

New Kilpatrick

Podcast

15th November 2020

Matthew 25:14-30

Introduction

Hello... and again thank you for the invitation to join you wherever you are... I'm Roddy Hamilton the minister in New Kilpatrick... and a special welcome to the folk from Houston and Killellan Kirk... who are joining us for a one week special... Gary Noonan... their minister who was a student here not so long ago... is off this weekend so it is good to have you...

And so today... we travel into a story of a landowner who has left the country... and he gives three of his slaves his property to look after... known as the parable of the talents... but its got nothing to do with talents... but before we explore that dichotomy... let us centre ourselves... and find that place in God where we meet each other...

Prologue

A landowner
Left the scene
Leaving three
His property

It was invested
made to work
And was buried

And on his return
The investors were praised
And more was given

For the one who buried it
What little there was
Was taken away

Yet against all odds
Counterintuitive to the world
It is this one
Who is the kingdom's hero

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Loving God

May we be shaped by such love
And know its strength
To hold us
And reshape us
And renew us

Know its imagination
To colour us again
And bring us into life

Know its peace
To steady us
And guide us on every path

Know its song
That sings in us
A new song every morning

Know its truth
That has held the world
Since its first dawning

Know its freedom
To set us free
Into a life yet to be imagined

Loving God
May we always be shaped by such love
As it calls us into the world
And risk its very self
That seeks the kingdom
In the least expected places
And finds a voice
That speaks truth
Into the power of the world
And finds such words
Are words of life
Reshaping who we are
And who we will yet be
In your name
And for love's sake

And together we pray
In the words of the Lord's Prayer

Our Father
Who is in heaven
Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day
Our daily bread
And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
And led us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For yours is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever
Amen

Reading Intro

This week... I need to be up front and say the way this parable is usually interpreted... and that must be about 99% of the time... is not where we're going this morning...

In fact... I'd suggest that is a red herring...

That this parable is about talents... not helped by the same word used for money... being the same word that means some intuitive ability... it's perfectly reasonable to look after your talents... but this parable is not the one to be used to say that... This is instead... a subversive... and dangerously honest parable about the world...

Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

14 "A man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; **15** to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

16 The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. **17** In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. **18** But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. **20** Then 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.' **21** His 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.'

22 And 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.' **23** His 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.'

24 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.'

Reflection

So there you go... not one of the happiest parables in the bible... Welcome to the Kingdom... except... where is God in this parable... The rich landowner?... An absentee landowner... known for being a harsh man, reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he did not scatter... It is hardly god-like...

The God we know is the one who brings people into a land of milk and honey... tells Amos to tell the farmers not to glean the edges of the fields... that way the poor can have something ... and not to shake all the olives from the tree... so the least can have enough... The God in the bible is generous...

And then that terrible line at the end that undercuts the whole kingdom... the slaves have presented their investments... and the landowner responds... 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...

This is not a parable about the kingdom... It's actually anti-kingdom... it's about the world... because there is no economy God approves of that says the rich are to get richer and the poor, poorer...

So... it's time this parable gets some major reinterpretation...

Those who first heard Jesus tell this parable will have immediately pictured the absentee landlord... Not as God... but those folk whose folk who owned them... raised their taxes... and got rich off their backs...

Beginning to see the world in this... and what Jesus is saying about that?...

The first slave is given 5 talents...of the landowners money... invests it... and happens to double it...

The same for the second slaves two talents...

The third... Well this is where it gets interesting... he buries his one talent...

Now traditionally we've said... isn't that terrible... imagine having a talent... a wonderful thing (almost an Abba song)... Look what happens to you when you don't use it fully... you are thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth...

The third slave is asked about his return... "You are a wicked man... you reap what you do no sow"... so here's your talent back... I refuse to take part in your scheme that keeps the rich rich and the poor poor...

This hero... refuses to take part in an economy that divides... He speaks truth to power... in an honourable and peaceful way...

But then... of course... no happy ending... he is thrown out... where there is gnashing of teeth... In other words... he loses the little he had... by standing up... he loses everything... The parable comes true... that describes how the world works...

And so as Jesus often reminds us... blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake... for yours is the kingdom of heaven...

This is a picture of a world of computer companies that sound like a fruit... books companies that sound like a river... internet search companies that sound like a cardinal number... and an awful lot of other...

Here... Jesus knows what he is doing... with a subversive parable that speaks truth to power... a kingdom parable that says... this is what the world is like... and in following the kingdom ethic... sometimes we must be willing to risk and sacrifice our own comfort for the greater good... sometimes we have to take even one step against the system... and not condone what reduces our humanity... so that the absentee landlords get richer...

Now there has been cautious news about a vaccine... a feeling we will all get back to normal... this parable... and indeed our experience of these days... perhaps makes us restless about what we will go back to... this parable of Jesus... invites us instead... to speak truth to power... to reorder... reimagine... our parish... community... world...

Prayers for Others

Your book tells us – "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, think on these things."

In these last troubled months we have had so much time to think. May we find in our thinking a positivity to share with the people around us. Give us the strength to obey the rules and not to be wearied by them. May we stand up for whatsoever things are true.

Wherever in the world there are polarised views, may people find not only a physical peace in those places torn apart by war, but a mental peace that respects the opinions of others. May people who live in such terrible circumstances find just a little ray of hope, a tiny scrap of positivity to help them through the present to a future. May we all stand up for whatsoever things are just.

Wherever in our own community there are those for whom one solitary day succeeds another, wherever people are struggling to put a meal on the table, wherever people have lost hope or faith, wherever they are close to breaking point with the restrictions of present life, may we seek them out and stand alongside them for whatsoever things are honest.

Instead of comparing this Christmas to previous ones, may we compare it to the ordinary days which we are experiencing at present, and think of ways in which we can give it a special meaning. May we use the wonderful story of Christ's birth to channel hope within our community.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, may we think on these things.

Lord, give us the strength to do so. Amen.

Benediction

Go in peace into the world
And plant there a word, a hope, a moment
Of justice
Of truth
Of love

And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

Announcements

Thank you for the chance to travel together today... for being a community from Houston & Killellan and New Kilpatrick... Let's do this again... its not difficult... Both have much going on... you can go to houstonkillellankirk.org and nkchurch.org.uk for all this weeks activities...

For New Kilpatrick... let me highlight... Tuesday's singsong and weekly quiz night and Thursday sofa surfers and coffee pot own Friday morning... all details on the website and bulletin...

Thank you to Kirsteen Maclean for her prayer this morning and Pam Douglas for reading.

Let's catch up soon whenever we can... Take care.