

POSSIBILITY PARABLES:

There's Something for Everyone

March 6, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the 'year of jubilee' of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Matt 25:14-30 ¹⁴ "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents,^[a] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter 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 replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This Week: Matt 25:14-30

In Jesus' original parable, a man entrusts each of three servants with a large amount of money. Upon his return, the first two have worked with the capital and doubled it. Attention focuses on the third, who has acted with proper caution not to lose what was entrusted to him and is able to return it whole to the master. When challenged as to why he has not increased the money entrusted to him, he responds with a characterization of the master as a harsh and unjust man who inspires only fear and caution. The hearers of the parable are doubly surprised and do not know what to think. On the one hand, the hearers have just seen proof of the master's generosity to the first two servants. On the other hand, the story has led them to be sympathetic to the action of the one-talent man in carefully hiding the money. To his (and the hearers') surprise, the one-talent man is condemned for fearful inactivity, and his money is given to the first servant, who already has ten talents.

The meaning of being "good and faithful" is not mere theological correctness, passive waiting, or strict obedience to clear instructions, but active responsibility that takes initiative and risk. In the story, the master gives no instructions as to what is to be done with the money, so faithfulness is not merely obedience to directions. Each servant must decide how to use his/her time and gifts during the master's absence.

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol VIII, p. 453

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. A talent was worth about 16 years of wages for the average worker, so even one talent would be a generous investment of over \$1,000,000 in today's dollars. What do you think of the generosity of this master? Why do you think some were given more than others?
2. The first two servants took advantage of this gift and brought back a significant return. What does this say about them? What does the Master's response say about him?
3. The one talent servant had a very different perspective of the master and this influenced his inactivity. From the text, how does he describe his master? How can fear and comparisons get in the way of a fruitful life?

4. Do you understand God's character as the first two servants did (generosity) or like the third (harsh, fearful), or somewhere in between. How does this impact how you used your gifts today?
5. Have you decided what you will do with your **Lenten Seed gift**? How is that coming along?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Prayerfully reflect about what you will do with your **Lenten Seed Gift** during this season.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Matthew 25: 14-15 ¹⁴ *"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents,^[a] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.*