It Is Time To Give An Account.

Text: Matt 25:14-30

Suggested Hymns:
485, 490, 486, 616, 881

1) The Parable of the Talents
2) What kind of steward have you been
3) Two wills

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 25:14–30, ***14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.***

16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not

scattered seed. [27] ***So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.***

[28] ***So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.*** [29] ***'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*** [30] ***And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are nearing the end of another church year. The church year differs from the secular calendar. Very early in the Christian era the church set up its great festivals, dedicated to the gracious acts of God for man.

The period of Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, is to be a time of preparation for the coming of Christ, God the Father's great Gift to man.

The period of Lent, forty days, is to be a period of meditation on the suffering and death of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. There is the great festival of the Resurrection, Easter. There is the festival of Pentecost, the celebration of the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit.

During the years the church chose special readings from the Holy Scriptures in order to emphasise all the main teachings of the Bible.

From these readings, the Old Testament Lesson, the Epistle and the Gospel, we have, during the course of the year, an opportunity to hear what God has done for us, and what God expects us to do.

As we come to the close of another church year, we recognise that these last Sundays are always devoted to the things of the last times — the coming of Christ for Judgement and the fact that we are to work while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work.

Remember, then, that *It Is Time To Give An Account*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Parable Of The Talents

Jesus was seated on the side of the Mount of Olives, one of His favourite retreats. The time was very near the end of His short earthly ministry of three years. His disciples had seen the miracles which He had performed. They had heard His teachings, and at this time they came to Him with some questions. ***"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?"***[1]

Here Matthew recorded one of the longer discourses of Jesus. It covers two chapters in his Gospel, chapters 24 and 25.

Jesus tells the story of the kingdom of heaven, speaking here of His Kingdom of Grace, the Christian Church on earth, and He uses two parables to illustrate that truth.

The first parable which He told was the story of the Ten Virgins, the five wise virgins who had prepared themselves for the coming of the Bridegroom, Christ. They had their lamps well trimmed and supplied with oil. Then there were the five foolish virgins who were not prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom, and so they were excluded from the great marriage feast.

Then follows this parable, the parable of the Talents. Here Jesus is giving a story, an illustration, an example of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

We must, of course, recognise that the details are not to obscure the truth which is to be conveyed: that we are to be diligent in the tasks of the church before the end of time. Activity is demanded, and not merely passive loyalty.

Our text begins, ***[14] "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.*** The man travelling into a far country is a reminder of the ascension of Jesus, who left His earthly ministry and went to heaven to be with His Father again.

Before His departure to heaven He called His servants, the redeemed children of God, who are now His bond servants, and delivered His goods to them — an indication that all things come from Christ. This includes both spiritual and physical gifts.

Remember the great commission recorded in Matthew 28:19–20, ***[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all***

things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Our text continues, ***[19] After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*** This is on Judgement Day. Christ had left, as it were, His servants, entrusted with His property, and now He is returning. They are to give an account of what they have done with those things which He left with them.

The Lord Jesus expects exactly the same thing of us today. All that we have has come from Him. We are to give an account to Him of what we have done with those things which we have received.

In our story there were two men who used their talents and improved what they had received. One added another five talents and made it ten. The other man added two talents and made it four.

But you notice that, despite the difference in the amount which they had received and the difference in the amount which they returned to the lord and master, they both received the same word of praise and commendation: ***'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.'*** It is for their faithfulness that they are commended rather than their accomplishments.

The third man brought back exactly that which he had received, no more and no less. This, then, was the judgement of the lord on that wicked and lazy man's actions: ***[28] So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. [29] 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. [30] And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'***

As we said before, we are not to let the details of the parable, the story, or the illustration obscure the truth which Christ intended to reveal; so, what does it all mean to us today as we come to the end of another church year?

Just as the disciples came to Jesus at that time and said, ***Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?"***[2] which includes His return for Judgement, so we should search the

Scriptures to determine what these things mean for us today and how they are relevant in our lives.

2. What Kind Of Steward Have You Been?

What have you done this year with all that God has given you? Have you increased your talents and abilities? Have you grown in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? What kind of grade would you get on God's report card?

We recognise that, even in this story concerning three people, held up as examples of a cross section of all, there are those who have received five gifts from God, unusually talented and gifted people. They have spiritual insight, which is a gift of God. There are others perhaps who have only less than half of that, only two talents; and then there are those who have only one.

Scripture tells us that there are diversities of gifts,[3] but there is one God, one Lord, one Master, One who shall judge. We read in 1 Peter 4:10, ***[10] As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as <u>good stewards</u> of the manifold grace of God.***

So, what have you done with your five talents or with your two talents? Have you really tried to the best of your ability, as God has given grace, to extend and to multiply them in service?

I sincerely hope that there are none in this congregation who are like the man with the one talent. He was afraid that even that little which he had would be taken away, and so he hid it.

Then when the Lord came and asked for an accounting, he said, "***I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.*** Here is that which you gave me, no more and no less. And the judgement given to him was very severe.

He produced no fruit. Faith without works is dead.[4] His unbelief condemned him.

Recall part of the Gospel for today. Matthew 25:41–46, ***'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: [42] for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no***

drink; [43] I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

[44] "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

[45] Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' [46] And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The judgement of God is going to be just as severe upon those who have received much from Him, but have done absolutely nothing with the gifts and the blessings and the benefits which He has entrusted to their hands.

We are God's bondsmen. We are slaves of Christ, because we have been purchased and won by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. We are His, and we should know it. We should recognise that we are going to be held accountable, and therefore we should live as those who are sure that this will come to pass.

This is important throughout all our life, but it is especially important at the moment of death. As we think of the signs which are to foretell the end of the world, how all of them have been fulfilled, and that we are definitely living in the latter days of the world, we recognise how important it is that we turn more and more to the things which speak of the judgement of God upon man.

In life and in the hour of death it is of extreme importance that we put our trust, our confidence, our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Two Wills

Here are two wills. One was filed in Geneva in May 1564. The man who wrote that will was a scholar and minister of Christ. When he came to dispose of his earthly property, he found that it amounted to a few books, about $32.00, and some furniture.

The will begins with these words: "With my whole soul I embrace the mercy which God has exercised to me through Jesus Christ atoning for my sins, by the

merit of His Passion and death, that in this way He might satisfy for all my crimes and faults, and blot them from His remembrance.

I testify also and declare that I humbly beg of Him that He may be pleased so to wash and purify me in the blood which my Redeemer has shed for the sins of the human race that, under His shadow, I may be able to stand at the Judgement Seat."

The second will was written at the beginning of the 20th century by a man who, at the time of his death, was probably one of the richest men in America. He wrote: "I commit my soul into the hands of my Saviour in full confidence that, having redeemed it and washed it in His most precious blood, He will present it faultless before the throne of my heavenly Father, and I entreat my children to maintain and defend at any cost of personal sacrifice the blessed doctrine of the complete atonement of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, once offered and through that alone."

Two wills. One by a Frenchman and one by an American. One written in the sixteenth century and one in the twentieth century; one by a man who was a scholar and a minister; the other by a man who was a banker and financier; one by a poor man and one by a very rich man.

Yet the Frenchman (Calvin) did not plead his poverty, and the American (Morgan) did not plead his riches. Both of them put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His atoning blood.

The same thing holds true today. It makes no difference whether you are rich or poor. It makes no difference whether you have five talents or two talents or one talent. The important thing is that we put our trust in God and faith in Jesus Christ, and that we have the right attitude over against what He has done for us, and what we have received from Him.

God expects an answer, and sooner or later that answer must be given — not to me, not to the church, not to men, but in the presence of God Himself. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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[1] Matthew 24:3
[2] Matthew 24:3

[3] 1 Corinthians 12:4
[4] James 2:20