

God Expects Us To Grow [Mature]

The parable of the talents [Matthew 25:14-30] describes the consequences of two attitudes to the return of Jesus Christ.

This time Jesus will return as King of Kings, Ruler and Judge.

The person who diligently prepares for Christ's return by investing their time and talent to serve God will be rewarded with many blessings.

Matthew 25:24-30 [NIV] *“Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, **harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.** So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And **throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**””*

The person who has **no** heart for the work of expanding the Kingdom of God will be rewarded by being sent into outer darkness, that is far away from God's presence, who is the source of all light.

This one talent man was thinking only of himself. He hoped to “play it safe” and protect himself from his master who he saw as a hard man. He was judged for his self-centredness.

We must not make excuses to avoid doing what God calls us to do.

It is always a temptation for the person who sees themselves with just one talent to say *“I cannot do much at all with my talent, so why try?”*

Yet this person has to add but one talent to receive the same reward as those who added two or five talents.

Our time, abilities and money are not ours in the first place, we are only stewards, caretakers not owners.

When we ignore, squander or abuse what we have been given by the Creator God, we are rebellious and deserve to be punished.

How do we ensure that we double our one talent?

John 15:1-5 [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. **No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

We have to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. To bear the fruit [talents] that God expects. This relationship is as close as the branch is to the trunk of a tree.

How does this growth of fruits happen?

John 14:15-20 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you.** Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

We are joined to Jesus Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

The fruit of our intimate relationship with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will be the fruits [talents] that God expects and deserves as the giver and sustainer of our life.

This is not the end of this fruitful maturing life.

Fruit produced by any plant in God’s physical creation is always for the benefit of something other than the plant itself.

Others gather the fruit produced by the plant and are nourished by this fruit and in most cases the fruit contains the seeds for additional growth and fruit.

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

The Holy Spirit cannot be stagnant.

He always comes into our lives, produces fruit and flows out for others to benefit from the fruit produced.

John 4:13-14 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, **the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**”*

Eternal life “*living waters*”.

The fruit produced in us by the Holy Spirit must flow out of us to offer to others the opportunity to receive eternal life.

That is the gospel message our lives must be expressing.

For all of this to happen in our life we must have a certain attitude towards God.

Matthew 5:6 [NIV] *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*

If we are ourselves “*thirsting*” for God’s “*righteousness*” to be in and overflowing out to others.

Note it is **not** our righteousness but God’s righteousness.

How do we receive this righteousness of God?

Romans 4:3-8 [NIV] *“What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now when a man works, his wages are **not** credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does **not** work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, **his faith is credited as righteousness.** David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

Our faith in what God has already done for us through the sacrifice in what God has already done for us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross allows God to credit the righteousness of Christ’s perfect sin-free life to us. Not earned, not deserved, but received as a gift of our faith and trust in God providing all we need.

If we feel that we have not been producing this fruit as yet in our lives don’t give up, help is at hand.

Luke 13:6-8 [NIV] *“Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig round it and fertilise it.’”*

Ask Jesus Christ [the man who was looking after the vineyard] **to “dig around us and fertilise us”,** the digging could be painful but Christ nourishing us with His Word [flesh] can become a joy-filled experience.

The desired fruit will be the end result.