

End Time Attributes: Faithfulness Matthew 25:14–30 11-19-17

This parable teaches the imperative that faithfulness is required as an end time attribute. Without faithfulness, we will not be ready to give an account of the gifts of grace and abilities God has given us.

In the departure of the master to a faraway place, for an unknown span of time, Jesus pictures his ascension to heaven and return on the final Judgment Day. Giving his property to the servants is the Holy Spirit giving gifts to each of his disciples according to the measure of their faith and capacity to use them.

Texts on spiritual gifts in Paul's letters teach that they are varied, not all have the same amount, and that each of us to use them for serving our neighbor and for the good and mission of the Church.

Until the master returns, both the servants in the parable and God's people are to concern themselves with His priorities. As each has different gifts, the accounting of our use will not be measured by volume of works, but whether we were faithful to use what God entrusted to us.

In the parable *talent* was a unit of money equal to 20 years' worth of wages. So even the third servant had much more than needed, and therefore no reason to fear taking a risk with it. As *talent* for us means our skills and aptitudes, we consider gifts as more than our money. To each of us God gives what we need, and for most, far more than we need, so that we may use his gifts for His service. We have no excuse not to be faithful with whatever we have or can do.

The master returned and found that the servants to whom he had entrusted 5 and 2 talents both worked with the talents and doubled their money. They worked as servants who highly regarded and trusted their master and wanted to please and thank Him.

How do you see your Lord? Do you view Him as One who has given great treasures of grace, not just for your material life, but also your spiritual and eternal life? Is thanksgiving your everyday motive for using all of God's gifts? Do you look forward to his return because your life is a faithful and joyful response for the freedom and forgiveness he earned for you on the cross?

It was not so for the third servant. Like the faithfulness of the first two, his faithlessness was a result of how He viewed His master. As a fellow servant, he is the church member redeemed and gifted by God. However, he does not embrace the gift or the giver. He pretends to follow Christ, but inwardly is faithless. In the end, all pretense falls away. He tells the Master what he really thinks of Him: Unfair, greedy, and unjust. Therefore, He hides the gift and later returns it as belonging to the master, never having received it as a gift to use for the master.

Strangely, he isn't afraid to insult his master, but fears risking the loss of a talent? Even if his master really was unfair, why didn't he put it in a bank and let the bankers take the risk. It was "Use it or lose it" for this servant.

To his credit, he didn't lose the talent. But neither was he faithful to His master in his use of it. So the master takes the talent the servant didn't want in the first place and gives it to the one who had ten.

While that doesn't seem fair at first, wouldn't you do the same? If you entrusted your money to an investor who didn't increase its value, would you let him keep the money, or would you give it to an investor who had proven faithful in working to make more money?

To invest God's gifts so that others may know His salvation in Christ is the task assigned to each of us. To be faithful in His work requires us to see God as that faithful Father who kept his promises to bring salvation to all by sending the Savior Jesus.

He who has kept His promise remains faithful. The apostle John wrote, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" 1 John 1:9

As He is faithful to forgive, he calls us to be faithful to share His gift of grace in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's forgiveness and in forgiving one another. In encouraging the persecuted Church to hold fast, Jesus says, "*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*" Rev. 2:10 As long as we live, we pray for God's strength to invest faithfully all His material and spiritual gifts. Those who faithfully await His return will experience far greater gifts in heaven. Let us be encouraged by his faithfulness. Amen.