

---

# READY

“ENTRUSTED”

(MATTHEW 25:14-30)

9:30 am Bobbin Head Anglican Church

Sunday 13 December, 2020 + Online Pre-record

---

## Introduction

Good morning, my name is Luke Woodhouse, pastor of Bobbin Head Anglican Church, church that meets in Turramurra North Public School. It is my privilege to open God’s Word for us today.

If you have just joined us we are in the middle of our short teaching series for ADVENT, which we are calling READY. And this season leading up to Christmas, there is a lot of pressure for us to be ready for all kind of Christmas related events and traditions, buying presents, organising parties, practicing carols. But nowhere in the New Testament are Christians called to be ready for Christmas. Jesus never encouraged his followers to be ready to celebrate Christmas each year, why is that? Not because the Christian life is not about being ready, but because we are taught that the most important thing we need to be ready for is not Jesus first coming, which has already happened, but Jesus second coming, his second advent, his return, which is still to come.

And so this little teaching series picks up on an extended discourse Jesus has with his followers before his death, and the subject matter is all about how important it is to be ready for his return, his second coming.

In this teaching Jesus has used a number of parables, metaphors and analogies to describe what it looks like to be ready for his return. He has talked about his return being like a thief in the night, coming at a time unannounced and unexpected. And the lesson a few weeks ago, was to keep watch, don’t get lulled into a false sense of apathy towards Jesus return. There was also the example of the master who returned to find one of his slaves, treating his fellow slaves with care, just like if the master was around; and he finds the other slave acting up, because the master is not around. The lesson there is that to be ready for the return of Jesus, is to be living like he is already with us in person.

Last week, we looked at the parable of the ten virgins, the five wise and the five foolish; and the lesson last week was that being ready for the return of Jesus is to be ready for his return to be a long time coming, and to take heed of the warning that there will come a time when it is too late to join the wedding celebration.

This week, Jesus continues to teach his followers what it means to be ready for his return and again he uses a parable like analogy of master and his servants (more likely slaves as we will see a bit later).

A good way for us to understand Jesus teaching to us today is to first work through the parable, to ensure we understand what it is saying and then we will draw out the implications of Jesus teaching for us today.

So let's dive into the parable shall we, we are in v14 of Chapter 25.

Notice the opening few words 'Again it will be like'.

The 'it' Jesus is referring to is his return, the coming of the kingdom of God.

This is what he is about to describe.

And what is it like?

We have a man going on a journey, and he calls his slaves in to entrust his wealth to them. Some translations use the word 'servants', which is the same word for 'slave'. It seems from the context that Jesus is referring to slaves here, slaves, while very different to the racial based slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries, 1st century slaves were still considered the property of the master, and they had far less rights than a servant, and they were not paid a wage, but they were looked after and provided for.

So what the master does is quite surprising, he decides to leave his wealth to his slaves to take responsibility for.

Some translations use the word 'talent' to describe the wealth. This is a bit misleading, because we think of talents more like skills or gifts, and so we can apply this passage as if this is all about Christians using the skills and gifts that God has given us, while there are parts of the New Testament which talk about the importance of Christians using the gifts they have been given, I don't think this is the point of Jesus teaching in this passage.

The word used in the original language is a word that is used to talk about wealth, money. And to get an idea of the kind of money we are talking about here, we read that one slave is given five bags of gold, which would have been the equivalent of almost \$10 million dollars in today's currency, the second is given probably the equivalent of around \$4 million and the third slave is given around the equivalent of \$2 million.

And so this is an astonishing amount of money for a master to entrust to his slaves, but that's what he does; and as we read on, we see what master expected his slaves to do with the wealth he had entrusted to them.

We read that the first two slaves go and put the master's money to work, and end up doubling the masters assets.

In the ancient world, to put the money to work probably meant to buy businesses, to purchase wealth producing resources. It didn't mean trading on the stock exchange, and so perhaps that is why each slave was given a certain amount of the masters wealth based on their ability. But the expectation is clear that the master's slaves are called to increase the masters assets and not their own.

But what does the third slave do, the third slave prioritizes guarding the masters wealth from being lost, or stolen. So he buries it in the ground.

Well what happens when the master returns?

Well as we read on, we see that (like the bridegroom last week) the master is a long time coming, but he eventually returned and calls his slaves to produce an account of what they have done with the wealth entrusted to them.

The first two slaves come forward, and it seems with joy and a bit of spring in their step.

v. 20 the first slave says:

'Master, '[...]'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

v. 22 the second slave also says:

'Master, '[...]' you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

The first two slaves have doubled the master's assets, and how does the master respond?

vv. 21 & 23

'Well done, good and faithful slave! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness! '

The slaves are not only affirmed and praised for their stewardship and investment of their masters assets, they are rewarded, their status changes from a slave to one who is put in charge of many things and invited to share with the masters joy and happiness.

But what about the third slave.

On the one hand, at a superficial level, we could look at the actions of the third slave, as perhaps wise and conservative.

He is risk averse, so he decides to preserve the master's wealth as the first priority, rather than risk losing it.

But when we look below the surface, we see a glimpse into the heart of the third slave, we see that he resents his master. In v24, we see that he thinks his master is unreasonable, a hard man; perhaps exploiting his slaves, with the promise of no reward and only the possibility of punishment. He accuses the master of working his slaves in areas where there would be no possibility of a harvest.

So how does the master respond? Well the master's response makes more sense if we understand the slave to be a slave, not an employee like servant. Because a slave had no choice but to do what the master expected of them. And the master expected the slave to look after his wealth, to improve it. And instead, the resentful slave, does the bare minimum to escape punishment. Not interested in sharing the masters happiness, not interested in serving the master.

The master challenges the slave's heart, and using the slaves own accusation against him — that the master 'harvests where (he) has not sown, and gathers, where no seed has been scattered'. The master replies, v27 well if that's the case then why didn't you at the very least, put my money in the bank, so that there would be even a little bit of interest when I returned.

But the third slave resents his master, and doesn't want to see his master's assets improve at all, he only wants to ensure his own safety.

Well the master's judgment on the third slave is pretty strong

v26, you wicked and lazy slave.

28 ' "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.

And then we read, Jesus lesson of this little parable:

29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless slave outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. '

So what do we make of this teaching of Jesus.

What is Jesus teaching us?

Well to understand what Jesus is teaching us, we need to understand what a few of the key images are pointing to.

We need to understand what the master's wealth is and what it means to grow his wealth

We need to know what Jesus means when he says whoever has will be given more, and whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

So what is the master's wealth and what does it mean to grow it?

We've already seen that the master's wealth is not the same as gifts and skills. We see that the wealth that the master gives is given in accordance with someone's ability.

The best way to understand what the master's wealth is, is to understand what it is that Jesus wants to see increase and grow upon his return.

Is he teaching that he wants to see Christians own bigger houses, better cars and go on more spectacular holidays?

Of course not.

When we read the New Testament, we see time and time again that what Jesus wants to see grow in his absence, is the fruit of his gospel, which is his church, his people.

It is what we call disciples.

The great commission in Matthew 28, drives this home very clearly.

Jesus wants his followers to be investing in the work of his gospel, and seeing more and more disciples who then make more disciples for his kingdom.

You see everyone who is a Christian: that is someone who has moved from death to life, through giving their life to Jesus, has not just responded to the gospel. They have been entrusted with the gospel.

What do I mean?

Well the gospel is the good news of Jesus.

The good news that through Jesus death and resurrection, he is enthroned as both our Lord and our Saviour.

And so a Christian, is not only someone who accepts the invitation of forgiveness and new life that comes with this good news, a Christian is someone who has been entrusted with this good news, who has been given a responsibility to grow the work of the gospel.

It's important as Christians we don't mix up the bibles teaching on what we are to guard and what we are to grow.

There are of course many passages in the New Testament where Christians are taught to guard their hearts, to guard the church, to protect and preserve the apostolic teaching.

This is of course true — yet we see in Jesus teaching that Christians guarding themselves from temptation, or guarding each other from false teaching, is not the same as burying the work of the gospel, and becoming so risk averse that our chief concern is church unity and status quo, at the expense of actually seeking to grow God's kingdom, through his Spirit empowered gospel he has entrusted to us.

As a church, as a parish, our mission is that by God's grace in Christ, to be disciple-making disciples, for the glory of God.

Now this isn't just a bit of jargon. This mission statement attempts to articulate how we as a church are committed to taking Jesus words in this passage very seriously.

There is a reason why when we become Christians, we aren't immediately taken to glory to be with Jesus. Why is that?

It is because we have been given a responsibility?

Do you think of you relationship with Jesus in these terms?

That you have been given a responsibility?

A responsibility to see the assets of our master grow?

To see his kingdom grow?

On the last day, when you meet your Lord and Saviour, if he was to ask you 'what have you done with my gospel?' what would you say?

Oh, I didn't realise you were talking to me when you gave your great commission?

Oh, I've spent most of my energies, making sure that I am at church each week, and I am reading my bible each day. I thought that as long as I kept trusting you until the end; that is all that really counts.

Now don't get me wrong, this is not a call for every Christian to go to Bible College and become a preacher, or a missionary, or a full time evangelist. Although God's Spirit might convict some this way.

This is a call for every Christian to prayerfully be invested and playing our part in seeing God's kingdom grow, according to the opportunities God has entrusted to us.

As we finish, here is a little thought experiment for you. You don't have to share this with anyone, but you can if you want.

When you arrive at church on a Sunday and think about those you are gathering with (or for those who have not returned to face to face yet, when you arrived at church on a Sunday back in March), what kind of things would go through your mind.

I think if we are taking Jesus words seriously in today's passage, than everyone who calls themselves a Christian would have at least one other person (hopefully more) that they have a genuine, prayerful, practical concern for their Christian walk. This may be someone who is a Christian, this might be someone who isn't yet a Christian.

But if our attitude to the Christian life, is all about ensuring that our individual relationship with God is healthy, our individual habits of worship and discipleship of Jesus are maintained, can I suggest there is the very real possibility that we are drifting into living like the third slave.

Not sharing the master's interests

Not sharing the master's joy in increasing his assets.

Risk averse.

Fear of punishment is greater than the active joy of seeing God's kingdom grow.

I think this is what is meant by the promise of Jesus, in v29,

For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

Of course we can see in the context of Matthew's gospel, Jesus is not talking about economic, material prosperity. This isn't a comment on how the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

This is a comment that those who share the desire of the master, to see the master's assets grow, to see his kingdom grow; that those who desire that kingdom to grow, will be strengthened more and more to do God's work. And those whose desire is to

do the bare minimum to avoid punishment, those who aren't really interested in the master's interests. Well Jesus warning is that, even the very little interest they have will wither away.

It's a confronting message in many ways, is it not?

But can I encourage you, to look to the example of the first two slaves in this parable — look to the joy that they have in sharing in the work of their master. It is not a burden, it is not something they resent. It is a wonderful privilege.

Do you think of it this way?

Perhaps as we finish today, we can all take a moment to think and pray for at least one other person who we would like to see God use us, to bring them to know and trust Jesus more.

## PRAYER

Father, thank that you have not only given me forgiveness and new life, in the good news of the death and resurrection of your son, thank-you that you have also entrusted me with this news. Please help me be someone who doesn't hide the light under the bowl, help me to not be so focused on my own spiritual preservation, that I ignore the joyful privilege and responsibility you have entrusted to me, to see your kingdom grow. Please give me a joyful anticipation of the day that your Son returns, help me to live for that day, boldly and courageously putting the progress of your kingdom above all things. I ask this in your Sons mighty name. Amen