



Sermon Series: From Here to There

Sermon Title: Trash to Table

Scripture: Matthew 25

Speaking: Reid Robinette

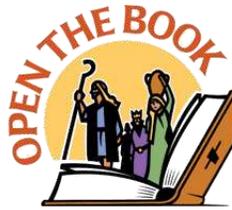


**Before your group study begins, share your first impressions on the message.
Did the message raise any particular questions?**

*IF YOU WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND THE SUNDAY SERVICE, WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE SERMON AT
<http://www.crossroads140.com/sermons/>*



Main Point/ Summary- The Gospel Jesus preached was regarding the availability of the Kingdom of God. Jesus devoted His life and called those who follow Him to devote their lives to bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.



Each week you will open the Bible and explore the Scripture for the week. While you're there, take a look at the verses that surround your text for the week. As you read, you might want to make a list of observations. Try to put yourself in each of the character's shoes. Make a list of questions you may not have answers to. Ask God what He may be trying to teach you.

READ MATTHEW 25

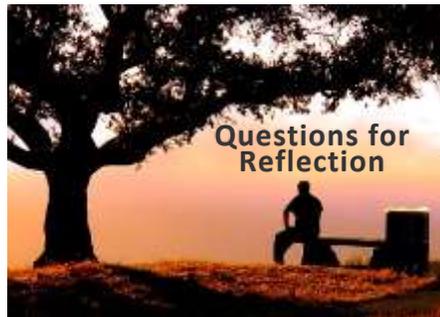
My first impression of the passage:

Observations:

Scripture surrounding your text-

Characters (Who's listening? Who's in the story?) / Setting / Culture-

My Questions:



1. What does it mean that the Kingdom of God is slow, small and hidden?
2. What difference does it make that grace is the central power for Kingdom living?
3. Why is it important to notice that the judgment in the future reflects actions in the present?



1. Tell the group which parable in Matthew 25 relates to you the most. Why?
2. What could it look like for you to bring the Kingdom of God to earth this week?



Ask God to help you and your group devote your lives to bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.

Go deeper

COMMENTARY-MATTHEW 25

25:1-5. The virgins were young women of marriageable age. Jesus used the word virgin not so much to highlight their virginity or lack of sexual experience, but to highlight their relationship to the bride. These were the bridesmaids. It was a great honor to be invited not only to the wedding but to be a part of the wedding party.

For the point of Jesus' parable, we should not think of these young women as representatives solely of the church. Some people choose this interpretation, seeing the virgins as representatives of those who are pure and holy (as the church in Eph. 5:27). The purity of the young women may fit God's purpose for the church, but at the end of the parable half of this group of women was not allowed to enter the house. Viewing these women as the church, then, leads to the incorrect conclusion that many believers either lose their salvation or they are not allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. These young women represent all people, because all are invited to be a part of God's kingdom. Not all enter, but all are invited. It is a safe assumption that all people want to go to heaven, but not everyone takes the necessary step to enter.

The custom was to provide a celebratory welcome to the bridegroom as he brought his new wife from the bride's father's house to his home. Part of the virgins' responsibilities was to light the path for the processional. Typically, the procession took place at night. The bride and bridesmaids had a general idea of when the groom would arrive at the bride's father's house to take her to his house. But because they

did not know the exact time of the groom's coming, the bridesmaids had to have sufficient oil to keep the lamps burning as long as necessary.

The fact that the virgins became drowsy and fell asleep should not be viewed as a picture of spiritual negligence. Even the sensible virgins slept. With the delay and the lateness of the hour, it is understandable that these women fell asleep. The sensible virgins, however, were prepared and could afford to sleep. The foolish virgins could have used that time to correct their error and purchase the oil they needed.

25:6-9. Suddenly, in the middle of the night a shout came from the wedding party traveling with the bridegroom. The shout was a call ahead to the other part of the wedding party to come out to meet him. The virgins were then to meet the groom and his procession with their lamps lit, lighting the way for the rest of the distance from the bride's house to the bridegroom's home.

The 10 virgins sprang into action to do what was expected of them. The problem was that the foolish virgins had used up what little oil they had for their lamps. When the time came to replenish their lamps, the five foolish virgins had no oil to replenish theirs. A lamp or torch that had been burning for a long period of time might have had a dim light. The light could be replenished by trimming away the burnt parts of the rags wrapping the torch. The torches could then be dipped in fresh oil or have oil poured on them.

The foolish virgins made a seemingly reasonable request of the sensible virgins: "Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out." The sensible virgins would not do it. They did not move from being sensible to stingy. Their desire was to remain faithful to the task at hand, which was to honor the bridegroom as he approached his home. They could have shared some of their oil, but it would have been spread too thin among 10 lamps. Five brightly shining lamps lighting the path in honor of the bridegroom were far better than 10 dimly lit lamps or 10 lamps that had lost all their light by the time the bridegroom reached home. That would have brought greater dishonor than five unlit lamps.

There was only one course of action for the foolish virgins: "Go . . . and buy oil for yourselves." While the foolish virgins were able to buy oil, it was too late to do them any good. Their opportunity to use it in the wedding procession had passed. Once the bridegroom and all those attending him reached his house, there was no need for oil or light. Those who were prepared and participated in the wedding procession were recognized as part of the wedding party, and they were allowed to join in the wedding feast inside the house.

25:10-13. The wedding celebration did not end with the arrival of the bride and groom at the groom's house. The celebration continued with a wedding banquet in the bridegroom's home. This was considered a part of the wedding ceremony. Once the entire wedding party was in the house and the banquet had begun, the outside door was shut. This was to keep out intruders.

But were the foolish virgins really intruders? After all, they had been invited to be there. And surely the bride or bridegroom recognized their voices as they stood on the outside requesting entrance. The virgins were most likely friends of the family who felt honored by the opportunity to serve in the wedding party. The problem was that the five foolish virgins were to play a specific role in the ceremony and festivities, but they chose not to do what was necessary to fulfill that role. Their neglect was more than just an embarrassing or tactless act; it was an affront and insult to the bridegroom.

When the five foolish virgins returned, they realized what their ill preparation had cost them—the door was shut. Nevertheless, they said, "Master, master, open up for us!" The bridegroom's response was sobering for these young women. They had professed to be a part of the wedding party, but their actions showed otherwise. The groom disowned any relationship with them, and his words carry the assurance that there was to be no negotiation in the matter.

25:14-15. Matthew inserted the parable of the talents in a section of other teachings dealing with the consummation of God's kingdom (24:36–25:46). In the parable of the talents, Jesus challenged His followers to invest all that God has entrusted to them to advance His kingdom. He taught that living in God's kingdom includes waiting, but it is an active waiting, where people are provided resources by God, are expected to put them to use, and will be judged on their faithfulness.

Verse 14 begins with the word for, tying this passage to the previous parable of the 10 virgins (25:1-13). While the King James Version inserts "the kingdom of heaven," other translations simply have it, pointing back to the "kingdom" of heaven" in verse 1. This parable about the coming kingdom of God deals with a man going on a journey.

The master, before traveling, called his servants and entrusted to them his property. During Jesus' day, wealthy landowners often entrusted their property, possessions, and affairs to their trustworthy servants. These "bond slaves" enjoyed considerable authority and responsibility. The remainder of verses 15 through 18 highlights three important principles regarding the talents God gives to us today.

To begin with, God grants resources to all people. The master called three of his servants. Each was given an amount of a financial asset: To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. A talent originally was used as a measurement of weight (about 75 pounds) before later referring to money. Determining the exact value of a talent is difficult, but certainly it was a very large sum.

God determines who receives what resources and the amounts. While all of us are equal in terms of our potential to have a relationship with God, this parable suggests that functionally God treats some different from others. This point is made clear by the detail of the master giving the three servants different amounts of resources. They received five, two, and one talent respectively to each according to his ability. The master knew ahead of time the trustworthiness of each servant and acted accordingly. He determined who would receive how much. The same is true with God. He is sovereign, and we are not. In essence, God can do as He pleases, because He is God.

25:16-18. Finally, God expects the assets He provides to be put into use. The master expected that the servants do more with the money than simply hold on to it. He obviously intended they would treat it as he would, utilizing it in such a way that he might receive a gain on his investment when he returned. Two obeyed. One did not. The first two servants wasted no time in obeying the master's expectation to use their talents. They traded with them, probably setting up some businesses and working to earn more capital on their invested talents. They took a certain amount of risk—they could have lost the money entrusted to them—but reaped reward for their master in doing so. All believers should willingly take wise, faithful risks with their resources so God will provide a return on their investments. The third servant acted in exactly the opposite manner. He went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. By doing so, the servant chose a route that was (1) less work, (2) less time-consuming, and (3) less risky.

25:19-20. This next section of the parable makes another important point about God giving assets: the master returned after a long time. The delay implies that God may allow people a great deal of time to capitalize on the assets He grants to further His interests. The master came and settled accounts with his servants. Using a standard commercial term, Jesus underscored the master's expectation for the servants to put their talents to use. The slaves given five and two talents demonstrated faithful use of their resources in expectation of increase. Because of their ingenuity, the master rewarded them equally in three ways. The commendation likely would have been the same for the third man had he exercised faithful stewardship. God's criterion for reward is what we do with what we have, not how much we have or how much we gain.

25:21-23. First, the master commended them. To each he asserted "Well done, good and faithful servant" No doubt the servants gladly received the master's commendation. Second, the master gave them greater responsibility. Following the commendation, the master continued, saying to both servants: "You have

faithful over a little; I will set you over much.” As a result of their faithfulness to their master, each servant was promised greater opportunity and responsibility in the future. Third, the master invited them: “Enter into the joy of your master.” Both servants heard the same excited injunction to share their master’s joy. This joy was the subjective possession of the master in which he then invited the faithful slaves to participate.

Scripture makes clear that all people will face God’s judgment after death (Heb. 9:27). The fate of unbelievers will be based on their failure to repent of sin and receive Jesus as Savior, especially in light of God’s blessing them throughout their everyday lives with gifts of natural abilities and resources. Christians will be judged based on their works for God after experiencing salvation and rewarded accordingly. Paul claimed, “If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one’s work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one’s work” (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

25:24-25. What about those who don’t act faithfully? We can safely assume the third servant would have heard the same commendation had he exercised faithful service. But he chose to act on fear. So he suffered judgment both for his faithless attitude and bad action. He sought to excuse himself and actually blame the master! He first asserted, Master, I knew you.... But his attitude and actions reveal he did not know his master. Notice the harshness in the third servant’s justification of himself. He first called the master a hard man. “Hard” translates the Greek scleros (we get “arteriosclerosis” from this, which means hardening of the arteries). “Hard” can mean harsh, strong, over-bearing, oppressive, cruel, and merciless. He accused his master of greed and exploitation of others by reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. What might lie behind such an accusation? He did state, I was afraid. Hiding the talent may mean his actions were spiteful. Whether his unfaithful actions were due to an inadequate knowledge of his master, fear, or spite, the master passed judgment on him.

25:26-27. The master identified the man as a wicked and slothful servant! The servant’s problem was both moral and behavioral. He chose this path similar to the way the first two servants chose to behave in ways that were “good and faithful.” Second, the master turned the servant’s words back on him. Be careful not to see the master agreeing with the servant’s assessment of his master’s character. If the servant genuinely believed his master was greedy and exploitative, the servant’s actions still should have been different! By depositing the master’s money in the bank he should have received his money back with interest.

25:28-29. Third, the master declared, Take the talent from him. If he had been upset that another had five talents to his one, imagine the ignominy of now having that single talent given to his perceived rival!

25:30. Fourth, the master pronounced the most severe punishment. This worthless servant was to be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” refers to the result of God’s judgment. In addition to verse 30, the expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” occurs five other times in the Gospel of Matthew (8:12; 13:41-42; 13:49-50; 22:12-13; 24:48-51).

Often in Jesus’ parables, the main point is found in the ending. Verse 29 provides the answer to, “What does being prepared for Christ’s return actually involve?” It means refusing to play it safe, doing little or nothing, but instead serving with the goal of results.

25:31. “When the Son of Man comes in His glory” points to the future and the closing era of God’s plan of redemption. Jesus’ return at some point in the future is often treated with slight embarrassment today by otherwise fine Christians. Their expectations have not been met even though the signs seem to line up again and again. The words “glory,” “angels,” and “throne” call attention to the majesty, power and authority of the second coming.

25:32. The word for “nations” can refer either to Gentiles only or to all people from every nation including Israel. The latter is to be preferred here. The emphasis is on all people as individuals, not on nations collectively. Each person will be judged based on his or her response to the Gospel and will receive Christ’s verdict. Jesus “will separate them one from another.” This image of judgment gives rise to several important points. First, all of human life and effort boils down to a basic choice based on Jesus’ message and sacrifice. A second important point we can take from the image in this parable concerns the sheep and the goats. Distinguishing between these two animals is difficult, especially from a distance, except for someone who knows precisely what to look for. A shepherd is qualified.

25:33. The positions of “left” and “right” indicate the complete distinction. There is no middle ground. The sheep have the position on the right, the place of honor. The goats are on the left, in this case the place of rejection.

25:34. “The King” emphasizes Jesus’ dominion and power at the final judgment. His reign, which is no less real today, will be complete—all of creation will be forced to acknowledge His authority. “Those on His right” are invited to

“come.” They will receive their reward for faithful service. Notice they are not about to be blessed but already are blessed by my Father. The word “blessed” emphasizes God’s action in bringing people into His desired relationship with them. The fact of our relationship to God leads naturally to the next image in the parable. “Inherit the kingdom” underscores the Christian’s place in God’s family. The Scripture often uses the imagery of an “inheritance” to describe our inclusion in God’s family and the reward we will enjoy.

25:35. The criteria for judgment is surprising, and a few preliminary words may help to understand the specific intent of the parable. Judgment is based on works in this parable, but this does not mean Jesus was describing salvation by works. He was emphasizing the importance of service, and service especially to the neediest people in our society. His strong language here does not negate the wider New Testament teaching of salvation by grace through faith. It simply highlights the results of salvation.

25:36. “Naked” may refer to someone without any clothes or someone who only has an undergarment. Ministry to the sick is always important. Only when you have benefited firsthand from this kind of kindness can you really appreciate its impact. In this context the people in prison may refer to those who fell on hard times through debt or were abused in some manner by the wealthy and influential. They were the weak and poor.

25:37-39. One of the most interesting features of this parable is the element of surprise on both sides. Our service to others must not be undertaken with the intention of piling up rewards. That kind of motivation undermines the genuineness of service.

25:40. Who are the “least of these my brothers”? Some interpreters suggest brothers refers to the disciples only, but such an understanding is far too narrow and in effect limits the application of the parable to the first century. A better understanding is the more obvious interpretation, that they are any person in need.

25:41. This passage essentially mirrors the previous section with a few more interesting details. “The eternal fire” is a detail of hell about which we can either make too much or too little. Some preachers over the years appear almost to take delight in describing their visions of hell.

25:42-43. The criteria for the rejection of the wicked is the opposite of the criteria for the inclusion of the righteous. Their sins are primarily those of omission.

25:44. You can almost hear in these words of defense, “but we never hurt anyone!” That is true, but the failure to show compassion reveals the state of one’s soul. A related plea of “if we had known it was you!” is equally unconvincing.

25:45. "You did not do" underscores the inaction of the cursed. Interestingly, their lack of service, as benign as that may sound to us, puts them in the same category as those who commit gross sins, reel drunkenly down the streets, or scream profanely. This verse highlights the danger of the "isolated moral person" who did nothing to harm anyone.

25:46. The opposite destinations underscore the finality of the verdict that is rendered at the judgment. Both are "eternal."



*There are free Go Deeper Devotionals available at our Resource Center. The Go Deeper Devotionals will take you through the Bible over a period of three years. There is a commentary for every chapter of the Bible. Reading the commentary will give you some background before reading the scripture text. We encourage you to use the devotionals. Grab as many months as you wish. Share them with your friends, neighbors. Dive into God's word. **Psalm 119:105 - You're word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.***

May 2016 Devotional – Deuteronomy