

The Parable of Pounds

#0031

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—June 22, 1979

Our text this evening is found in Luke, the 19th chapter. Before we read our scripture, I want to ask you a few questions.

Have any of you ever been to an auction of any kind? May I see your hands? Did you take anything home with you? There are people who just enjoy going to auctions; they like to watch the bidding and the sales, but they never take anything home with them. They just watch what's going on.

There are people who come to church that way. They just watch while other people engage in things. If there are any of you here tonight who see yourself in that picture, I hope tonight you'll enter right in, because there's something here for you. But you can miss it while others get it.

Did any of you ever go to a picnic lunch? May I see your hands? Did you get anything to eat? Probably you did. But would it possible for a person to attend a lunch and watch all the other people eat and never get anything themselves? Could that happen? Sure, it could happen. In each case, you see, there's a possibility of being *spectators* rather than participants.

Now, some people here tonight are going to participate. I hope there won't be any who will be mere spectators. But you know who decides in an auction whether you buy something or not? You do. Who decides at a lunch whether you eat anything or not? You do.

This will that God has given people: the power of decision, the power of choice. It's really a marvelous thing, isn't it, friend? A marvelous thing. The power to choose to just watch while something happens, or to enter into it and have a part in it. Oh, I pray that God may help us to receive that which has for each one of us tonight.

And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come"
Luke 19:11–13.

I was interested in discovering that this word 'pounds' comes from a word that represented about a hundred days wages of labor. So when the nobleman gave

each of his ten servants a pound, he was giving them the equivalent of a hundred days wages to invest, to use.

“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading” Luke 19:13–15.

What did he expect? He expected that they’d have more when he got back than when he left.

“Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds” Luke 19:16.

He had how much? Ten times as much. The Lord was apparently gone more than a few days. But that was a good return, wasn’t it?

“And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” Luke 19:17.

This nobleman had gone to receive a kingdom. He received it and came back with authority over all that part of the country. Now he had cities under him, and he was looking for men who were talented and had good administrative ability. It was doubtless with this in mind that he distributed these pounds, talent, this money to his servants before he left.

And as the man who had received the one pound now had ten times as much, and the nobleman who had now received the kingdom and had authority now to put him over places, gave him authority over *ten* cities.

“And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities” Luke 19:18–19.

Why did the nobleman give this servant five cities when he had given the other servant ten cities? Because the servant had demonstrated good ability, but not as much as the first. The first servant apparently had more capacity. The nobleman didn’t reprove the second man because he didn’t get as much as the first. He was pleased and gave him authority and responsibility commensurate to what he could do.

“And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up

that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" Luke 19:20–23.

If the man was so lazy that he didn't want to do anything in using this pound in work, and didn't want to invest it in goods and sell them or do anything else that took work, he could have at least have deposited it in the bank. As the result, when the nobleman came back, he could have received his own with usury: that is with interest.

There are those who think that the Bible teaches that no one should pay interest, and no one should charge interest. This is an interesting parable, and Jesus told it to show that there is a proper place for interest. Usury in the sense of absorbent interest, taking advantage of a poor man, and making it difficult for him is condemned in the Bible. But the proper use of money, as well as of time and all other talents, is commended by the Word of God.

What is the result?

“And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him” Luke 19:23–26.

At the end of the story, we find a man with twelve pounds that started with one. Here's another man with six pounds who started with one. And here's another man that started with one pound and he has none. When the story ends, he doesn't have any. Everyone here tonight fits in somewhere in this story. Everyone is either increasing at a fairly rapid rate the talents and capabilities the Lord has given him, or increasing those at a more gradual rate, or else really not doing anything with them. As a result, eventually, they'll be taken away.

They tell me that up in Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, are fish in the waters up there that have no eyes and therefore no possibility of being able to see. They can't see. For generations they have not used their eyes. They live down there in the darkness. It's an interesting illustration of the fact that gifts that are not used eventually dwindle and are taken away.

What a great privilege it is to be on the *growing* side, friends. God help us to be. I'm trusting that God will awaken some heart here tonight to *do* something about your opportunities to *do* something about what you have.

Those servants might have said, "Well, after all, all we have is just one pound. That isn't much. The nobleman himself called it very little. Did you notice that in the

17th verse? So what you have may be very little in your own, and it may be very little. But if you would use that, Jesus says it will increase. God is not only developing us, But He's also measuring us, He's testing us.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" Luke 16:10.

Can it be that the man who took what would be equivalent to a hundred days wages, and invested it, revealed to the nobleman his ability to administer *ten* cities? That's the lesson in the parable. Ten cities. But he was faithful, the Lord said, in a very little.

Children can be taught mathematics just as well with pennies as they could with silver dollars, or twenty-dollar gold pieces (when they used to have twenty-dollar gold pieces around). The decimal system works whether you're running it with pennies or dimes or dollars or ten dollar bills or hundred dollar bills or thousand dollar bills. It's the same principles. And the principle of faithfulness is revealed in how a little girl washes dishes, or how a boy mows the lawn or hoes the corn. It's revealed in how we pay our bills, whether those bills are small bills or larger bills.

Our faithfulness is demonstrated in how we look after the interest of our loved ones. The husband who is faithful in being attentive to his wife, and the wife who is faithful in being loving and helpful to her husband, the parents who are faithful in combining love and discipline in the training of their children, and the children who are faithful in obedience to their parents based on love and appreciation, there in that little family circle each one is demonstrating the faithfulness that God can use on a much wider stage in the days to come. Thus it has been down through the ages that God has prepared His workers. Faithfulness in little things is the preparation for the larger things.

I was interested in this statement:

"While the shepherds were watching their flocks on the hills of Bethlehem, angels from heaven visited them. So today, while the humble worker for God is following his employment, angels of God stand by his side, listening to his words, noting the manner in which his work is done, to see if larger responsibilities may be entrusted to his hands" *Ministry of Healing*, page 477.

What are the angels doing? They're around, looking over this campus. You who live off the campus, they visit your home too. Wherever you are angels come, unseen, invisible, but nonetheless real. What are they looking for? God is looking for people who can do a larger work.

Someone says, "Oh, I'm so glad. I wish I could do a larger work."

What are the angels taking inventory on? What you're doing *now* with what you have.

I was thinking of it in a monetary way. Do you know how to save money? Someone said, "Oh, I would if I had more to save." I'm not so sure of it. I heard a treasurer once with a smile make this remark: "In order to know that the average American family needs to live on, take their income and add ten percent." While he said it with a smile, he was bringing home a lesson. Do you know that the total debts of American people today are more than *all* the debts of *all* the people who have ever lived anywhere in the world since Adam and Eve began? That's the debts right here in the United States. It's fashionable to be in debt. In fact, if you're not in debt, you are a queer bird. I hope you enjoy the distinction.

It's surprising how some people can save a *little*, no matter how little they receive. And it's equally surprising how people with *large* incomes can't even make ends meet. It's a state of mind. Jesus, in giving us this lesson, is teaching us that God is looking to see how we handle a very little before He entrusts more to us. This will come close to some heart, and make it a *spiritual* matter, my friend. Take it to the Lord and pray over it and say, "Dear Lord, is there something you want to teach me about handling money, about how to be a good manager, how to use my pound in the way that you want?"

Some people have the idea that money should flow through their hands just like water in the pipe. Whatever they receive is gone by the next payday, sometimes before.

I remember when I was a boy, my brother and I used to go out and canvass. We'd sell magazines. It was during World War I, and we would go out to the army camps. But we soon learned that there was only one day of the month to go to the army camps. That was payday. If we went any other day but payday, very few of the soldiers had any money. They'd either spend it all on payday, or used it up in gambling, or paid off the debts they had accumulated from borrowing from some more thrifty soldier during the month.

What are you doing with the income you have? Someone may say, "I don't have any at all." Well then you have no responsibility to worry about, do you? But most of us see at least a few nickels once in a while. I'll leave it with the Holy Spirit to impress your mind. But there are other talents far greater than money that God has given us. Time is an interesting talent that He's given us.

Jesus told this story twice. The one we have read tonight He told up on the way to Jericho to Jerusalem just a few days before His triumphant entry. He told it another time a few days after. You can read that one in Matthew 25. He gave the parable to His disciples as they were sitting on the Mount of Olives in connection with the story of His second coming. In that story, as He told it there on the Mount of Olives, one servant was given five talents, another two, and another one. But in this story that He told there near Jericho, each man received one pound. They all received the same. By putting the two stories together, we learn that there are some ways in which our opportunities *differ*, and there are others in which we all have the *same*.

Do you know what talent we all have the same amount of? Time. Aren't you glad? This is one of the greatest talents of all. This is one of the greatest talents of all. It's what we do with it that determines our success or failure.

Back in 1904, our people, in the providence of God, purchased an old building in Glendale, a suburb of Los Angeles, and started to turn it into a little sanitarium. In the providence of God, there was a man in Southern California at that time that God was using to locate and get these sanitariums started. His name was John Burden. He became the first manager of that little Glendale sanitarium. He had been a manager of Saint Helena Sanitarium a number of years before. He was over in Australia to help get a work started there. Not long after getting the Glendale sanitarium started, he helped get Loma Linda started where our medical work became the great center.

About the time that Glendale sanitarium was started, the Lord gave His prophet a vision. In this vision, Christ was heard giving instructions regarding that Glendale sanitarium. He said that they had come to an important place in the history of the work. Who shall be chosen to carry responsibilities in the sanitarium at the beginning of its work? There were not to be any mistakes in that matter. Men were not to be placed in positions of trust who had not been tested and tried. That's a wonderful principle.

What method did the nobleman who went to receive the kingdom and came back, use to decide who would be given authority over the cities? He tested them with a very little. But the man who took one pound, and with careful management and hard work and good decisions, came back with ten times that amount, the nobleman said, "I'm going to give you responsibility to manage ten cities." The point is he had demonstrated his ability to make his income more than his outgo. He was able to multiply his assets. The same thing happened with the second man on a lesser scale. But all the third man had at the end was what he started with.

Some people don't even have that. There are some people you can turn over a department or an institution or a home to them, and the longer they're there, the bigger the debt is. This is a lesson for us to study individually, institutionally, in our homes, in our churches, and everywhere. What are we doing to develop and to demonstrate the talents of management that God has given us? Men are not to be placed in positions of trust who have not been tested and tried.

"Men in positions of trust are to be instrumentalities in the hands of God for promoting His glory, and in performing their duties with the utmost faithfulness they may attain perfection of character" *Selected Messages*, Book 2, page 161.

We think of perfection sometimes as a gift, and it is a gift, friends. But it's a gift something like the food we get. Jesus offers us food and it's a gift, but to get the benefit of the food that Jesus gives me, I have to do what? I have to eat it. And besides eating I have to do something with it. Do you know the importance of exercise? That's a law of physiology. It's one of the laws of God just as certain as the Ten Commandments. And it's so spiritually as it is physically.

If we are to have perfection of character, we must receive it as a gift from Jesus. But we must work it out and act it out in our lives.

“In performing their duties with the utmost faithfulness they may attain perfection of character” *Ibid.*

Notice how the same thought is expressed almost the same words in the page before:

“Perfection of character is attained through exercise of the faculties of the mind, in times of supreme test, by obedience to every requirement of God's law” *Ibid.*

By “performing duties with the utmost faithfulness, we may attain perfection of character. I’m glad God has given us mental faculties. He’s given us the ability to think, to listen, to reason, to weigh matters, and come to a decision as to what is right and what is wrong. He has given us the ability to come to a decision as to what we’re going to do about it, and then to put it all into action. As we do these things, what do we receive as the result? We attain perfection of character.

Someone says, “I didn't think you could do that. I thought God had to do it.”

Well, He does, friends. “Without Me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5) But oh, thank God, while *without* Him I can do nothing, *with* Him I can do everything. Everything He wants me to do; that’s all I want to do, isn’t that right? I don't want to go to the moon. Someone else can manage that. But the little work that He’s given me to do—the *great* work He has given me to do, for while it's little, it's great—that I can do, for I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. I thank God for this.

So tonight, friends, looking to the One who came and showed us how to walk this road, who took our human nature and grew up as we grow up, and learned as we may learn, looking to Him as our example, let's put all we have into the work with Him, and let Him develop our talent.

If we have only a few talents, that's all right. All we’re required to do is to be faithful. That’s all. What is being faithful? Faithful is doing the best we can with what we have. That's all.

You've heard of that man, who, in a battle centuries ago, was utterly discouraged because of the way the battle was going, and his sword broke. He threw it down. There was nothing he could do. But by and by, the Prince came, and somehow the Prince had lost his sword. He took that broken sword and led the remaining group to victory.

Oh, for eyes to see our opportunities, for hearts to rejoice in our privileges. To say, “Here Lord, I'll take my little pound, and instead of tying it up in a napkin and putting it on the shelf, instead of burying it in the ground, I will *use* my talent. Whatever it is, however small it may be, I'll use it to the best of my knowledge to please You.”

If we do that, friends, God will multiply our talents, and the life that Jesus has given us will shine out to many others.

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W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org