

Recognition of the Master (Matt. 25)

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Matthew 25, verse 14.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.

To every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money. [00:01:02] After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents. Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents.

Behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

[00:02:01] His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that which is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. [00:03:07] Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one

that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[00:04:01] The last few days has taught us in this country something we may have realized before, but some of us more certainly than ever, that the world expects that its parties and its factions should be declared unseen through leaders, and there has never been a day when it was possible for everybody to know the face of the leader.

They think it's important. I'm not so sure from their point of view that it is, I don't know, but I do know that it's not a new idea.

It is one that the world has at last got round to and made possible. But it's always been necessary for the Christian to know and recognize his leader.

[00:05:06] And it's the more necessary today, and that's why I speak a little about it this evening, recognition of the Master, to know him so that I know the difference between his appearance and the appearance of anybody who seeks to take his place, a recognition so that I am dependent upon the guidance of his eye and the look that he bestows as he catches the eyes of those who look up to catch his.

But it's the more necessary today since Christianity has become just another religion.

[00:06:05] It's been like that for quite a time, but it's even more so today. It's just another of the world's religions in the eyes of many people. It's a set of rules.

They're pretty good rules, too. Other rules have crept in, of course, but basically they're sound. There are people who are non-Christians who like the Christian rules of Christianity, but it's very necessary that those of us who really have been saved really know the Savior for who he is, to be able to recognize him today.

One day, every eye shall see him.

[00:07:04] Those who don't want to see him will see him. God is, of course, never, never behind.

Are the world's intentions and schemes and developed techniques? God has promised greater things than any man will ever be able to invent.

And every eye shall see him.

God has said so, but not yet.

And hence a little examination of our position tonight in this room, of our position today as we stand in this point of time. We need eyes to see and ears to hear.

The Lord Jesus spoke of the necessity for that, ears to hear, not just to listen, but [00:08:06] to hear.

And we need our understandings to be opened. He taught us in his Word, we are taught in the Word about this, in order to be able to recognize one great person who is so great that every time we learn, we think about him seriously no matter how old we may be or how experienced or how learned, as we were hearing this afternoon, in the things concerning himself, and one remembers from the past men who lived to ninety, men of ability, men who spent the whole of their lives, by grace, in the service of the Saviour, who came to say as they grew the older, look up and look [00:09:03] to Jesus, catch the meaning in his eye and see him, recognize him, for he is the eternal life.

A few examples of what I mean, the unconscious have not been very clear. I am speaking of the recognition of the Lord personally, not just a system or something that bears his name, but of the Lord personally. When I think of that, there are four examples before me, but many more have floated across my vision, but four will do, and I think of the dying thief.

The same examples I am going to take, I think of the dying thief, a man who was saved from [00:10:01] badness, and we all know we mean badness.

When God picks an example to place before my eyes, my dear young believer, it is never a sickly illustration, it is never painted in colors that cannot be easily recognized.

God paints in strong colors. He paints in such a way that no one can mistake what he means. When God allowed us the glimpse into the private life of the dying thief who was saved, he gave us a real picture of the power of the Savior.

But what was the interview like?

We know the circumstances, we can hardly bear to think of them, hanging there about to die, [00:11:02] in terrible circumstances and under agonizing pain. I am speaking of the man, more terrible the position of the Savior hung up there and reviled.

But what was the, how do we know, how do we know that this man had forgiveness, had salvation after such a life, after such a death?

Because he said, Lord.

He recognized by grace.

He was granted the faith, don't ask me how, to recognize the one hanging next to him. He took some recognizing.

He had come so low, he had gone so far, he had submitted to such circumstances. [00:12:04] His face was more marred than any man, his form more than the sons of men.

But the dying thief looked and said, Lord, remember me.

You know, the Lord Jesus was able to say today, shall thou be with me in paradise. My point is, though, it was a personal contact, it was personal recognition on the part of such a person.

Then there's another extreme case of need. Not badness this time, the depths of badness, but I believe the heights of madness, Mary Magdalene.

We don't have a record of her being relieved of seven devils, but we are told that that [00:13:07] was so, an extreme case.

I don't think I've seen a man with one devil. I sometimes think I have, and that's bad enough, but I've often thought of Mary out of home when seven devils, what she was like then, I don't know.

What I do know is that it took a personal contact with this blessed person, Christ himself, before she could be relieved. How do I know that? Because she spent the rest of her life looking for him, and being near to him. The personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ was very important to Mary.

[00:14:01] Is he important to you? I mean his personal presence. Not the knowledge of the Bible, very important that. Not to know and be able to run through all the prophetic wonders of the scriptures, very important. But what about the personal presence and your recognition, my recognition, of the person of our Saviour?

I rely upon that wonderful moment when, in God's marvellous ways, he chose a woman who had known what the terrible state of demon possession was to the seventh degree. He chose her in order to be the recipient of the greatest piece of news of all time, I believe, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[00:15:04] As he came and made himself known to her, you remember, he spoke her name.

She couldn't recognise him. This is a little of what I mean. He wasn't immediately recognisable to her physically. He was risen from the dead.

We do know that the Lord's personal appearance was a very scarce and precious thing after his resurrection from the dead. The world hasn't seen him since they nailed him to the cross.

God is holy.

We may, at times, strike an attitude of familiarity with God and with the Saviour and stand with our hands in our pockets and a smile on our face and address him as though he was our [00:16:06] long-lost brother, but he is holy, he is great, he is God.

Let us be careful that we don't, in our enthusiasm for modernism and for an easy, careless rapture in the world today, overstep the bounds of the importance of this person and impinge upon him, upon his dignity, upon his glory.

I can tell you that those who love him best and know him nearest approach with the greatest care. I read some time, some years ago, of a man who, when he kneeled to pray, and I've tried it myself in my small way, never uttered a word, even in silence, even in the silence [00:17:07] of his room, never uttered a word until he settled himself and reminded himself that he was about to speak to the one who made the universe, who made all things, and yet that one so great and gracious and so full of love, because God is love, that he has come near enough to be heard and seen.

Indeed, he came near enough to be touched and handled. I can't understand a grace like that, but it's true.

But I fear myself to take advantage of that great position, however, no more about that, I must say that Mary Magdalene was approached by the Saviour who had so had contact with [00:18:10] her that she knew the very sound of her name as it fell from his lips.

He only said, Mary, and she said, Master.

She recognized him, and then those two on the way to Emmaus, I am very fond of them, they teach me so much.

Sadness was their trouble, and I don't wonder, but as they walked along, you remember, once again he drew near and went with them.

He, Jesus himself, drew near and went with them. [00:19:02] Every word of that little sentence fraught with the love of God and the care and gentleness and care not to impose himself, though he be God, upon their privacy and their individuality, he went with them.

And he cautiously, carefully approached them until they invited him into the house.

But it says in the story, at a certain moment, as they had invited him in, still not knowing who he was, with their eyes unopened as to exactly the person, it says their eyes were opened and they knew him, they knew him, personal contact.

[00:20:04] And it cleared away, of course, the sadness which filled their hearts, though it was a sadness not produced by sin, not produced by strain, but produced by losing contact with the one they believed to be their saviour. Wonderful I think it is. So here we have badness defeated by a personal contact with this wonderful person.

Madness defeated by the personal contact of this wonderful person. Sadness wiped away, dissipated by personal contact with this wonderful person. There's one other I cannot and dare not leave out. And that is defeatism, Peter and John.

[00:21:03] In the twenty-first chapter of John, it's all over, was Peter's feeling.

He didn't understand it, he had been forgiven, he had been restored, but let's go fishing, he said.

Let's go back to my job. I've often thought what a nice thing, that he had the character to say, oh well, we don't sit down and cry, we get on with the job of life. I don't try to cash in on this wonderful experience and write a book and make a fortune and sit in an armchair or a deckchair all my life. Now let's go fishing, he said. I like the character of the man, though he didn't know very much, but the moment came when Jesus drew near, and it was John who knew the Lord probably more closely in this [00:22:04] intimate loving way, who said when he saw what happened, it is the Lord.

Not it is Jesus of Nazareth, not it is the Son of God about whom he was going to write, not it is the Messiah, it is the Lord.

That's what we need. That was what I mean by recognition of the person of the Lord, when otherwise he was seemingly in disguise, when all the world around him didn't recognize that this was the one who some hours before or days before had hung on the cross. He would say that's all very well, that's what people were saved from while he was down here, but where is he now?

[00:23:04] He was still here then for a few days. He could be contacted, he's not here now, no, he's not.

But we have the scripture and we have something else which is of vital importance and which Jesus commends, and that is faith, given us by God for the very purpose of being used today, ever since he went, being used.

And I've seen young men walk back and say, oh, don't talk to me about faith, I want something a bit more tangible than that, you're not going to get it yet, yet, yet. And I think of Thomas when I think of this, you see, the Lord Jesus has left us all the evidence, and God has caused his word to be written in the power of the Holy Spirit [00:24:06] so that we have all we need in order to live today as though he was here to be seen with our natural eyes. You say that's a bit of a tall order, yes it is because faith is a tall order. It is something as tall as God can provide, it's as wide and as great as God can give as a gift to us, and he empowers us to it.

The Lord Jesus said to doubting Thomas, well, you do very well to believe, now I've stood before you and you have the opportunity of proof, which Thomas, you remember, didn't dare to take.

He had a holy respect for the blessed risen Saviour. He didn't attempt to put his hand on his shoulder and shake him and shake his hand. [00:25:02] He didn't draw near in familiar gesture and say, well, there you are, I was wrong not to believe it, and now how are you keeping? There was nothing of that. He didn't even put forth his finger into the marks of his hand or thrust his hand into his side, though the gracious, blessed Saviour invited him to do so.

What grace!

But Thomas didn't need to do so, why? Because he had that holy person before him, and that convinced him enough. That was perfect convincing for Thomas. And then we read that this personal recognition of the Saviour leads us, it has saved us from things.

Now we see it leads to three very positive things. [00:26:03] We see Jesus, it says in the second of Hebrews, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour.

The world only saw him and sees him today as somebody who was well and roundly defeated on the cross.

He died, spectacular they think, a marvellous piece of propaganda the enemy says, that he should be pilloried in such a way as to show himself that kind of loving person who would die for what he believed and die for those around him. But our risen Saviour, no thank you they say, no thank you. But the apostle writes, we see Jesus, we see Jesus.

It was Jesus who was crucified. We see him crowned with glory and honour. So by faith we are led on to see him in victory, crowned with glory and honour.

[00:27:10] But before he had gone to the cross, Jesus said something very precious to everybody here I'm sure.

In that 18th of Matthew, verse 20, he said as he spoke to his own, where two or three are gathered together, there am I.

Not just a recollection of me, but there am I in the midst of them.

There's never any exaggeration in scripture. That's a thing you'll never find. It says the kind of thing does scripture, that any man would have to exaggerate to the nth degree to come anywhere near saying, but it's not exaggeration in scripture because it's God who writes that word and he doesn't need to, he doesn't do it. [00:28:05] And Jesus spoke no idle word.

He would have been imperfect if he'd spoken an idle word because every one of us will have to give account for every idle word. He gives account for nothing, there are no idle words. And he said, where two or three are gathered together in my name, now that supposes that he wasn't there. You don't gather together in some place to the name of some person if he's there. That's a piece of nonsense. You're in his presence. But where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, there am I.

But what in connection with what was it said? Prayer to start with, and worship, prayer and worship are the things that Jesus said [00:29:05] he would attend. The kind of meetings he said he would always attend would be those where his own gathered together in his name with him before them, recognizing his personal presence. This is important.

And then one could multiply these quotations, but then there's a word about that wonderful thing we do, that Jesus asked us to do.

He said, this do for a remembrance of me. You've seen me break the bread. And he said, as he broke it and gave thanks for the bread and the breaking, he said, as he turned his eyes upwards and gave thanks, he said to them, take, eat, this is my body [00:30:02] which is for you, and of the cup, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, my blood which is shed for you. This do in remembrance of me.

I don't need to lead you through the intricacies of that. I'll leave you, if you don't know too much about it, with the beautiful plainness of the speech uttered by the Lord Jesus and confirmed by the Apostle Paul who wrote that he had received this from the Lord, the risen Lord, because God left it to a man.

For the sake of emphasis, he left the clearest instruction about the remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of bread to a man who wasn't there when the Lord Jesus instituted it. [00:31:01] I know you know this, but it gives a sense of foundation and confirmation to my own soul to see in Scripture not vagueness but precision and emphasis laid on the right things.

So for remembrance, and then there's a word of warning, about those who once again took liberty with the presence of the Lord. Familiarity led some of them, believers, to have the breaking of bread in early days in such a fashion, we get it in the Corinthians, that they ignored the personal implications.

They were not discerning in the bread the Lord's body.

[00:32:06] They didn't discern.

I know it means nicely judged that that is a special occasion and that is the Lord has said, this is my body.

I know it means that, but it's very closely connected with a personal recognition, a recognition of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and why do I discern, and why can I discern, and why should I take special steps with myself before I go to make sure that I am going to discern the Lord's body? You see, it's quite easy to go into a church and perform a religious rite, R-I-T-E, a religious rite by taking holy communion and not discern the Lord's body.

[00:33:07] It's done.

I'm not concerned with what's done. I'm concerned with ourselves in the doing, that we should recognize the holiness of the precious Saviour, and that the Lord has specially requested I should do this for a remembrance of Him, including the discernment, including the act, and including the showing forth or announcement of this great fact of the Lord's death, showing it forth. He has left us with the privilege. He has given us the responsibility, something that might not happen again in this world if Jesus comes in the next five minutes. It will be over.

We'll have done it. We'll have had the privilege, if you only broke bread for the first time last week, [00:34:05] of doing it. One of the greatest acts, I believe, it will be seen from eternity that was ever laid upon men to do, and we were ever given the privilege of carrying out in a hostile world. It's for remembrance, and how can it be that we can miss worship at such a time? Remembrance and worship, prayer and worship, the Lord promises in a special way His own presence because you need faith, but we've got the faith. We need to be careful about the exercise of the opportunity.

What on earth has this to do with verses we read?

Because I believe that those verses we read are part of a very wonderful series of revelations [00:35:02] the Lord Jesus made when He was on earth. I've never known such verses in chapters 24 and 5 that are so continuously mixed up by those who talk about them in all sorts of places. I'm no great expert, but I do believe that this section is the last of three revelations the Lord Jesus made, the end of the 24th chapter, the parable of the virgins in the beginning of the 25th, well known to us all, and this one all deal with a period in which we live.

It's not the Jews, it's not the Gentiles, it's Christendom the Lord is talking about, [00:36:02] and it's this period, and each one of these sections, which is no business of mine even to outline tonight, has the coming of the Lord in it from the position of responsibility, from the position of hope, and that of individual action, which we have in these few verses I've read.

It speaks about this great Lord Jesus Christ, some men say the founder of Christianity. Dear, dear, he is Christ and that's what we need, not Christianity, but he did, as he left this world for a long time, it says here, he was going a long journey. He gave every one of those who were in the bounds of his kingdom, he gave them some of [00:37:11] the share capital of that kingdom, he gave them a piece of the gold reserves of his kingdom, he gave them a talent, at least one talent. A talent is a piece of

money. It interests me because I believe I'm right in saying, but correct me afterwards if I'm wrong, that a talent in the Bible is a piece of money, a valuable piece of money, a valuable load of money if you like.

But it's turned from the Bible into our common language, the way the Lord talked of it here, so that now when we think of talent, we think of ability, we think of gift, we think of [00:38:03] a talent to write poetry or music.

That's what the Bible does to our language.

As Jesus told the story, it was hard cash belonging to the king and he trusted every person in the kingdom with it, everyone.

And everybody knows what it is to live in a Christian country, everybody, and not everybody does you know, those in Christendom are every person in official Christianity have a talent, have a talent.

We've all been given something with a responsibility to use it for the greatest master, not only [00:39:03] the world but the universe has ever seen, and there's going to be a day of reckoning. When he comes again, every person who has had the privilege of being in a Christian country will be called to account.

Let's talk just for a moment about that awfully responsible person who got one talent. We've all got one talent.

What can it be?

Well he took it and he dug a hole and he hid it and he had the impertinence to say to the greatest Lord of all, there it is, it's yours, take it, now you've got what's yours.

[00:40:05] That's what every person who's had the opportunity to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but slothfully neglects it, carelessly ignores it, or willfully and lazily buries it, is doing.

That accounts for the harsh words of the master who said, you thought you knew what sort of a man I am, the man was wrong of course, he's not a hard master, he's not a hard person. It's totally out of character, the kind of thing this slothful servant said about the Lord. It's the sort of thing that the person who has heard the gospel and rejects it out of hand does think about the Lord.

[00:41:04] And therefore the Lord said, thou wicked, I said you he never exaggerates. There's only one place for the wicked. The devil himself is called the wicked one, thou wicked and slothful servant, and he had him cast into outer darkness, that's how I know he wasn't saved. No saved person will ever find himself in outer darkness.

It's a responsible thing to have ever heard the gospel, to have ever been under the influence of it.

There's nobody in this room tonight either can plead they've never heard and never been under the influence of it. Do beware.

If for some reason you've come in and you don't really believe the Saviour, you're here [00:42:07] for

goodness knows what reason, do be careful.

Do wake up tonight.

The Master has conferred an enormous benefit upon you, but benefit always carries responsibility. What I wanted to say was to myself.

You have talents.

If you've turned to the Lord Jesus as your Saviour gratefully, you've done something with the first talent that everybody's been issued with, the mere possibility of having the chance to be a Christian, you've used it.

You've used it for its glory.

There'll be some profit to him out of that, but the chances are you have many more than [00:43:02] that. Who do you think it was who gave you that special capacity that only you have, at least that you have? Tell, tell me.

In an audience like this that you've no gift? Don't tell me that. Though it may be not to preach, it may not be to teach, but some gift.

That ability you have to attract the attention of the child and hold it. Oh, I haven't got that, say you, I can't bear the sight of a class of children. Well, what about your ability then to sit beside some lonely old person in an old person's home and talk to them so that they warm and wake up and listen?

You know the Saviour? [00:44:02] You can use that, can't you? And the thousand and one types of gift there are, every one of us given something. The Lord gave according to their several ability, it's very wide. I don't know whether anybody here could tell me why he spoke only of five and two. I think somewhere there's arithmetical progression in it somewhere, but I'm not a mathematician. And I'm not learned in those things, there are many talents. Let me plead with myself to be more careful to use what I've been given, to use it for pity's sake, no, for Jesus' sake. Use it.

Take it out and exercise it, because he is worth an increase.

[00:45:03] You notice that when he came, they stood before him and the one with five said, I've got another five Lord. They didn't say, I've got five converted souls for you Lord, I've got another five talents. He had by his trading increased the wealth of the king.

That's it.

By using what you've got, you'll increase the wealth of that which belongs to he who has graciously entrusted each one of us with something. A little it is, he's very wealthy, but he's entrusted us with a little, he said, to each one of them, whether it was the five or the two men. He said the same words here, well done, good and faithful servant. [00:46:02] Now it's been faithful in a few things.

Five talents may seem an awful lot of money to you, but it's a few things compared with what I'm going to put into your hands. I will make you ruler over many. There's the day of rewards coming and

it's based not on success but on faithfulness, on goodness and faithfulness.

Preach, go on preaching. Teach, go on teaching. Spread the word by every means. Help and help and help, do everything except ignore your talent or bury it. Because the words good and faithful, he did not say highly successful.

You don't any more than the farmer have to worry about the increase of the seed as it [00:47:06] comes up.

You sow the seed, God does the rest. And so he said to them both, finally, this is lovely, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. There's a day of very great joy coming. His joy, he shall see of the travel of his soul and he who is not easily satisfied he has so much will be satisfied, won't he?

He has everything and yet he wants to receive something from you. That's why he's entrusted you with a talent, two talents, three talents, four talents, five talents. Look about to see how many he's put in your pocket spiritually and pull them out not just [00:48:02] to polish and blot over but to exercise and use.

And then you'll be entering into the joy of your Lord in that coming day. There could be quite a spell of sorrow between but he knows all about that. And why do we exhort each other to do this?

Because as we do this we see him by faith and we say, it is the Lord.

It makes all the difference as it did to Peter and John. It is the Lord, no one else.