

Who is the good and faithful servant?

Message 8: [Under your wings series](#)

D E Wasake, a servant of Jesus the Christ

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Introduction

When the Lord Jesus appointed me to his service as his servant, he gave me a commission. He asked me to preach to everyone that: *“Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Matthew 3: 2).”*

This was actually the second time the Lord Jesus was calling me to service because I wasn't faithful the 1st time round. More than 20 years ago, he called me to serve him, but I loved the pleasures of this world and of sin more than him and so I run away, becoming a prodigal son.

I praise God that he however showed me mercy and called to me a second time and it is my daily hope that at the end of my journey, he will tell me: “Well done good and faithful servant” as we will see in a very famous parable of Jesus from Matthew 25.

But who exactly is a good and faithful servant? This message will show some of the things that differentiate good servants from bad servants or in our modern speak – I will show you what separates high flyers or achievers from the mediocre performers.

Like a good servant of the Lord, I will share with you both new and old things (Matthew 13: 52) - Old because you likely know the parable and it's general meaning and New –because the Lord has given me fresh or new revelation for you.

Anchor verses

Matthew 25:14 – 30 (NKJV)

14 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

20 “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ 21 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ 23 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

²⁴ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there you have what is yours.*’

²⁶ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

²⁹ ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Key definitions or Characteristics of the Parable

#1. Who is the man or master?

The Story starts by saying “the Kingdom of Heaven is like...” so we know that this man or master in the story is God. We notice a few key things from the introduction to the story:

He (the Master) called his own servants. This means no one who is a servant of God calls himself to service. It is God who calls him. No wonder one such Apostle Paul starts Romans 1: 1 thus: *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.*

So this Great Master sets apart those he calls for his service or employment. Employees are therefore servants did you know this? This means being called to service is the equivalent to being employed. A modern dictionary defines servants as follows:

Definition of a servant

n. an employee of an employer, technically one who works for a master. A servant is distinguished from an "independent contractor" who operates his/her own business even though spending much time on the work of a particular person or entity. The servant has established hours or pieces of work, is under the direction of the employer even as to details, cannot work for competitors and acts for the benefit of the employer rather than for himself/herself. The employer of a servant must provide to the servant (employee) worker's compensation insurance, Social Security coverage, make income tax deductions, and provide benefit from various federal and state labor laws. An independent contractor is responsible for such payments and benefits himself/herself.

An employee unlike an independent contractor:

1. Has established hours or pieces of work
2. Works under the direction of the employer
3. Cannot work for competitors
4. Acts for the benefit of the employer rather than himself.

In return for his service, the employer performs certain obligations for the employee.

He (the Master) delivered HIS goods to them

This means nothing good we receive is from ourselves for ALL good things come down from the father of lights (James 1: 17-18).

This calls for humility. Another verse to support this says:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15: 5 (NIV).

To be good and faithful, we need to remember the source of our talent.

In this story, the master gave the 3 servants talents – according to their own abilities.

According to many sources, 1 talent = Approximately 20 years' wages.

In the US, the average annual wage or salary is \$59,000 in May 2024. So:

- 20 years wages = 1.18mⁱⁱ This is what the man with 1 talent received.
- 2 talents = \$2.36m.
- 5 talents = \$5.9m

This means even the one with the smallest talent received A LOT! This parable is showing us first God's generosity, but second it is showing us that even the least of us, has been given a tremendous amount of talent!

He (the Master) went away on a journey – to a far country.

This tells us that each of us has been given sufficient time to accomplish our tasks while the master is gone. So, we have no excuse to say time is not enough. We need to instead learn to prioritize the master's tasks – not own for a good employee acts for the benefit of the employer, not his own interests!

He (the Master) provided protection – his name

One thing, we can expect from this story, while not said directly, is that these servants were trading, but not on their own account. They were trading in the Master's name.

How do I know this? This master was very wealthy. To give 3 servants almost \$10m and go away to do other business indicates wealth – which means influence. This means for these servants to be successful, they would likely have been operating in the name – or the authority of the master. This name or authority is what likely opened doors of opportunity for the successful ones who gained more.

Which means, one additional benefit these servants received from the Master, even when he was far was the protection of his name or insurance if you want - which means God provides protection to his servants while doing the work. A scripture to support this from our scripture for this season says:

“Because he loves Me, I will deliver him; because he knows My name, I will protect him. When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him.” Psalms 91:14-15 BSB

It is the same in modern employment. When your employer gives you a car for example – you go about doing business in the Master's name – not your own.

For it is only when you operate in his name, doing his business that you get protection, should you get into trouble. For example, imagine using the employer's car to go to the night club and it gets stolen, do you think your employer will cover you for this loss with his insurance? I

assure you; you will pay for the full price of that stolen car and might even get fired for this – hence go to the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!

#2. Who is the servant?

Having defined the Master, it is easy to define the servants. They are as indicated earlier – employees of the master and as noted, they do not make themselves servants. They are called to service. But who is the greatest of all those called to service?

The greatest among you must be a servant. Matthew 23: 11 (NLT).

Those who want to be the greatest, are those who model being the servant or the least – meaning an attitude of service.

Obvious as it seems – being someone’s servant means you are not operating on your own – as an independent contractor would do, which is often compared to an employee. Therefore, a good and faithful servant is not independent of their employer or master.

In the parable, Jesus doesn’t tell us if the servants were able to contact their master in the far away country for guidance but assuming they couldn’t, I suspect those who succeeded would have found a “manual of instructions” – akin to our Bible and even better, they would likely have been able to send messengers to the Master to get additional guidance or direction – akin to prayer.

This tells us that a good servant – reads the instructions i.e. studies the Bible and gets additional guidance from the Master – that is prayer, because without prayer, we are powerless.

The Bible shows this when Jesus had gone away to the mountain of transfiguration and his disciples failed to cast out a demon. When he returned this is what the scriptures show:

Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn’t we cast out that evil spirit?” Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.” Mark 9: 28 – 29 (NLT).

So a prayer less servant is powerless when the great challenges come their way. See why keeping in touch with the Master is critical?

#3. What is it like to render good and faithful service?

Now that we have defined the master and the servant. What is it like to render good and faithful service?

At the start of the parable, we clearly see that the master gave talents: **“each according to his own ability.”** This proves God to be a fair judge.

He will judge each of us according to our own race, not another’s race. Some have been given more than you, so accept it. Accept that your race is not with others. Your race is with yourself – with what you were given. This should free you from the sin of comparison with others because then to be faithful is simple: You keep using what you have, your talents.

So the good and faithful servant keeps doing what they are good at, with what they have.

But what is it like practically to be good and faithful in the service of the Lord?ⁱⁱⁱ

And what does it take you to double profits as the two good and faithful servants did?

Modern example: High achievers vs. Good and faithful servants

Assuming a servant is taken to be an employee as we showed earlier, what would separate the high achiever, the employee who uses the 5 or 2 talents well from the lazy one who hides the talent?

There are certain known traits of high achievers we can understand to help this parable make sense to us today. ^{iv} Some of those include:

1. High achievers are goal-setters—They're the navigators of their own success!

High achievers set goals that are clear, measurable, and doable! And the best part? They put a deadline on those goals.

It means the servants who were productive must have sat down to plan before they set out to trade. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been productive. The Bible gives us further insight to this. It says:

But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Luke 14: 28 (NLT).

2. High achievers are proactive—They're like fearless superheroes, always creating opportunities!

Do you realize that the last servant was called "wicked and lazy"? This tells us that God loves those who take initiative – like many high achievers. Don't wait for greatness to find you, go find it! The Bible shows how Moses ended up "falling into greatness" – he went to LOOK at the burning bush! He took initiative and God rewarded him for it! See what it says:

So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up. When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" Exodus 3: 3-4 (NIV).

3. High achievers have a growth mindset—They're the champions of self-improvement!

Here's the scoop: high achievers believe that they can level up their skills through hard work and dedication. They're not afraid of challenges or feedback that exposes their weak spots.

Everyone of us knows the famous stories of the successful: how they worked hard, how they persevered, how they suffered before their big breakthrough. These 2 faithful servants must have gone through a similar journey!

Think of Joseph the ultimate high achiever. Before he achieved his high position, he was treated unjustly, forgotten in prison and had to even wait 2 full years before Pharaoh called him up.

How can you achieve the growth mindset of a high achiever according to the Bible? Here are examples:

About studying/working hard it says:

Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2: 15 (NLT).

About persevering it says:

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1: 4 (NIV).

About suffering for the sake of Christ it says:

For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. Philippians 1: 29 (NLT).

Are you doing good and faithful service for the Lord? If not, which of these revelations shared can you start to learn from?

The message of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus was the ultimate good and faithful servant of God. He made it clear when he was on this earth that he did not operate on his own authority:

For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. John 12: 49 (NIV)

Because he was faithful, even when he suffered at the hands of sinful men, he was able to finally say while dying on the cross "it is finished."

Because of his faithfulness, the Lord God didn't let his body see corruption but he raised him up by the power of the Holy Spirit from the dead and thus this Lord Jesus is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father— having finished his own work.

He has also left us an example or pattern to follow in the Bible so that by the grace of God, you and I will be called a "good and faithful servant" like the two faithful ones and not cast into the outer darkness like the wicked and lazy servant.

Do you want to be called good and faithful? Do you want to give up your old life of unproductivity and unfaithfulness?

If so, I would love for you to become part of God's household, but it begins by becoming a Christian. So please pray this prayer to become a Christian:

"God of heaven, I confess that I am a sinner and have been one since birth, but I have heard that you can make me new, and you sent your son Jesus to die for me. He rose again and it is he who can give me his Holy Spirit. Please forgive me and welcome me into your Kingdom, teach me how to follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Lots of love, your brother in the Lord and a bond servant of Jesus the Christ.

Lord Jesus, come, Maranatha!

Amen.

Notes

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<https://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=1924#:~:text=servant,a%20particular%20person%20or%20entity.>

ii <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/average-salary-by-state/>

iii See <https://bible.org/seriespage/10-marks-faithful-servants>

iv <https://www.betsyallenmanning.com/5-traits-of-high-achievers-that-separate-them-from-the-rest-catapult-their-success>