



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS
-
PARABLES 7

A thick black L-shaped frame surrounds the text. The top-left corner is a horizontal bar extending to the right, then a vertical bar extending downwards. The bottom-right corner is a horizontal bar extending to the left, then a vertical bar extending upwards.

WELCOME TO “PARABLES”

Each week we will delve into the background, imagery
and challenge of the parables of Jesus..



Reflection



- What have I learnt about God's kingdom tonight?
- What do I feel challenged about?
- What do I feel encouraged about?



Parable of the “Bags of Gold” (Talents)

- (Mt 25:14-28) “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
- The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more.
- So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.
- But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.



Parable of the “Bags of Gold” (Talents)

- After a long time master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.
- The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ ‘His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’



Parable of the “Bags of Gold” (Talents)

- “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’” “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’
- “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’



Parable of the “Bags of Gold” (Talents)

- “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’”
- So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.
- And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’



So, how to listen to a parable?



- **Ask** questions of course!
- **Ask:** What are the corresponding features talking about? (Sower, seed, pearl, banquet etc)
- **Ask:** What would have surprised or shocked the original hearers?
- **Ask:** What is Jesus wanting to teach about his kingdom that is *different* to the accepted wisdom?
- **Ask:** How might this parable be challenging me or my understanding of God's kingdom?

Parable of the Bags of Gold (Talents)



- Spoiler alert: it's not really about using your “talents” for God.
- Talent = 6000 denarii. 16 years wages.
- Someone with one talent of gold was considered rich.
- Our modern word “talent” : First recorded before 900; *Middle English, Old English talente*, from *Latin talenta*, plural of *talentum*, from *Greek tálanton* “balance, weight, monetary unit”
- So, how can we approach this parable to understand it?
- Maybe, start with the third servant – different to the other two.
- What was the chief fault of the third servant? (1 talent)
- He didn't do anything with what he had been given.

Parable of the Bags of Gold (Talent)



- Anything surprising or shocking?
- A talent is still an awful lot of money, not a little coin that could be easily lost.
- The attitude of the third servant – so different to the first two. Are we talking about the same master?
- Giving the talent to the one who has ten.
- The master doesn't seem to ask for the talents back!
- Treatment of the third servant? Bit harsh?



KEEP
CALM
AND
SET
CONTEXT

Parallel passage – Parable of the ten minas



- (Lk 19:11-27) While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’” But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’” He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.
- A man of **noble birth** went to a **distant country** to have himself **appointed king** and then to **return**



Parallel passage – Parable of the ten minas

- The parable references a nobleman going to a distant country to receive a kingdom. This parallels the historical events surrounding Herod Archelaus, one of the sons of Herod the Great.
- After Herod the Great's death in 4 BC, Archelaus went to Rome to have his authority confirmed by Caesar Augustus, while Jewish leaders sent a **delegation opposing him** due to his cruelty.
- Archelaus was eventually confirmed as ruler, but with limited authority, and his reign was marked by oppression and unpopularity. Killed thousands on his return.
- Jesus' audience, particularly those in Judea, would have recognized this political backdrop, making the parable resonate as a familiar scenario.
- Archelaus is the Herod of Matthew 2.22
- So here, even a wicked king expected responsible actions, how much more a good king...



**KEEP
CALM
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CONTEXT**

Matthew 25 Context



- Jesus is in Jerusalem, final week before the cross
- Mt 21 – Jesus enters as king. Cleanse the temple, Cursing the figtree, Jesus’ authority challenged, **Parable of the wicked tenants, parable of the two sons.**
- Mt 22 – **Parable of the Wedding Feast**, Paying taxes to Caesar, Sadducees silenced on Resurrection, Greatest commandment.
- Mt 23 – Woes to the Pharisees, Lament over Jerusalem.
- Mt 24 – Signs of the end times, Return of the Son of man, Watchfulness – **parable of the fig tree.**
- Mt 25 – Three parables: **Ten virgins , The Talents, The sheep and goats.**
- All in one week! Do you see any themes here?
- What are the parables focussing on?



Parable of the Bags of Gold (Talents)



- So the master gave something of great value, went away and came back. Who could the parable be talking about?
- God and Israel?
- Something else?
- Who do you think the third servant might be? (think about the context)?
- What then would the one talent represent?



The “wicked, lazy servant”

- In what sense had they been given something that corresponds to the gift of the talent? The scribes and Pharisees had been given the law of Moses. They had been given the Temple, the sign of God’s presence among them. They had been given wonderful promises about how God would bless not only Israel but, through Israel, the whole world. And they had buried them in the ground. They had turned the command to be the light of the world into an encouragement to keep the light for themselves (5.14–16). They had been worthless slaves. And now, when their master was at last coming back, he was going to call them to account. The threatened destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was to be seen as the master’s punishment on the servant who had not done his will. (N. T. Wright)
- What do you think about that?



What do we learn About kingdom?



- There is an expectation of responsible use of what we have been given.
- Not so much “an exam at the end”, but are we going about working to further the kingdom each day.
- Attitude towards the king is important. “I knew you were a hard man reaping where you did not sow...” v joyfully serving.
- Hiding or thwarting of the kingdom is a “worthless” response and subject to judgment.
- How does it land for you?



Reflection



- What have I learnt about God's kingdom tonight?
- What do I feel challenged about?
- What do I feel encouraged about?



Next time

- **Good Samaritan**
- **Shrewd Manager**