we recognize it?" and Jesus answers and gives an entire chapter on the state of the world generally and then proceeds to explain

what the church will be like with parables.

### Parable of the Talents

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With what we already know, we can already identify two of the three main variables in this parable.

1. "The Lord": this is the Lord, Jesus Christ.
2. "The servants": the leaders of the church given stewardships. The leaders are the prophet, apostles, area seventies, bishops etc. Anyone who has keys.
3. "The talents": the stewardship. This is that which the servants are given as stewardships (The Lord still "owns"). This is the only thing left that we need to clearly identify.

So what else do we know in this parable that will help us clearly identify what the talents are?

1. A talent was an enormous amount of money; it was what an average laborer would make in a year. It was used in other parables of the Lord to emphasize the extreme value or weight of something.
2. The Lord loved the talents and he valued the talent above all else. He "owned" them.
3. The righteous servants "doubled" their stewardship of talents by putting the talents to work ie. "letting their light so shine", whereas the wicked servant merely maintained his stewardship of

talent, not putting it to work but rather burying it in the earth ie. “putting the light under the bushel”

4. When the Lord came and asked for an accounting, the unrighteous servant had his stewardship of the talent taken away and given to another.
5. The failure to double the talents (didn't matter how many they started with, just that they were doubled) is something so severe that one could lose their exaltation over.
6. The talents are specific to only leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, nobody else in the world has these talents as this parable was clearly identified as the kingdom of heaven

Do we know of anything said in the church about “doubling” that could help us narrow down what the talent is? “Last year there were approximately 300,000 convert baptisms throughout the Church. This is tremendously significant. This is the equivalent of 120 new stakes of 2,500 members each. Think of that: 120 new stakes in a single year! It is wonderful. But it is not enough. I am not being unrealistic when I say that with concerted effort, with recognition of the duty which falls upon each of us as members of the Church, and with sincere prayer to the Lord for help, we could double that number” (Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep, Gordon B. Hinckley, April 1999). Could “souls of men” fit the bill for talents? Does the value of a soul correlate with the value of a talent? Yes. Is there anything else of great value in the kingdom of God other than souls? No. Does the Lord require us to double the souls that have been given to us? Yes. Is the doubling of souls to the kingdom of God unique to just converts? No, the first and great commandment was to replenish AND multiply the earth. What does it mean to replenish? It means where one talent is given, one talent is required. But is that enough? No. The Lord says to then multiply. What does it mean to multiply? It means to double. What does it mean to have enough children to replenish? It means where two able parents are given, two children are required. Where 100 members of a ward are given, 100 members are required. What does it mean to multiply? Where two able parents are given, four children are required. Where 20 members of a branch are given, 40 members are required. Can you have the stewardship of souls removed from you and given to another? The answer is yes. If you fail to multiply your leadership as a prophet, area seventy, stake president, bishop, parent, etc will be taken from you and given to somebody else. Can even your children be taken from you and given to another? Yes. Can your knowledge of playing a piano be taken from you and be given to another? No. For the prophet Joseph Smith taught ALL knowledge gained in this life will rise with you in the resurrection. Is then, doubling your stewardship an important enough commandment that one could lose their exaltation over? The obvious and clear answer is yes. To quote George Albert Smith, “we will attain our exaltation in the celestial kingdom only on the condition that we share with our Father’s other children the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Preach My Gospel, p. 12). And finally, only those with keys have these talents. Is playing the tuba something that is unique to leaders or members of the church? No. What is unique to the kingdom of God? Keys. And what do keys oversee? Souls. It’s too long of a subject to cover at any great length here, but suffice it to say, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that there were two orders of Priesthood, one of the two was Patriarchal; fathers have keys over their family regardless of church membership. The last thing before summarizing this parable that I believe is crucial to address is that of the excuse proffered by the unwise servant, in which he said, “I knew thee that thou art an hard man (GR strict), reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid.” What is this man saying? He is saying that he knows that the Lord has the ability to harvest things that you haven’t even seen him sow (ie. He can make growth happen in some of the most difficult and impossible situations). He can be given a field that is barren

and hasn't been planted and yet can gather straw out of it. Firstly, if you are going with a secondary application for this parable, such as playing a piano, does this excuse make any sense? It makes reason stare. No, it doesn't make any sense and it gets worse as this exchange between them continues. Secondly, have you or have you not heard leaders in the church, those with keys, this includes missionaries, say things like "your area is better", "your branch was better, your ward was different", "you were given a different field than me" and that's why I didn't produce the same. If you haven't heard this, you haven't been paying attention. This man's excuse was, "I was given a field that was barren and didn't have any straw planted and I knew that you could have done something positive with it so therefore instead of asking you for help I became afraid and decided to just maintain." The Lord counters this by immediately calling the steward wicked and slothful because "thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not and gather where I have not strawed." So ask yourself, if you are a branch president, bishop, a missionary etc does the Lord have the power to double your talents? If the answer is yes and it hasn't happened for you, what is the only reason for that? You haven't asked, you don't have the desire. The Lord then says that the very least he could have done was make sure that his money obtained usury, or interest. What is the Lord referring to here? He is referring to fertility rates. "If you aren't willing to ask me for help, if you don't have the desire, you don't have the faith, you aren't willing to put in the work, to double your talents by preaching the gospel, the very least you could have done was slowly increase over time purely by children of record." The only way a branch, stake, ward, mission etc starts with 100 and ends with 100 is when there is only maintaining and replenishing.

In summary, what is the primary understanding of this parable?

The Lord establishes His kingdom and gives keys to those to rule it; prophets (5 talents), bishops (3 talents), fathers (1 talent) etc. He then gives each of them talents or souls, to be in charge of according to their own abilities (foreordination). The Lord then leaves. Some of the servants are good and faithful- these are those that have doubled their talents (souls). Others are wicked and slothful- these are those who seek to simply maintain their talents (souls). Having children is easier than preaching the gospel and those that have only managed to maintain or replenish couldn't even manage to do either (moneychangers). When the Lord returns to claim his kingdom (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) and his talents (members of his kingdom) he will realign the stewardships taking from those who were wicked and slothful and giving to those who were good and faithful.

I know these things are true and I also know what the Lord said in Doctrine and Covenants section 4 is true:

- 1 Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.
- 2 Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.
- 3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;
- 4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;
- 5 And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

6 Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.

7 Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

I know that the Lord isn't a liar, I know that the Lord speaks only truth. The Lord did not say this is the time for planting seeds in people's hearts, he did not say this is the time to dung the trees, he didn't say any of that gibberish- the Lord said the field is white, ready to harvest. Those who harvest and increase their talents (souls of men) will be added unto and those that only see a barren field, those that spend their time "planting seeds", those that seek only to maintain and replenish will have even that which they have taken from them.

Thrust in your sickle with your might, brother and sisters, this one last time.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.