

Dr. Joe Jursa Sermon

[Wasting My Life - I know but sometimes I fail to do](#) - Matthew 25:24-30

We have all listened to the story of the parable of the talents. A rich man on leaving home for a journey leaves his assets in the hands of servants. Each servant is then left to his own best understanding of what to do until the master returns to collect what was originally given plus whatever additional has been made. Different servants have been given different amounts and the assumption is that some of the servants are more talented with finances or more trustworthy or have some quality that inspires more trust in them than in the others.

Those kinds of things are the things we most often see when we look at this parable of the talents. But today I want us to look at just one of the servants and think about what it is he has to say about his experience and his thoughts about the master. The time of reckoning comes as the master returns home and wants an account from each servant.

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.'

"Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

Sometimes I know things but I do not do anything as a result of what I know. The deer in the head light look is the kind of thing I am talking about. When you shine a bright light on a deer, in its mind it knows that the light is dangerous. A deer eyes are larger than most animals and their night vision far exceeds that of predators so the darkness is their friend and the brightness of day or of strong light is their enemy. If you have the good fortune sometime of borrowing night vision from someone and you look in an open field beyond the light of flood lights or other artificial light you will notice deer all a certain distance away from light sources. They know that closer than that puts the advantage toward the predators and away from them. They stay in the dark because it is safer. When you shine the bright light into their eyes fear takes over because of the suddenness of the light and they freeze.

This servant froze because he was afraid! I know that you are a harsh master (don't second guess the servant, he works for the man, he knows whether he is harsh or not). I know you reap where you do not sow, gathering where you did not scatter seed. In other words he knows that his master is always looking for new ways to draw in wealth even in places that he had not previously done the work required to earn the reward. His master is an entrepreneur.

What would it take for him to be a good servant in the eyes of his master? To make money from what the man has entrusted to him. What his master is expecting is that each servant will take what is given to them and use it to create greater wealth for the master. This servant knows what is expected. But he fails to do it.

And that is exactly what I want you to think about today. What do you know that God requires of you? Not what has some preacher or teacher or your parents or family told you God expects of you, but what do you know that God expects of you?

What do you know that God expects of you? Have you always done it? Have there been times when for one reason or another, even though you knew what God expected you failed to do it?

This is the first Sunday in the season of Lent. During Lent the church has historically encouraged its members to think about the passion and suffering of Christ and to think about their own part in that suffering.

We know as Christians that Jesus died for us. But we need to take that very personally. If every other person you ever met was perfect and you were the only one who ever sinned, Jesus would have hung on the cross for you. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should have everlasting life. But when we hear this our ears hear "the world." Jesus did not die just for me, Jesus died for everyone. But we are wrong. The message of Christ is that you are the one who mattered. Had there been no one else but you who sinned, Jesus would have still gone to the cross and suffered all that he did, just for you.

And somehow knowing that we are expected to do something and then because we fail to do it, Jesus is sacrificed upon the cross seems so excessive. It is excessive if it is just for me for the thing that I forget or ignore or just fail to do. But that really is the truth of the story being told here.

One servant fears the harshness of his master. He knows what should be done, but because of fear fails to do anything. And the result is punishment. Because he fails to act, the talent given to him is taken away and he is called a worthless slave and thrown into outer darkness.

Over the years we have each learned some of the things God expects of us. We know what we should do. What we may have never thought of was the consequence for failing to act. Knowing is not good enough. Knowledge that fails to lead to action is worthless.

This is the season of Lent. What does God expect of you? What do you already know you should be doing? Why have you failed to act? And more importantly when are you going to correct it and act upon what you already know God wants?

Lent is not a time to consider the sin of the whole world or every sin that you may have committed over your entire life. But this week, what would happen if you truly did think about what God has already asked of you? What would it cost to quit knowing and begin doing what you already know you should be doing? What is holding you back?

Do you really want the Day of Judgment to arrive with you knowing but never doing? Our sin has been paid by the cross of Christ. But could you still take advantage of the time and life you have to do the things you already know. Instead of the harsh words of the master there may still be time for our actions to bring a smile to the face of God.

Instead of disgust or anger or frustration with our failure to act, maybe our actions could bring pleasure to God.