

Matthew 25:14-30 – The God of Gifts

We live in a well-policed world. There are thought police to tell you what you should and should not think. There are speech police to tell you what you can or cannot say. And this politically correct world has no winners or losers, for everyone is supposed to get as many chances at bat as they need, nobody keeps score, and we all get a trophy at the end. We get equal everything – equal parts of the pie, equal shares of the wealth, and equal responsibility for the work and bills that make things happen.

But we do not have a politically correct God. Indeed, the love of our God would never permit such a label. God is a scandal to the modern mind. He does not treat everyone the same. He treats us differently. Our great temptation is to complain that this is not fair. The parable we heard today is certainly not about fairness. God gifts people differently, according to their abilities, and expects more from some and less from others but faithfulness from all. It is no wonder that this God is a mystery to us.

In the story of Jesus, each was given treasure to manage each according to his ability. Even though we find it hard to say, God doesn't. Some have more and others have less. We are not all the same. This is not a cookie cutter world. God gifts us differently according to our ability but all of us are capable of faithfulness to what God has given and what God expects of us.

God gives us gifts. But in the parable one got five talents (in silver that would be worth \$200K or gold worth \$6M today), and one got two talents (\$80K in silver to \$2.4M in gold today) and one only a single talent (about \$40K in silver or \$1.2M gold). Different according to ability. We would like to believe we are all the same but we are not. God knows we are not the same. He gives to us according to our ability.

But God still gives. He gives His gifts to His people. It is His decision who gets what and He does not love some more or others less but gives us according to our ability. And He gives us these things not so that we can use them as we desire or squander them but for His holy purposes. God gives us these things that we may use them to serve Him and He holds us all accountable for what we have been given and how we use it.

Now there is something more in this parable. God wants to give us more. God is not stingy but generous. He wants to give us more but the premise of that more is proving faithful over what we have. Stewardship is the promise of more to come and the premise of stewardship is faithfulness.

God is not fair. He is foolishly and unfailingly generous. We are consumed with measuring that generosity and trying to interpret it. We want to quantify His love. But that is the language of fear, jealousy, and selfishness – not of faith.

Like the man in the parable we complain. God is hard on us, He is hard to please, He is stingy, and He wants me to fail. Nothing could be further from the truth. God seeks to reward you but your reward is conditioned upon faithfulness over what He has already entrusted to you.

We measure God's generosity but what we ought to be measuring is our faithfulness with what He has given. Faith sets aside the yardstick by which we compare ourselves to others and faith refuses to complain about God's seeming lack of generosity. Because faith sees His giving love in Christ and knows that God is unfailingly generous to all His people.

God loves us equally but each of us are given according to our ability and each of us are held accountable for what He has entrusted to our care. His way of love is unfailingly generous but He expects from us nothing less than faithfulness. His goal for all our lives is the same – that we be faithful, that we live under Him trusting in His mercy, that we use faithfully what He has entrusted to us, and that we enter His eternal joy.

In order to possess this joy, we Christians need to stop looking over our shoulders to see what others have, stop comparing what we have to what others have, and start focusing on God's giving love and working to be faithful in everything that He has entrusted to us. That is the key to contentment.