

"You are only as good as your worst mistake" were the words that came after a big mistake. Upon making a mistake, Pastor James learned that failure was not the most damaging thing but that failure to try was the most damaging. With each failure we can gain understanding, learn a new skill, or become more proficient. Do we fear failure as we begin something new? We can't fail if we never begin. We can't say the wrong thing if we choose to never say anything at all.

God cares more about our success than we do. To accomplish His purpose in our lives only require that we put our faith in Him. We've all been given a talent - a purpose... **Matthew 28:18-19** *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."* We have all been called to this ministry in various ways.

When we put a talent to practice and are willing to learn, to sacrifice, and to apply ourselves, we develop our gift's usefulness. It calls for push-through to defeat, risks, failure, and mistakes. We will remain consumed by defeat if we don't take a risk. Are we at this place spiritually? Are we remaining on the sidelines, not investing, not pursuing what God has called us to.

In **Matthew 25**, Jesus tells us parables about the end times. **Matthew 25:14-18** *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money."*

These servants were given talents to do something with and after a long period were asked to give an account. The first two servants invested and after giving an account were given this response in **verses 21 and 23**, *'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.'* The third servant didn't invest his talent but only hid it and received this response in **verse 26**, *But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.'*

This parable is not about earning or working for salvation. We cannot earn salvation as it is a free gift. Jesus emphasizes in **verse 21 & 23**... *Well done, good and faithful servant.* It was their faithfulness that mattered and not the production. The third servant did nothing.

Here are five conclusions from this parable:

1. Jesus owns everything and we just manage it. All we have belongs to Him.
2. Jesus expects us to use what He has entrusted to us for His glory.
3. Don't be an idle person but be busy and faithful during a delay.
4. A misunderstood view of God is no excuse for poor stewardship.
5. Where there is not risk for God, there is no reward from God.

Jesus always emphasizes doing something for the Kingdom of God but not for salvation. **Matthew 7:19-20** *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruit you will know them.* **James 2:17** *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.* There are many that are satisfied with salvation and do nothing for the Kingdom of God. We are all gifted by the Holy Spirit for ministry, and when the Lord returns, we will have to give an account to Him. What will that day look like for each of us?

Our talent is not our own but to use for His Kingdom. Do we see people as "5-talent people" or "2-talent people"? Compare ourselves with others? No matter how much we are given, when we trust them to God, He will always bring the increase! It does not matter how many talents we are given - time, abilities, resources. God has invested in each of us. God brings the increase for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. It matters what we do with what He has given us.

Three points from this scripture:

- 1) It was not about their capacities or abilities, but everything to do with their faithfulness to use what they had. No matter what we start with today, put it to work. Stop focusing on what is not important and stop comparisons. Every one of us has unimaginable worth to the Father. He has chosen, ordained, gifted, and poured out the life of His Son to each of us. What love!
- 2) These gifts were given to increase the Master's desires, not for our own benefit. Joy then comes with the right use of what He gives us - invest it in others.
- 3) The attitude of the third servant shows he didn't know the Master. Do we misrepresent our Master? The third servant was entrusted but had no faith to go forward. The Bible should become more than just instruction and until it becomes a relationship it has no power to save. Relationship brings forth fruit. **I Corinthians 1:18** *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

What are you willing to do new? Frustrated that you are facing the same challenges? Take a step in a new direction. Be willing to take what we have to a greater investment. Are you talking to the same people over and over? What if we took a risk and did something different? What decision can we make to do this differently? God created each of us with purpose. Will we yield to that purpose today?

- To all that call ourselves saved... what calling, passion, or desire have we neglected? Let God reignite.
- To all who see God as judge and distant... He invites us to know Him as Father and to know that He is interested in our lives.

Our perspective of God is directly related to our relationship with God. Invite Him to come. Do you know God as Father? Do you know where you will spend eternity if you were to die today?

- **Romans 3:23** *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*
- **John 14:6** *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*
- **Romans 10:9** *That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Do you have a fear of failure when trying something new? What fear can you let go of?

What does God want to do in you today?

Do you have something God has given you that has been laying silent? How can you take the next step?