

## Life Isn't Fair

Text: Matthew 25:14–30

The Bible says in Romans 6:12-13 **“Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So, use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.”**

There is no holding back in these verses. **Do not**...Instead, give yourselves, how? **Completely**. Use what part of your body? **Your whole body**.

When it comes to your life you have three choices. You can waste your life, you can spend your life, or you can invest your life. You can waste your life and there's plenty of ways to waste it. You can spend your life and there are a lot of ways to spend it. But the greatest use of your life is to **invest it**.

Think back to your childhood, when at one point we all said: *“That's not fair!”* To which the grownup in our lives responded, **“Guess What? Life isn't fair!”**

When we say life isn't fair, what we're really saying is life isn't an even playing field for everybody. Here's why this is important: the unfairness of life, and setbacks we face, can quickly become an excuse to be **irresponsible**.

People say, “You can't expect me to be a responsible person because I didn't get a fair shake; I had a bad childhood; I'm handicapped. I have every right to walk away from my responsibilities.”

The word **responsible** is defined by the dictionary as: answerable or accountable, as for something within one's power, control, or management.

Irresponsibility is when you don't take responsibility for the things, you're responsible for. I don't know if you realize this, but our culture is becoming less and less responsible. In some areas of our society, irresponsibility is celebrated.

Here's how a lot of people interpret their rights: I have the right to be irresponsible. I have the right to do whatever I want to do, say what I want to

say, and act any way I want to act; I have the right to be irresponsible, but you don't have the right to hold me accountable and furthermore, you need to clean up the mess I make through me irresponsibility.

The problem is that whether irresponsibility is in your family, your company, the church, the government, or wherever; **it is contagious.**

Why should I work extra hard and why should I pay my own way and why should I clean up my own messes and why should I go without because of my irresponsibility, especially when other people have found a way to get by with being irresponsible?

And the other thing you need to remember is this; **what's rewarded is repeated.** So, in a culture where irresponsibility is rewarded, it's repeated.

It's often said that freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin – that if you want freedom, you must first accept the responsibility that goes with it. The truth is simpler. Freedom and responsibility aren't interconnected. They are the same thing. Freedom is responsibility.

Now the other little secret about irresponsibility is this: Anytime an individual, or a group of people, act irresponsible, sooner or later someone else will have to come along and shoulder the burden and clean up the mess. In other words, **irresponsibility is not neutral.**

Now, it's easy to talk about "immature, irresponsible, ungodly people out there," but I want us to talk about us. There is in all of us something that at times wants to shirk our responsibilities. But if you are a Christ-follower, you can't shirk your responsibility, because ultimately, you are not accountable just to your parents, or your spouse, or your family, or your boss, or to your church; you are ultimately accountable to your heavenly Father.

And, by the way, it's not just disadvantaged people who are irresponsible. People with a great abundance of things, which they take for granted, act reckless and imprudent as well; think of the prodigal son.

The problem isn't how to make life fair. The real issue is what will we do with the hand we have been dealt? What are we going to do with

the life God has given us? Will we waste our life, or invest our life?  
Will we be responsible or irresponsible? Let's PRAY

Jesus taught about this 2,000 years ago! Turn with me to the first book of the New Testament, the gospel of Matthew. In chapter 25, Jesus is telling parables about what the kingdom of God is like, and one of them could be called a story about unfairness. **You know this story as the Parable of the Talents.**

This parable comes right after the parable of the Ten Virgins. In The Virgins, Jesus revealed the necessity of attending to our **inward character**, but in The Parable of the Talents we are shown the necessity of **outward exertion**.

The Virgins teach us the need of **watchfulness**, The Talents, the duty of **work**. Jesus exhorts us not only to **watch in readiness** but to **work in earnestness**. While the Virgins are represented as **waiting** for the Lord, the servants are **working** for Him: there is the **inward spiritual life** followed by **external activity** ...

I believe they appear in this order, because our **being needs to precede our doing**. **Inward spiritual life** must be in order before we can really **do** anything productive and of eternal significance.

Let's look at this parable together: **Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV)**

**14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.'**

**23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no 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 answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**

Now this story just isn't fair, right? I mean the man gave his servants uneven amounts. The wealthy master referred to as "Lord" by his servants is Jesus Christ. The journey into the far country refers to His departure into heaven after His Ascension. The servants were the disciples to whom He addressed the parable, and then in larger sense, this is for all born-again believers. You could say that the Lord is not a socialist when it comes to talents, but the bible makes it clear that we all receive the same amount of His love, and mercy and grace. And while it's not fair that they didn't get the same amount, it **is** fair that God decides who gets what.

**"Talent,"** as used by Jesus, does not mean something we possess, but which He possesses and loans to us. All the talents in the parable belonged to the Lord and were handed over by Him to his servants to be used for His benefit.

Just so you know, a talent represented a large sum of money in Jesus' day. Trust me when I tell you that all three servants, even the one who received only one talent, became very wealthy from what the Lord gave them.

**I want to show you seven things we need to think about concerning our responsibility with what God has given us.**

**1. Everything I have really belongs to God. This is the Principle of Stewardship.**

You don't really own anything. God made it all, He owns it, and He loans it... to you and me. My life, my talents, abilities, everything I have.

Jesus illustrates this in verse 14 where He says "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called **His** servant and entrusted to them His property. Notice it's not your property, it's God's.

Here's the point. The more materialistic you are, the more stressed out you're going to be. You'll worry about protecting and keeping what you have. The Bible says that "Life does not consist of the abundance of things that you possess."

## **2. God has loaned me a set of talents. This is the Principle of Allocation.**

**STORY:** A priest and a pastor decide to help their community. Each one makes a sign and positions himself alongside the highway. Soon a car comes speeding toward them, and the priest holds up a sign that says, "Turn Around Before it's too late!" The driver shakes his head in disgust as he drives on. So, the pastor raises his sign, which says "The End is Near!" The driver yells "You religious freaks, get off the road!" But as he rounds the curve, they hear screeching tires and a big splash. The priest turns to the pastor and says, "Maybe we should just get a sign that says '**The Bridge is Out.**'"

One key in understanding this parable is to see that each servant was given according to his ability. The "goods, or talents" are not a question of our possessions or skills, but are the unsearchable riches of His grace, given to us as He decides, to use for His glory. Not everyone is given the same responsibility. And by the way, in case you think you've been short-changed, the Apostle Paul said his thorn in the flesh was to keep him humble because he had been entrusted with great responsibility.

**The reward for good work, and for being responsible wasn't a reward, like an early retirement or extended vacation. The reward for good work was more work. The reward for being responsible was more responsibility.**

I want you to notice that in this story everybody gets something. In other words, there's no such thing as a **"no talent person."**

I heard a story about a man who went to the pastor at the new church he was attending and said, "pastor, I have only one talent. I am really good at being critical and pointing out other people's faults." The pastor said, you need bury it like the man with only one talent."

Romans 12:6 says, **"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."** (NIV) It's a gift from God to you. **Your gift to God is what you do with them.**

*Everything I have belongs to God and God has loaned me a certain set of talents He expects me to use. The third thing is...*

**3. God expects me to make the most of what He loans me. This is the Principle of Accountability.**

Verse 19 says, **"Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them."**

Romans 14:12 **"Every one of us will give an account of ourselves to God one day."**

*Then here's the fourth thing to think about.*

**4. It's wrong to bury what God loans me. This is the Principle of Utilization.**

Remember the first guy goes out, takes the five talents he's given, and he doubles them. He makes 100% profit. The second guy goes out and he doubles his two talents to four talents. That's also 100%.

**Key thought:** The Lord said the same thing to the person with the 2 talents as He did with the one with 5 talents.

The third guy goes out and he does nothing. He buries his talent in the ground. The reaction of the master in verse 26, **'You wicked and lazy servant!**

This third guy is cautious and conservative. The master's reaction is "What are you doing? You could have at least put it in the bank and got interest.

Notice that entirety of verse 26 ends in a question mark. **But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'**

He is not agreeing with the man. He is simply saying, "Is that what you thought? In those words, the Lord makes clear the real problem: this man did not intend to be a servant. He was not at all interested in his master's interests; he was interested in his own. He had no desire to be responsible with what the Lord had given him.

#### **5. FEAR keeps me from using my talents. This is the Principle of Motivation.**

The Bible says the third guy said, *"I was afraid, and I went out and I hid your talent in the ground."* Being afraid and hiding always go together. You see it when Adam and Eve sinned back in the Garden of Eden.

It's interesting, this third guy who buried his talent, had planned it all out. He had an excuse for his irresponsibility. He said, *"Master, I knew you were a hard man. Harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered. So, I was afraid and hid your talent in the ground."*

#### **Who is this guy blaming for his failure? He's saying it's the master's fault.**

Let me give you a little tip. Every time God gives you a talent the devil tries to attach a fear to it to keep you from using it. Fear of failure, fear of not being good enough or smart enough...fear of not being liked.

I've heard there are 365 "fear nots" in the bible. One for every day of our life, or maybe one for every excuse we come up with to be irresponsible with what God has given us. In case you haven't heard, the bible says **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."**

*There's a sixth thing that you and I learn from this story that Jesus told us...*

#### **6. If I don't use it, I'll lose it. It's the Principle of Application.**

Verse 28 *"Take this talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents."* He didn't say let him keep it and maybe he'll do better. He said take it from him and give it to the other person. Why is it that some people seem to have less and less in life? One of the reasons is that they're not being faithful in the little they have.

Some people think, when I make more money, I'll start tithing. When I know the bible better, I'll witness or teach Sunday School. No, you won't. You won't do anything great if you're not faithful in the little.

If I use what God has given to me, He gives me more. There's a promise in Hebrews 13:21, **"God will equip you with all that you need for doing His will."**

*And lastly...*

#### **7. If I'm faithful, God will reward me.**

When the servant who received the five talents, and the second servant his two talents, we read that both went **"straightway"** and traded; meaning immediately! There was no delay. They knew not how long their Master would be absent, so as soon as He left, they started working. **"What your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,"** the Bible says.

Verse 23 ***"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.'"***

Do you see all the rewards in that verse? There's the reward of **affirmation**; **"Well done..."** and the reward of **promotion** **"I'm going to put you in charge of many things."** Then there's the reward of **celebration**. **"Come and share your master's happiness."**

**Jesus' point is this:** Everybody gets an uneven amount of opportunity, BUT everybody is held accountable for what they do with what they have.

Queen Esther said, "If I perish, I perish." A Jewish cupbearer named Nehemiah says, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in your sight, send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so I can rebuild it." Three Jewish friends refuse to bow down to a Babylonian idol. Daniel refused to worship a king. A teenage boy faced off against a giant. A teenage girl became the mother of the savior. Ordinary men left their fishing nets and followed Jesus.

These individuals didn't know they were making history when they were making history! They were just ordinary people taking risks! When you take a risk...when you step out in faith...when you unequivocally obey the Word of the Lord, you never know what kind of impact it is going to have.

Let me make this observation: small acts of courage can change the course of history. Taking risks, creates a domino effect, or we as Eric and Keisha would call it - a Ripple Effect.

In 1960, an MIT meteorologist named Edward Lorenz made an accidental discovery while he was trying to develop a computer program that could simulate and forecast weather conditions.

One day he was in a hurry, and instead of entering .506127, the number he had used in an earlier trial, he rounded it off to .506. Lorenz figured that rounding the number to the nearest thousandth would be inconsequential.

He left the lab, and when he returned, he found a radical change in the weather conditions. Lorenz estimated that the numerical difference between the original number and the rounded number was the equivalent of a puff of wind created by a butterfly's wing.

He concluded that a minor event like the flapping of a butterfly's wing could conceivably alter wind currents sufficiently to eventually change weather conditions thousands of miles away. Lorenz introduced the scientific community to what we know as: **"the butterfly effect."**

In his book Chaos, James Gleick defines the butterfly effect as, "*tiny differences in input can quickly become overwhelming differences in output.*"

It's true in science. It's true in life. Small changes and small choices become magnified over time and have major consequences.

The genealogy of God's blessings are the result of our risks of obedience.

I think many people view their relationship with God in win/lose terms. They focus on what they *give up* and fail to realize how much more they *get back*. A relationship with God is the ultimate win/win relationship.

We are called to "deny ourselves" and "take up our cross." We're called to "lose our lives so that we can find them." And when we live like that, I promise you will always get back more than you give up.

**The only regrets you will have at the end of your life will be that you didn't seek God sooner and serve Him more sacrificially.**

**You can also look at the Parable of the talents as Jesus describing the Kingdom of Heaven in terms of risk.**

If you really want to appreciate this parable you've got to realize that one talent was the ancient equivalent of 6000 denari. A day's wage was only one denarius. So, in terms of money, one talent was 20-25 years of wages. You can see that this is a large sum of money, even for the person with one talent. It had to be tempting to play it safe. You have more to lose! But more to gain!

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

Did you see what word jumps out of these verses: ***faithful***.

**Eugene Peterson said. Faithfulness is a Long Obedience in the Same Direction**

Illustration: Have you heard about Old Faithful? It is the most famous of all **g(i)eyers** because of its predictability.

If the previous eruption lasts less than 2 ½ minutes, the next one will occur 65 minutes later. If the eruption lasts more than 2 ½ minutes, the next eruption will happen 91 minutes later. You can set your watch by it.

When Old Faithful was named in 1870, soldiers used it for a laundry, because they knew when it would erupt. They would safely walk up to it and put their dirty clothes in it. They found that linen and cotton clothing would be shot into the air clean, but wool clothing was torn to shreds.

Faithfulness isn't just doing the right thing once; it's doing the right thing over and over, day after day, week after week, year after year.

Think of the story of Noah. His building the ark ranks as one of history's largest and longest construction projects.

The ark measured 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in height. In the Hebrew system of measurement, a cubit was the equivalent of 17.5 inches. That means the ark was the length of one and a half football fields. Not until the late nineteenth century did a ship that size get constructed again. The internal volume of the ark was 1,518,750 cubit feet — the equivalent of 569 boxcars. If the average animal was the size of a sheep, it had capacity for 125,000 animals.

Who builds a boat in the desert? Who hammers away for 100 years at something they might not even need? Who banks their future on something that never happened before? It was unprecedented. It took an incalculable amount of faith, and a long obedience in the same direction.

According to Jewish tradition, (not the bible) Noah didn't just start building the ark. **He planted trees first.** After they were fully grown, he cut down the trees, sawed them into planks, and built the boat. That's going all out for God.

Noah built the ark because God commanded it. Sawing planks and hammering nails were acts of obedience. And when everything was said and done, it was the longest act of faithfulness recorded in Scripture.

Speaking of animals. The African impala, known for its incredible leaping ability, can jump ten feet high and thirty feet long. One might think zookeepers would have a tough time keeping impalas in their enclosures, but it's quite simple. A three-foot wall will do the trick. Here's why: **an impala will not jump if it cannot see where it will land.**

We have the same problem, don't we? We want a money-back guarantee before we take a step of obedience, but that eliminates faith from the equation. Sometimes we just need to take a faith inspired risk.

**In fact, Faithfulness is risk.** We tend to think of faithfulness as just maintaining, holding the fort, or hanging on to what we have. Nothing could be further from the truth. Faithfulness is multiplying what you have to the best of your God-given ability. Faithfulness isn't minimizing risk, it's maximizing risk.

The parable of the talents is about an investment mindset—risking what you have. It's playing to win.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 challenges us to be faithful in stewardship.

Ephesians 6:21 talks about being faithful in service.

1 Timothy 5:9 speaks of being faithful in our marriages.

Revelation 2:15 speaks of being faithful in witnessing.

Romans 12:12 says we are to be faithful in prayer.

Revelation 17:14 says we are to be faithful in following the Lord.

Proverbs 31:26 speaks of faithful instruction.

3rd John 3 says we are to be faithful in the truth.

Revelation 13:10 speaks of faithfulness even in times of persecution.

Revelation 2:10 says we are to be faithful unto death.

Colossians 1:7 speaks of being faithful in ministry.

**We've got to be obedient and faithful to the measure of revelation God has given us if we want more of it.** And that's why we get stuck spiritually. We want more revelation before we obey what God has already given us. God wants more obedience before He reveals more. Don't leave new gifts, new anointings, and new dreams that God wants to give to us, **unclaimed.**

**You need to step into the conflict without knowing if you can resolve it. Share your faith without knowing how people will react to it. Pray for a miracle without knowing how God will answer. Don't be afraid to put yourselves in a situation that activates spiritual gifts you've never experienced.**

Noah looked foolish building an ark in the desert. Sarah looked foolish buying maternity clothes for herself at ninety. Moses looked foolish asking Pharaoh to let his slaves go. The Israelite army looked foolish marching around Jericho blowing trumpets. David looked foolish attacking Goliath with a slingshot. The Wise Men looked foolish following a star. Peter looked foolish stepping out of the boat in the middle of the lake in the middle of the night. And Jesus looked helpless hanging naked on the cross.

But the results speak for themselves: Noah stayed afloat during the flood. Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Moses delivered Israel out of Egypt. The walls of Jericho came tumbling down. David defeated Goliath. The Wise Men found the Messiah. Peter walked on water. And Jesus rose from the dead.

**If you don't step out in faith, you'll miss out.**

Matthew 11:12 says, ***"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."***

There is nothing remotely passive about following Christ. Some of us approach our relationship with Christ like we're called to play a **"prevent defense"** when we ought to be in a **"two-minute offense."**

Faithfulness has nothing to do with maintaining the status quo or holding the fort. It has everything to do with storming the gates of Hell. Jesus commissioned the church in Matthew 16:18: ***"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it."***

Satan wants to put us in a defensive posture. And he uses two primary tactics—**fear** and **discouragement**. He wants us to run away in fear, filled with uncertainty, and avoiding spiritual risk. But Christ calls us to boldly go, boldly do, and boldly believe.

**Let me tell you:** when you look back at moments where God had handed you the keys to the kingdom to do some great work for Him and you chose to blow it off, to be irresponsible and play it safe, it will haunt you because they leave you asking what if.

We are left to wonder how our lives would have been different had we taken the risk or seized the opportunity. What if...What if... What if we had given God everything and served Him faithfully. In other words, the greatest regret at the end of our lives will be the spiritual risks we didn't take.

### **CONCLUSION:**

One tribe of Native Americans had a unique practice for training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, he was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone.

Until then he had never been away from the security of his family and tribe. But on this night, he was blindfolded and taken miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of thick woods. By himself. All night long.

Every time a twig snapped, or an animal howled; he probably visualized a wolf or wild beast ready to pounce. Every time the wind blew, he wondered what sinister sound it masked. No doubt it was a terrifying night.

After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he saw the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was the boy's father. **He had been there all night long.**

Sometimes we may feel that we are all alone and fear and anxiety try to creep in, but the truth is, God is always there even when we can't see Him or feel Him. His promise is that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Satan wants to keep you paralyzed by your fears and past failures. God wants to replace your guilt with grace. And He wants to recondition our fear with faith! What are you afraid of? If God is for you, who can be against you?

Don't try to make life fair. The more you focus on the unfairness and unevenness of life, the more you will be tempted to make excuses, live in fear, and shirk your responsibility. The real issue is what will we do with what you have? How will you invest the life God has given you? Don't bury what God has invested in you. Risk it all for His glory.