

# Empire Church of the Brethren

## Sunday Service Sermons

25 February 2024

Well Done or Good Job

How often have you heard those words?

Not as much as we would like or not as often as we need.

I remember the two times my father said those words.

The first time was in disking the first time by myself.

The second was the year I helped him run the walnut huller.

Both meant a lot to me.

As a matter of fact I just heard those words from my dentist.

Usually I am told where I am not doing as good as I might by the lady who cleans my teeth.

This last time the dentist himself did the cleaning and commented that I was doing a good job with a difficult mouth.

That has motivated me to do even better in cleaning my teeth.

Two things about complements.

Why is it so hard to give them?

And why does a negative comment have a much bigger impact than a positive comment?

It takes several positives to neutralize one negative.

Why is that?

Today we are looking at Father God telling us that we did a good job.

Text: "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!" *Matt. 25:23*

Some translations say happiness and some say favor.

I like favor because it is more inclusive.

Ok, so I made him happy, big deal.

But to have his favor means I will enjoy many benefits from him.

We all like benefits.

Jesus told stories, parables, as powerful pictures about God, humans, and life.

Life illustrations to make a point.

These stories communicated life-changing truths to his disciples and to those who are willing to listen and learn from them.

The parable of the talents, or the three servants, is a parable that emphasizes the importance of faithfulness.

Jesus is saying that we will not be judged by our fame but on the basis of our fidelity.

Not on the basis of our genius but on the basis of our goodness.

This parable is meant to challenge us about how we use what God has given to us.

It is meant to encourage us to do our best and challenge each of us to become a better person.

We are children of God through grace and faith.

We also are servants of God with the privilege of helping God and others.

This pointed parable calls our attention to the possibility that we can miss our opportunities of blessing and service.

We can miss our opportunity to minister significantly to others.

We should be motivated to not fail in our efforts to be God's person.

Talents were measures of money.

Today it is translated to be about \$5,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000.

These talents represent the means God has entrusted to his people for carrying on his kingdom work in the world today.

They are the gifts that Paul enumerates as being distributed by the Holy Spirit in *Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4*.

It could be said that these talents are the gospel itself, the truths Christ preached, the training we have received, the energy available to us, the education and skills we have acquired, along with Christian experience, health, wealth, time, opportunities, and effectiveness in preaching and teaching.

God has entrusted to us all the gifts and endowments of the Holy Spirit.

From the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been bestowing on God's servants the talents and gifts needed for doing God's work in the world today.

Notice that the talents were entrusted to "each according to his ability".

This parable does not emphasize equality.

It emphasized the importance of faithfulness.

We are unequal in our natural gifts.

We are unequal in the opportunities that are open to us as individuals.

We are unequal in the advantages that we might have over others.

We are unequal in human endowments.

Yet each of us has an equal opportunity and charge to become a good and faithful servant of God.

This parable points out that we will be judged and rewarded on the basis of our faithfulness in using what has been entrusted to us.

Let each of us beware of the possibility of becoming a twin brother or sister of the one-talent servant.

This man failed to trust in the good character of his Lord.

From the beginning of human history, Satan's strategy has been to question the goodness of God.

In the Garden of Eden, he dropped the hint that God was not really good, that he was restricting Adam and Eve from entering into what they had the right to experience.

The sin of no faith has been the undoing sin of God's people throughout the ages.

The sin of little faith causes us to refrain from attempting to do the big things God wants us to do.

This man was not a bad man.

He is not described as cruel and merciless.

He is not described as a wasteful person or as a slave to his passions.

This man counted his one talent as being of no real importance.

Evidently he assumed that his one talent was not needed.

He failed to appreciate that every talent is precious in God's sight.

This man lacked the faith and courage to take a risk.

He decided to be cautious and play it safe.

He is like those who never "go for broke" in order to succeed in a business enterprise.

We must trust God to fulfill his promises if we are to do something significant.

We must expose ourselves to the peril of embarrassment and loss if we are to do anything worthwhile.

What if Abraham had played it safe and had refused to risk leaving his home and going to a far country for God?

Moses wanted to play it safe and tried every excuse possible to avoid responding to God's call.

Finally, he took the risk and became a great deliverer.

And we can be grateful that Jesus did not play it safe.

If Paul and the other apostles had played it safe and had never risked failure, we probably never would have known about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many people are tempted to think that their talent is so small that it does not matter, and therefore they neglect to respond to their opportunities.

When we do this we become a twin brother or sister of the one-talent man.

The good news in this powerful parable.

Each of us has been given talents by our King.

The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each believer according to the needs of the church.

No one is left empty-handed

Each one has been given a gift.

We can increase our talents by faithfulness.

We can do this by being reliable and trustworthy in using what God has already placed in our hands.

We can improve our own usefulness and fruitfulness.

If we all play our notes well we can have beautiful music.

We can receive the Lord's approval and praise.

We receive God's acceptance when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

He accepts us and forgives us.

We can have his approval and his praise if we are faithful in the use of the gifts he bestows upon us.

All of us would like to hear him say, "Well done".

We can enter into the joy of the Lord.

All of us want to enter into the joy of our Lord in the hereafter.

This parable teaches us that it is possible for us to enter into the joy of our Lord in the here and now.

Ours can be the joy of doing good.

Ours can be the joy of showing God's love to others.

Ours can be the joy of seeing people come to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

Ours can be the joy of becoming what God wants us to be.

Let us beware of thinking of ourselves as one-talent people.

We need to recognize that the little person with a great gospel is mightier than a great person with no gospel.

If we neglect to use our opportunities and gifts we will lose them.

If we bury our gifts we reveal that we do not have the character that makes it possible for us to be compatible or comfortable with God.

Let us use what God has given to us that we might bring glory to him and that he might be glorified in us.

And His Kingdom will be seen on earth!