

“Risky Investments”

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Matthew 25:14-30

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See the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

That’s a good news story? Really? What do you think?

Jesus wants us to know something about living in this meantime. That’s the time after his life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. That’s the time before he returns, to complete his New Creation. It’s the mean-time, the time we’re in now.

Jesus calls us to follow him in this meantime. This story is about that. It is not a story about salvation. It is not a story about rich and poor. It’s about him and us. He is our Master and we are his servants. He has gone. Someday he’ll come back. What should we be doing in this meantime?

Everything hinges on what sort of Master Jesus is.

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In Jesus’ story, the Owner gives each account manager some talents. “Talent” was an amount of money. A huge amount! Roughly, in today’s dollars, to the first manager he entrusts \$15 million. To the second, \$6 million. To the third, \$3 million.¹ Big bucks!

The Owner wants them to put Her money to work. Maybe they’ll start a business or invest in trading. They are entrusted with different amounts, because the Owner knows who can handle what.

We don’t know what the first two do. Just that they do very well. Each doubles the money. I’m guessing they do not play it safe. Such a good rate of return requires risk.

We do know what the third account manager does. Buries it. Hiding valuables underground was considered wise, especially in times of danger. It is safe.²

But what is the danger the third manager is afraid of?

¹ “Talent” was a measure of weight, about 130 pounds. A talent of gold was worth a lifetime of wages for the average worker. Klyne R. Snodgrass, Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 553. The median individual income in Canada is about \$70,000. Assuming 40 years of work, that works out to just under \$3,000,000. That’s the approximate value of 1 talent. www.macleans.ca/economy/median-income-in-canada-is-over-70000-says-census.

² Snodgrass, 556.

III

The Owner.

He says so, right to the Owner. *"I know that you are hard! You harvest what you haven't sown, and reap where you haven't scattered the seeds."* She gets rich off the work of others. The Owner is unjust, and tough. That's what the third manger thinks.

So there is no way he will risk his Owner's wealth. Imagine what She'll do if he fails! He plays it safe.

A lot hinges on whether the third manager is right. It matters not just in the story. It matters in our discipleship, following Jesus. What is our Owner like?

IV

Well, the Owner finally come back and hears their reports.

The first account manager has grown 15 million into 30 million! The Owner says . . .

Well done! You are good and faithful!

You have been faithful with a fewthings — 15 million few things!

I will put you in charge of many things.

Come, and share your Owner's joy!

The second manager has grown 6 million into 12 million! The Owner says . . . the same thing!

Well done! You are good and faithful!

You have been faithful with a fewthings.

I will put you in charge of many things.

Come, and share your Owner's joy!

But now the third manager, who has grown 3 million into . . . 3 million. Safely and soundly, he returns it.

The Owner is not pleased. At the very least, the manager could have put the money into savings bonds. So the Owner takes that manager's account, and gives it to the first manager. Then, she makes the manager hand in his swipe card, his gym membership, and shown off the premises.

Was the third manager right about the Owner?

V

What about the fourth manager?

She is not in Jesus' story.³ Imagining her brings to light what we think of this Owner.

To this fourth manager, the Owner entrusts \$9 million. Like managers one and two, she gets to work right way, investing her Owner's money. She does not keep it safe. She risks it.

The result? She does not double it. She doesn't break even. She loses it, all her Owner's investment.

What does the Owner say to her?

If the third manager is right about the Owner's hardness and injustice . . . if the third manager is right to be afraid of the Owner, then this fourth manager, who has lost everything, had better start job-hunting.

But what does the Owner say to her?

I think she says this:

Well done! You are good and faithful!

You have been faithful with a few things.

I will put you in charge of more.

Come, and share your Owner's joy!

VI

Here's why I think so. Jesus is telling this story, about himself. He is our Owner.

We know that Jesus calls unqualified people (like us). We know Jesus restores failures (like us). We know Jesus pours out grace on those who don't deserve it (like us). We know he is not hard; his heart breaks. We know Jesus does not sit back while others do all the work; he goes ahead of us, and gives everything he has for his world.

The third, fearful manager is wrong about the Owner.

If you picture God as mean, as hard, as unjust and out to get you, the prospect of encountering God will be terrifying. God's judgement could feel like condemnation. God's truth might burn.

But those who know what Jesus is really like will experience him without fear. They will anticipate his judgement and truth, not with worry but delight and hope.

³ I'm borrowing (or, you might say "investing") this idea of a fourth manager (servant) from Doug Caldwell. He was a staff worker with Queen's Christian Fellowship, and first taught me the parables of Jesus.

VI

Jesus entrusts us with treasure! Each of us, and all of us together as his church-community.

Jesus entrusts us with the Good News of who he is and what he has done.

Jesus entrusts us with the Holy Spirit, God's intimate and abiding presence.

Jesus entrusts us with the fruit the Spirit bears in our changed lives, and the gifts the Spirit unwraps in our lives for others.

Jesus entrusts us with our community together as his disciples.

Jesus entrusts us with money, buildings, experience, and wisdom.

What wealth! What treasure!

If all of it was ours, we could do with it whatever we wanted. Like bury it.

But it is his. He entrusts it to us, for us to put it to work. To put it to work for him.

He entrusts us with what he knows we can handle.

He entrusts us with what we need to get the work done.

It's risky! We might put it to work, and fail. Just like my fourth manager did. And if our Owner was hard and unjust, we should worry.

But who is our Owner? What is Jesus like?

It seems he can handle failure.

He does not seem so keen about playing it safe. It seems that if we do not put to work the treasure he has entrusted to us, he might give it to someone else.

Is this a good news story? I guess it depends if you know the Storyteller.

I'm sure it is . . . the Good News of Jesus. Amen.