

Matthew 25:14-30

Aim of lesson

To show that we should use the abilities and opportunities God has given us to serve him.

Background study

Matthew 24:45-47; 1 Corinthians 12:4-26.

Suggested outline of lesson

Trusted employees

At the commencement of the story, point out that the master had to go away for a while and leave his servants in charge of his property. Show the trust he had in them in giving them the responsibility of managing his affairs. Note also the wisdom of the master in dividing the responsibilities according to his knowledge of each servant's ability. He left them in no doubt as to what was expected of them during his absence. They were to use what he had entrusted to them.

Describe what each servant did with his portion. The first two servants set to work immediately and made the most of their opportunities for their master's sake. Perhaps one of them bought a farm. He would buy seed and grow crops, and later buy cattle and sheep and make still more money. The other servant may, perhaps, have been interested in trading, buying wine, oil and spices to sell to people who were unable to go to the market. The third servant thought about his own talent and decided that it was no use trying to do anything with it. He didn't want to lose the money, and he also wanted to forget about it - not to be reminded all the time that he should have made use of it. He decided to hide it in a hole in the ground, and then went on his way without a thought for the return of his master.

The Master returns

Note the reaction of their master when he found out what each servant had done with the money he had entrusted to them. They each had to give an account of their labours. The master was pleased with the first two servants, because they had proved themselves to be loyal, obedient and hardworking and had sought to please him. They were generously rewarded. The master dealt harshly with the third servant because of his idleness and disobedience, and because he had given no thought to his master's wishes. Furthermore the third servant proved himself unworthy by making excuses for failing his master.

Using our own God-given gifts responsibly

There are several important lessons to be learned from this parable. The first and most straightforward for the children to understand is that God has given us the money we

have, since all we have comes from him. Some have more than others, but no matter how much or how little we have we can use it in ways which please or displease him. Secondly, discuss the English meaning of the word "talent" and the way in which we can describe people as talented, meaning that they are endowed with differing strengths or abilities. God has given us these gifts as well. Thirdly, talk about the different kinds of personalities of people, which fit them for different kinds of service. Most of us have abilities, talents, attributes of one kind or another, and have opportunities to use them to the full, either in God's service or exclusively for ourselves.

At the return of our master

Remind the children that in the story the master went away and came back, and that when he returned the servants had to give an account of what they had done. Ask the class who they think is represented by the master in the story. Explain that when Jesus returns, those who have dedicated their lives to him will receive far more than they could possibly imagine, and will be overjoyed to hear the words: "Well done".

Relevance to the children's lives

What do you think are your strong points? What abilities have you? Are you talented in any way? How can we use such qualities to serve God? What work did Jesus ask his disciples to do while he was away? (Mark 16:15). Is there any way in which you can help do this?

Worksheets

The talents are (left to right): running, writing, singing, games, drawing, baking, sewing, making things, swimming, gardening, painting, reading, maths, listening, and talking. The squares left should read 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for making us as we are, and for giving us the abilities we have. Help us to use our talents well, so that you will be pleased with the things we try to do. Amen.

Memory verse

'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:21).