

- Building a Life

Matthew 25:21 His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

Sunday, November 19, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction

I think that we build a life over the course of years that we have on this earth. All that we say and do on a daily basis contributes to that life, which, as followers of Jesus Christ, we present to the Lord when we meet Him face to face. The wise are deliberate about this and have as their goal the words "well done, good and faithful servant." If you stand before the Lord in glory and hear those words, it will go well with you. It centers around faithfulness and being trustworthy, to the Lord and to each other.

- Being faithful

The Apostle John, in Revelation 21:10 tells the church of Smyrna to "be faithful unto death." In those dangerous times, and in the dangerous times for Christians in different parts of the world today, this phrase can mean "be faithful even if it costs you your life." Another shade of meaning is to be "faithful for all your life." Married couples make this vow on the day of their wedding and live it out for as long as both shall live. There are always challenges, but after counseling a few couples starting out their married lives together I've noticed that being faithful unto death is a lot easier when you can trust the people you're with. (p179-180,Zondervan 2023 Pastor's Annual)

- Set the stage

Toward the end of Matthew's Gospel, the Lord Jesus speaks of things to come and of the End of the Age, and by extension about what matters even if the world seems to be falling apart. There is, at the beginning of Chapter 25, the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, which tells us to live each day ready to meet the Lord and to live each day paying attention to one another as well. Then there is the Parable about the Talents. A talent was a sum of money worth about \$1,000.00, an enormous sum for that day. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a wealthy man entrusting money to servants for investment while his is on a long trip. Two of the servants do what they can with what they have and are richly rewarded. The third servant, who told the master that he was a "hard man" to his face, buried the talent and then gave it back. Things did not go well for the third servant.

- Main point: Let's look at "well done" and the heart of this parable is about the Lord's faithfulness.

The joy of "well".

Take a look at that phrase that begins with the Lord's comments. It is translated "well done" but it is one word in the original language and could be expressed as "fantastic" or "excellent!" There is an enthusiasm to it that implies that the Lord is heavily invested in your success in building a life. I can only imagine how His face lights up when He says this. Now please consider with me the heart of this parable, which is the Lord's faithfulness to us.

- This parable is really about the Lord's faithfulness

The Allstate Insurance Company for years claimed, 'You're in good hands with Allstate.'" It's attractive because security is a basic need, for our possessions, and especially loved ones and ourselves. Jesus made a similar claim for His people when He said, "I give them eternal life, and

they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." (Zondervan, p. 358) The Lord is faithful. The Lord is trustworthy. The great flaw of the third servant is that he viewed the Lord as unfair and not deserving of trust. Now the Lord can be stern, and exercises His right to judge, as the third servant discovered, but I believe that main thought to take away from this parable is that the Lord is faithful. He is trustworthy.

- I remember hearing a story about two brothers running errands in town. The older brother received his license and mom and dad trusted him with the younger brother and the car while they stayed and worked on the farm. For reasons unbeknownst to me, the older brother dropped off the younger brother near a convenience store while he wanted to take care of some business for his parents. He expected to return in about twenty minutes, but there was heavy traffic, and a sudden accident trapped the older brother in a sea of cars for nearly two hours. When he finally escaped the mess, he hurried back to the convenience store worried sick about his younger brother only to find him calmly waiting at the same corner, chewing on a candy bar, apparently without a care in the world. The older brother explained and apologized but the younger brother remained calm for the entire two hours. He knew that his older brother was an hour and forty minutes late, but he was unconcerned. He knew his older brother and he knew that he could trust him. Biblically, a key to being trustworthy and faithful is knowing that the Lord is trustworthy and faithful.

- Application or connection to church vision & Conclusion

The latter part of Matthew has Christ emphasizing faithfulness especially when the world is full of chaos. He includes the family Parable of Talents, featuring three servants charged with making investment for their master. Two did well and one did not. I think key to this parable is that the third servant failed to trust the master and the lesson for us is that Christ values faithfulness and is faithful Himself. Faithfulness and trustworthiness builds community and community is a major part of our vision as a church. Carry these thoughts when considering your days and may the Holy Spirit give us all insight and wisdom as we build our lives, and may we all hear "well done, good and faithful servant."