

MATTHEW 25.14-30

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there

LUKE 19.11-27

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. 12 He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. 13 Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ 14 But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ 15 When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. 16 The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ 17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ 18 And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ 19 And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ 20 Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ 22 He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ 24 And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ 25 And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’ 26 ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’”

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock—to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.

KLYNE SNODGRASS

The parable is about stewardship, but is the issue of stewardship in general or specifically stewardship *in relation to the kingdom*? If the parable is placed within the whole context of Jesus' teaching... it is difficult to deny the eschatological intent of the parable. Jesus' teaching consistently points to a crisis and judgement for his hearers.

...It is much more likely that both versions were originally addressed to disciples of Jesus or at least to those who had responded positively to his preaching of the Kingdom. To hear the message of the Kingdom is not only a privilege but also a responsibility, and people will be held accountable for what they do with the message.

Matthew's intent in the parable is clear. He understood the parable as an exhortation for followers of Jesus to be faithful in their obedience until his return.

ROBERT SCIRICO

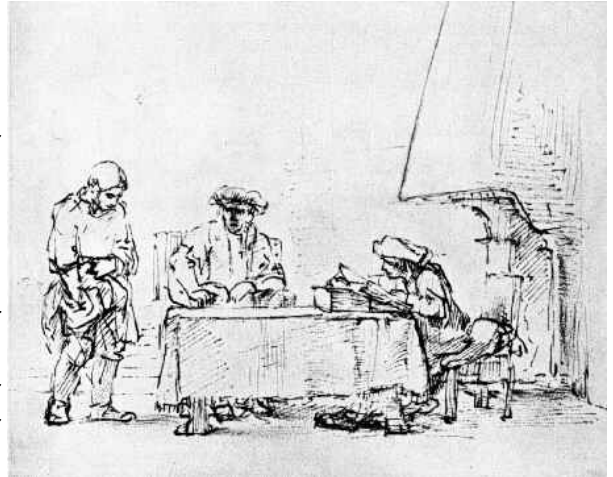
Throughout history, people have tried to construct institutions to provide perfect security, as the failed servant did. Such efforts range from the Greco-Roman welfare states, to full-scale Soviet totalitarianism, to the Luddite communes of the 1960s. From time to time, these efforts have been embraced as Christian solutions to future insecurities. Yet in the Parable of the Talents, courage in the face of an unknown future is rewarded in the first servant, who has been given the most. He had traded the five talents, and in doing so, acquired five more. It would have been safer for the servant to have invested the money in the bank to receive interest. For his faith in his master he is allowed to keep what had been entrusted to him and what he earned, and he is invited to rejoice with the master.

MATTHEW 27.33-37;45-50

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ... 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

TIM KELLER

What is hell, then? It is God actively giving us up to what we have freely chosen—to go our own way, be our own "the master of our fate, the captain of our soul," to get away from him and his control. It is God banishing us to regions we have desperately tried to get into all our lives. J.I.Packer writes: "Scripture sees hell as self-chosen . . . [H]ell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshipping him, or without God forever, worshipping themselves." (J.I.Packer, *Concise Theology* p.262-263.) If the thing you most want is to worship God in the beauty of his holiness, then that is what you will get (Ps



96:9-13.) If the thing you most want is to be your own master, then the holiness of God will become an agony, and the presence of God a terror you will flee forever (Rev 6:16; cf. Is 6:1-6.)

Why is this so extremely important to stress in our preaching and teaching today? The idea of hell is implausible to people because they see it as unfair that infinite punishment would be meted out for comparably minor, finite false steps (like not embracing Christianity.) Also, almost no one knows anyone (including themselves) that seem to be bad enough to merit hell. But the Biblical teaching on hell answers both of these objections. First, it tells us that people only get in the afterlife what they have most wanted-either to have God as Savior and Master or to be their own Saviors and Masters. Secondly, it tells us that hell is a natural consequence. Even in this world it is clear that self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness makes you miserable and blind. The more self-centered, self-absorbed, self-pitying, and self-justifying people are, the more breakdowns occur, relationally, psychologically, and even physically. They also go deeper into denial about the source of their problems.

On the other hand, a soul that has decided to center its life on God and his glory moves toward increasing joy and wholeness. We can see both of these 'trajectories' even in this life. But if, as the Bible teaches, our souls will go on forever, then just imagine where these two kinds of souls will be in a billion years. Hell is simply one's freely chosen path going on forever. We wanted to get away from God, and God, in his infinite justice, sends us where we wanted to go...

...I believe one of the reasons the Bible tells us about hell is so it can act like 'smelling salts' about the true danger and seriousness of even minor sins. However, I've found that only stressing the symbols of hell (fire and darkness) in preaching rather than going into what the symbols refer to (eternal, spiritual decomposition) actually prevents modern people from finding hell a deterrent. Some years ago I remember a man who said that talk about the fires of hell simply didn't scare him, it seemed too far-fetched, even silly. So I read him lines from C.S. Lewis:

Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others . . . but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God 'sending us' to hell. In each of us there is something growing, which will BE Hell unless it is nipped in the bud.

To my surprise he got very quiet and said, "Now that scares me to death."

Further on Hell & Judgement:

Avery Cardinal Dulles, "The Population of Hell" & "Who Can Be Saved?"

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