

Hidden Treasure

Matthew 25:14-30 (November 15, 2020)

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14“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then 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.’ 21His 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.’ 22And 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.’ 23His 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.’ 24Then 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; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But 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? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For 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. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Historical Context

In Jesus’ day, one talent represented wages for approximately 15 years: enough money to fund the winnings of a lottery jackpot.

Theme: Hidden Treasure

The parable of the talents exposes the challenges of faithfulness in a world dominated by power and wealth. The rich man has achieved his wealth at the expense of others. The first two servants multiply his dishonesty. The third refuses to participate in this system of oppression, and for this refusal he is abandoned and condemned to a place of suffering. The parable offers a clear-eyed analysis of the real world.

Jesus tells this parable a couple of days before his arrest and crucifixion. Like the third servant in the story, Jesus will be condemned to suffering. Abandoned by most of his friends, he will cry out to God, “Why have you forsaken me?” Then he will be buried in a rock-hewn tomb, just as the talent is buried deep in the ground. This is not the end of the story, however. As Matthew’s Gospel makes clear, a hole in the ground—even a tomb—cannot contain Jesus. He is the Messiah, raised from the dead. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, and the day will come when the Messiah will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.