

Kingdom Accounting ¹

- ✦ “Well done!” – faithful (vv.14-23)
- ✦ Lost in darkness – lazy (vv.24-30)

In the Name of Jesus our Friend and Redeemer, the Judge of all, dear fellow forgiven, mercied ones:

This TIME IN BETWEEN Christ’s first and second coming is a Time for Faithful Service. There’s a day of reckoning coming for each of us individually. No one but Jesus can help you or me with this. Aunt Tilde’s good works won’t help you, nor her faith for that matter. Call this **Kingdom Accounting**. There’s two reasons why I’m so grateful for Jesus’ teaching here.

It helps young people thinking about a life of fulltime ministry to know how some of us veterans of this spiritual warfare struggled with our own career decision. Between my college freshman and sophomore years I was begging for God’s guidance. He always gives wisdom for those who ask. I had thought I could witness more effectively as a layman, but few opportunities were showing up. Then my pastor’s sermon on this text spoke of talents, *Use Them or Lose Them*. God’s Word of mercy transformed my heart and life.

My second reason is Moses who serves as a warning for all of us getting older and less flexible. Can you imagine being 80 years old, and then the LORD God calls you to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt? After the golden calf tragedy things seemed to be going better. But the spies came back from the Promised Land with a bad report, and the whole nation rebelled except for Joshua and Caleb. Moses had to lead the nation of Israel wandering in the wilderness 40 years as that rebellious generation died off. Numbers 20 opens with the death of his sister Miriam and closes with brother Aaron’s death. In between the two of them lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land. Moses rebelled in anger by not glorifying God when he struck the rock twice and said, “*Listen now, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?*” (Numbers 20:10) Yes, for that, this 120-year-old prophet lost the Promised Land here on earth. God took Moses to heaven by faith, but he suffered the consequences of his sin of frustration first.

Kingdom Accounting – and we so want to hear at the end of this TIME IN BETWEEN...

- ✦ “Well done!” – faithful (vv.14-23)

So how was your week? “Well done” like a good steak or maybe more burned? Maybe it felt like things were going along swimmingly until the tide turned this week? Storm clouds of disappointment? Some weren’t your fault? But maybe some where you have to admit with me that you disappointed others, yourself, your God? With David in the Psalms we pray, “*Who can understand his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*” (TPA) “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” (Psalm 19:12; 139:23f NIV84)

In mercy Jesus is leading us by His *Parable of the Talents*. Notice all the giving going on here. No one earned what he received. A man is going on a journey. He entrusts his servants with his possessions, the type or amount, not important. *Five talents* to one, *two* to another, *one talent* last – *each according to his own ability*. Simple story. The first two went to work and doubled their master’s goods. They both got the same commendation. Their work evidenced loyal thanks to their master: “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.*” (25:21f) Theirs wasn’t grudging service, as if it were only their duty. Serving their generous master was the joy and delight of their life. His mercy doubly rewarded them in eternity.

¹ 2023 WELS Worship Foundations series: *THE TIME IN BETWEEN: A Time for Faithful Service*.

✠ Lost in darkness – lazy (vv.24-30)

Look at the attitude of the third servant. The one talent with which he was entrusted according to his ability was still a huge amount, equivalent to 6,000 days' wages or twenty years of a day laborer². But he just buried it. *Use it or lose it* could only come out one way for his attitude. He considered his master a liar and a cheat, so he did nothing. He says, ***"I was afraid..."***, which is what Adam said to the LORD when he first rebelled in the Garden Paradise. This is not the true fear of God as in, "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." There was a deadly sin underneath which is rarely mentioned.

Under the cross of Christ this "is a poisonous sliver indeed. It pierces the souls of young and old, of those in the pulpit no less than those in the pew....In ancient times there was a word for it. The word is *acidia* (or *acedia*). It is a Greek word. It means sloth or laziness of such a kind that the one afflicted knows what is right and true and good but does not pursue it as it deserves to be pursued. He pursues it only half-heartedly, casually, in a bored and uninterested manner. Dante treats it brilliantly in the *Purgatorio* of *The Divine Comedy* (Canto XVII-XIX)...It was called one of the seven deadly sins. Luther often railed against this vice...[as in] his longer preface...[and] in his comments on the Third Commandment in the Large Catechism...(Kolb, p. 400)...When [Adam and Eve] fell, they did not treasure [God's Word] or consider that its pursuit was what life is all about....In the gospel we see [acidia-unbelief] in the parable of the talents in the person of the lazy steward who buried his talent (Lk 19:20-24)." ³

If we take Moses as our warning, there is no statute of limitations this side of heaven. This does not mean I had to become a pastor; I could have served like Joshua and Caleb too. The word is ***faithful*** for brothers and sisters in Christ using their talents to glorify God. Here's how Paul put it: ***"Although I am free from all, I enslaved myself to all so that I might gain many more....To the weak, I became weak so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people so that I may save at least some."*** (1 Corinthians 9:19-22 EHV) Paul's desire to *gain* (EHV) or *win* (NIV) souls was not for personal power or wealth. Christ did not come for His personal enrichment either. Christ's fervent desire for winning the cosmic battle against sin, death and hell, matches God's eternal determination to give you victory in eternal life in heaven with all who trust in Jesus for salvation. God so fervently wants to bless sinners with His love that He declared the whole world, ***"Not guilty!"*** when He raised Jesus from the dead. (Romans 4:25)

The master is digging at his digging servant for being so foolish. Even literally *throwing* his money to the bankers would have been better than burying the talent in such irrational disrespect. Blinded by his misplaced fear (v.25), he also misjudged his master's character. His master's generous entrustment this one-talent servant didn't want in the first place. He found that his master could be as harsh as he misjudged. Sometimes God gives sinners what they demand, what they deserve, teeth-gnashing outer darkness – **lost**.

Since all of us remain sinner-saints this side of heaven, we need the warnings and encouragement of God's Word during this Time for Faithful Service. In view of God's mercy, expressed through Isaiah: ***"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool."*** (Isaiah 1:18 EHV)

Paul says, considering everything in Romans 1-11: ***"Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship. Also, do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God—what is good, pleasing, and perfect."*** (Romans 12:1f EHV) God's gifts and talents – use all to glorify God and love your neighbor.

Let none hear you idly saying, "There is nothing I can do," while the souls of men are dying, and the Master calls for you. Take the task he gives you gladly, let his work your pleasure be; answer quickly when he calleth, "Here am I! Send me! Send me!" (CWH 745:4) Faithful, we wait for you! Amen.

² Schroeder, Jonathan E. *Commentary on the Propers – Year A*. NPH © 2022. Order from NPH: 1-800-662-6022.

³ Deutschlander, Daniel M. *THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS – Reflections on His Cross and Ours*. NPH © 2008, pp. 81f. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.newlifeshoreview.com .180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126