

The Rev. Jay Lawlor “How Do We Hear the Parable of the Talents?” St. John’s Episcopal Church, Speedway, IN

The Rev. Jay Lawlor discussed the parable of the talents in sermon at St. John's Episcopal Church in Speedway, IN on Nov. 19, 2017.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 28, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) discussed the context of the understanding of Rich and Poor in Jesus' day and how that may help us better understand the Parable of the Talents from Matthew 25:14-30.



It is a parable about the way things often were in Jesus' day, rather than the way things ought to be.”

The Rev. Jay Lawlor

The talents in the parable from Matthew are often used in our modern English language context and preached as a [sermon](#) on stewardship – it is that time of year in many congregations. It is also, if I'm being honest, the easier place to go for the preacher. There is less risk in talking about talents as our gifts

from God and how we are to faithfully give back a portion in service to God.

While we are to give back a portion of our gifts to God – there are plenty of other examples of this in scripture. Today, I would like to invite us to consider this parable as it was most likely heard by its first hearers in Jesus' day. We tend to read scripture – especially Jesus' parables – through our current cultural context and norms rather than first understanding them in the context of the first century Roman Palestine of Jesus' day. The context in which Jesus told the story.

But we miss some very big – and important – points Jesus is making if we rush to the place of our modern context. Our conversation needs to take a different direction if we are to be honest with the parable in both its original context, and application for Christians today.

The first thing to notice is that Jesus makes no mention of the scene he describes as being an allegory about the kingdom of God, like so many of his other parables. Absent is the “Kingdom of God is like...” which Jesus uses when he wants to tell us how his disciples are to be in the world. What we have is a story about a man going on a journey and leaving his property in the care of his slaves.

The property here are five talents, two talents, and one talent. A talent in the parable was the largest unit of currency in Jesus' day, a single talent estimated to be worth about fifteen years' wages for a day laborer. Needless to say, the man in the story is rich. Very rich.

The first two slaves go off and double the money that had been given to them. The third slave buries the one talent for safekeeping, so as not to risk losing it. Our modern contextual, capitalist, lens often interprets this parable as the first two slaves being faithful to what had been entrusted to them, and the third slave as lazy for not having produced a return on investment. The rich master in the parable certainly sees it this way – rewarding the first two slaves, and punishing the third slave as “wicked and lazy.” He then takes the one talent from him and gives it to the first slave and instructs that the third

slave be tossed out as worthless: “As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:30 NRSV)

But is this how Jesus sees it? Is this how Jesus told the story? Remember, [...]Jesus is not presenting the parable as like the Kingdom of God. It is a parable about the way things often were in Jesus’ day, rather than the way things ought to be.

The complete transcript of the Rev. Jay Lawlor's sermon, along with commentary notes, available at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/hear-parable-talents-sermon-rev-jay-lawlor-24-pentecost-year-nov-19-2017/>

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