

Matthew 25:14-30, Living Your Best 2018

Each year I tend to shop on Black Friday. There are a couple of stores that I like to go to. I like Target, Old Navy, Gap, Origins skin care, and Yankee Candles. One of my favorites is the Disney Store. The Disney Store makes me happy. I just love all of those great Disney characters. Now that my kids are older Elliott gets extra purchasing attention when I shop there! That lucky little guy. It is a delight to give each Christmas. I just love seeing the faces of my loved ones as they open up the gifts.

I have once heard that "to whom much is given much is expected." Although, in today's scripture we see that "to whom anything is given much is expected." Let's read today's passage from Matthew 25:14-30.

#1 - 5 talents

At once he went off and traded. He traded and made 5 more talents

"Well done good and trustworthy servant, you have been trustworthy with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

He got five and made five.

#2 - 2 talents

He made 2 more talents.

Said the exact same thing as for #1

He got two and made two.

#3 - 1 talent

Dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

"Master replied, You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gathered where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

The third man did nothing with his talent. He only hid it. This just doesn't make sense. He knows that he needs to be productive with his work.

Look deeper at #3 -

Knowing the ethics of the master hid the talent out of fear and concern. Focused on fear instead of faith. Since it is New Years Eve let's break this down. God our Heavenly Master is giving us the gift of a new year. He is giving us 365 days. How will we invest that gift?

Which one of the workers will we be in 2018? That is our choice. Let's first look at the fear that paralyzed the 3rd servant. The fear that made him ineffective.

I once had a mentor of mine that said, "Fear is False Evidence Appearing Real." It is in our imagination, we picture the monsters.

We anticipate the bad outcomes. We focus on the negative potential outcomes. This makes us react in an overly protective way. We dig a hole to put the money in. Fear keeps us from stepping out in faith.

That is what the evil one wants us to do. The evil one wants us to be so obsessed with evil, injustice, fear, and potential failures that we cannot step out in faith or just don't step out. Faith is too scary when fear is in control.

God is calling us out of fear into faith in 2018. Looking back on 2017 how did we fare? Did we accomplish a lot? Where did we get tripped up by fear?

Galatians 5:22 "By contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

The Holy Spirit in us gives us the great gifts of mercy and peace. When we yield to the Holy Spirit in our relationships we make the difficult decision to bolster others and that results in the fruit of the Spirit. The victory may be self-control. The victory may be faithfulness. The victory may be patience. Yielding to the Holy Spirit in our lives brings great fruit.

I am reminded of Hebrews 11:1.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Looking towards 2018 we hope for so many things. May faith give us great assurance that we are headed in a God ordained direction as we walk with Jesus. May we believe God for great things and dare to step out in faith. The Bible says that "Man plans his way but the Lord orders His steps." As we step out in

faith the plans of the Lord will emerge. He will order your steps and show you His good and perfect will!

God's grace surrounds us and helps us to embrace the merciful work of Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing ; it is the gift of God."

I challenge you to commit to regular church attendance in 2018. When we are surrounded by the things of God we truly are blessed as God works in our lives. Also, I encourage you to download the "Gideon's Bible Ap" for your commute or kitchen duty. This will help you to be constantly reminded about God's grace and the mercy of faith.

We are reminded in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ." It builds our faith to listen to the Bible, Christian Music, come to church, be in a Bible Study, or have a prayer partner.

Psalm 56:3 "Oh most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you." So, today I say to man #3 - put your trust in God!

Putting our blind trust in God in all things springs us forth to make a difference. As we go with God in 2018 may we put all of our trust in Him.

Indiana Jones illustration.

We have hope for 2018

Romans 5:3-5 "And not only that, but we also boast in your sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has

poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

2018 is not going to be a walk in the park friends. But, like any athlete who trains for victory: We need to realize that we are growing and developing in His likeness. We are strengthened by our faith. We are encouraged by our Lord and lifted up by our church.

God is watching over us. Psalms 32:8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

Jesus will not abandon you. He will provide for you. **Philippians 4:19 "And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."**

Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Let's make an investment. The master is giving us every day and every second of 2018. Let's use those days and seconds according to His will.

We are entrusted with something - could be one talent - could be 5? Let's pause and reflect with what we have been given in 2018.

On Black Friday at the Disney Store: I bought the cutest Mickey and Minnie mouse stuffed animals. They are just darling. I bought them because I knew that this past Advent season would be one to remember. They are going to be kept in the Christmas box for years to come.

The kids had so much fun in their endeavors this Christmas. Those mice are going to be a permanent decoration in our home.

When we had the Session and Staff over for a Christmas party. Little Mark and Luke Gomes went straight for Mickey and Minnie.

May 2018 be the greatest gift ever! It is a fresh start my friends. May we buy a stuffed animal at the end of 2018 reflecting that this was a year of faith and walking with Jesus as He provides for our needs and guides us in paths of righteousness.

We are Given Favor

In 2018, lets say goodbye to fear.

In 2018, lets Step out in faith.

In 2018, lets make every day count.

In 2018, lets take what we have got and do the best with it.

May you hear it said: "Well done good and trustworthy servant, you have been trustworthy with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." May you conquer fear and make an investment of faith, integrity, wisdom and courage that will last a lifetime.

Let's pray: