



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

DEEPER • WE LOVE OTHERS THROUGH SERVICE •
MATTHEW 25:14-30 & ROMANS 12:3-8 • 11/10/2024

MAIN POINT

Jesus expects His followers to fully invest themselves in His kingdom work until His return. God works in us so we can worship, but also works through us so we can love others through service.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some of the ways you have served in God's church in the past?

Did you find that God used service not only to work through you, but also to work in you? How?

If you were to tell someone else why service is an important discipline for a Christian, what would you say?

We will see that God has entrusted to each of us a measure that He desires us to use for His glory in the world until He returns. We will see that volunteering your gifts and energy for the church is not optional; rather, it's an imperative part of spiritual growth. We will see that God works in us so we can worship, but works through us so we can serve.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 25:14-18.

Why do you think Jesus wants to remind us that He is returning one day?

What “possessions” has Jesus left His people while He is away?

What particular “possessions” has Jesus entrusted to you personally while He is away? If He returned today, would He find you stewarding those priorities well? Explain.

Jesus is our Master and He is coming back. How we live in the meantime is significant. We all have the same purpose—the same general priority—but we have different tasks based on what is going on in our lives, and who God has placed in our lives.

What are some reasons why believers might “cover up” the talents God has given them?

What is scary about going all out for Jesus with the talents He’s entrusted to you?

The three men showed their commitment to the master’s priorities “immediately.” We don’t know anything about the three men previously; Jesus didn’t include their history in the story because their history didn’t matter. At that point, two of them determined to spend their time devoted to their master’s priorities, and one of them did not.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 25:19-30.

What do you think Jesus was alluding to when He said the master came “and settled accounts” with the three men?

What pleased the master in the parable? What angered him? Why?

How have you experienced sharing in “your Master’s joy” by committing to His priorities?

All that we have belongs to God, including our time. As a result, our time should be spent on His priorities. We should be about the tasks of evangelizing, serving, and giving with whatever talents God has entrusted to us. Those who follow Jesus are interested in being found faithful at His return.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 12:3-8.

Why is it essential that we recognize that all members of the body are gifted for service? What’s the result if we don’t recognize that?

Do you really believe God can use you, with your unique set of giftings? What are some of the obstacles that might keep a person from believing that?

What are some ways we can encourage and value each other in their service?

We must truly believe that everyone has a place. Everyone can be used by God. But he also helped us see that there is some measure of work involved in finding and engaging in that place.

What, in your opinion, is the best way to find and begin to serve with your gifts?

What are some of the things that are keeping you from doing that?

The best way to find our gifts is to actually begin to serve. We see a need, and then seek to meet it, and do so over and over again until we find the place God has for us. But to do that, we must slow down long enough to pay attention to real needs. Like so many other of the disciplines, our main obstacle to service is hurry. We must commit ourselves to the truth that God's will for us is to serve and then adjust our schedules accordingly.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What about our church and this group, specifically, would be different if we were to give our full attention to God's priorities?

Do you have the emotional and physical margin to serve right now? If not, what do you need to do about your schedule?

What is one practical way you can encourage those around you to engage in service?

Think about the current needs in our church. Where is one place God is calling you to engage? How can our group help each other move into those arenas of service?

PRAYER

Thank God for entrusting you with His priorities until Jesus returns. Commit to be His faithful servant in the days ahead.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 25:14-30

21:14-15. Matthew inserted the parable of the talents in a section of other teachings dealing with the consummation of God's kingdom (24:36-25:46). In the parable of the talents, Jesus challenged His followers to invest all that God has entrusted to them to advance His kingdom. He taught that living in God's kingdom includes waiting, but it is an active waiting, where people are provided resources by God, are expected to put them to use, and will be judged on their faithfulness.

Verse 14 begins with the word for, tying this passage to the previous parable of the 10 virgins (25:1-13). While the King James Version inserts "the kingdom of heaven," other translations simply have it, pointing back to the "kingdom" of heaven" in verse 1. This parable about the coming kingdom of God deals with a man going on a journey.

The master, before traveling, called his servants and entrusted to them his property. During Jesus' day, wealthy landowners often entrusted their property, possessions, and affairs to their trustworthy servants. These "bond slaves" enjoyed considerable authority and responsibility. The remainder of verses 15 through 18 highlights three important principles regarding the talents God gives to us today.

To begin with, God grants resources to all people. The master called three of his servants. Each was given an amount of a financial asset: To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. A talent originally was used as a measurement of weight (about 75 pounds) before later referring to money. Determining the exact value of a talent is difficult, but certainly it was a very large sum.

God determines who receives what resources and the amounts. While all of us are equal in terms of our potential to have a relationship with God, this parable suggests that functionally God treats some different from others. This point is made clear by the detail of the master giving the three servants different amounts of resources. They received five, two, and one talent respectively to each according to his ability. The master knew ahead of time the trustworthiness of each servant and acted accordingly. He determined who would receive how much. The same is true with God. He is sovereign, and we are not. In essence, God can do as He pleases, because He is God.

21:16-18. Finally, God expects the assets He provides to be put into use. The master expected that the servants do more with the money than simply hold on to it. He obviously intended they would treat it as he would, utilizing it in such a way that he might receive a gain on his investment when he returned. Two obeyed. One did not. The first two servants wasted no time in obeying the master's expectation to use their talents. They traded with them, probably setting up some businesses and working to earn more capital on their invested talents. They took a certain amount of risk—they could have lost the money entrusted to them—but reaped reward for their master in doing so. All believers should willingly take wise, faithful risks with their resources so God will provide a return on their investments. The third servant acted in exactly the opposite manner. He went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. By doing so, the servant chose a route that was (1) less work, (2) less time-consuming, and (3) less risky.

21:19-20. This next section of the parable makes another important point about God giving assets: the master returned after a long time. The delay implies that God may allow people a great deal of time to capitalize on the assets He grants to further His interests. The master came and settled accounts with his servants. Using a standard commercial term, Jesus underscored the master's expectation for the servants to put their talents to use. The slaves given five and two talents demonstrated faithful use of their resources in expectation of increase. Because of their ingenuity, the master rewarded them equally in three ways. The commendation likely would have been the same for the third man had he exercised faithful stewardship. God's criterion for reward is what we do with what we have, not how much we have or how much we gain.

21:21-23. First, the master commended them. To each he asserted "Well done, good and faithful servant" No doubt the servants gladly received the master's commendation. Second, the master gave them greater responsibility. Following the commendation, the master continued, saying to both servants: "You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much." As a result of their faithfulness to their master, each servant was promised greater opportunity and responsibility in the future. Third, the master invited them: "Enter into the joy of your master." Both servants heard the same excited injunction to share their master's joy. This joy was the subjective possession of the master in which he then invited the faithful slaves to participate.

Scripture makes clear that all people will face God's judgment after death (Heb. 9:27). The fate of unbelievers will be based on their failure to repent of sin and receive Jesus as Savior, especially in light of God's blessing them throughout their everyday lives with gifts of natural abilities and resources. Christians will be judged based on their works for God

after experiencing salvation and rewarded accordingly. Paul claimed, "If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work" (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

21:24-25. What about those who don't act faithfully? We can safely assume the third servant would have heard the same commendation had he exercised faithful service. But he chose to act on fear. So he suffered judgment both for his faithless attitude and bad action. He sought to excuse himself and actually blame the master! He first asserted, Master, I knew you.... But his attitude and actions reveal he did not know his master. Notice the harshness in the third servant's justification of himself. He first called the master a hard man. "Hard" translates the Greek scleros (we get "arteriosclerosis" from this, which means hardening of the arteries). "Hard" can mean harsh, strong, over-bearing, oppressive, cruel, and merciless. He accused his master of greed and exploitation of others by reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. What might lie behind such an accusation? He did state, I was afraid. Hiding the talent may mean his actions were spiteful. Whether his unfaithful actions were due to an inadequate knowledge of his master, fear, or spite, the master passed judgment on him.

21:26-27. The master identified the man as a wicked and slothful servant! The servant's problem was both moral and behavioral. He chose this path similar to the way the first two servants chose to behave in ways that were "good and faithful." Second, the master turned the servant's words back on him. Be careful not to see the master agreeing with the servant's assessment of his master's character. If the servant genuinely believed his master was greedy and exploitative, the servant's actions still should have been different! By depositing the master's money in the bank he should have received his money back with interest.

21:28-29. Third, the master declared, Take the talent from him. If he had been upset that another had five talents to his one, imagine the ignominy of now having that single talent given to his perceived rival!

21:30. Fourth, the master pronounced the most severe punishment. This worthless servant was to be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" refers to the result of God's judgment. In addition to verse 30, the expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth"

occurs five other times in the Gospel of Matthew (8:12; 13:41-42; 13:49-50; 22:12- 13; 24:48-51).

Often in Jesus' parables, the main point is found in the ending. Verse 29 provides the answer to, "What does being prepared for Christ's return actually involve?" It means refusing to play it safe, doing little or nothing, but instead serving with the goal of results.

ROMANS 12:3-8

12:3-8. As part of a renewed mind, the Christian is to think wisely about himself and what his function is to be in the body of Christ (the church; see 1Co 12:12-28). Measure of faith may mean a person should measure himself by the gospel. Others see it as different apportionments of faith. Either way, Paul exhorts Christians to be humble and to use what God has given for the good of the body. Christians are given gifts to use for the good of others.