

True Success

Matthew 25:14-30 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁴ “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents immediately went and did business with them, and earned five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way the one who had received the two talents earned two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “Now after a long time the master of those slaves *came and *settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have earned five more talents.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘**Well done, good and faithful slave.** You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter the joy of your master.’

²² “Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have earned two more talents.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘**Well done, good and faithful slave.** You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter the joy of your master.’

²⁴ “Now the one who had received the one talent also came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you still have what is yours.’

²⁶ “But his master answered and said to him, ‘**You worthless, lazy slave!** Did you know that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸ Therefore: take the talent away from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

²⁹ “For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰ And throw the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Introduction

We all know how the world measures our success according to how much cash we have, how many toys we own, how big the house we are living in, how big our salary is, and so forth). But, that's not how our God measures our success. E.g. The story of Toffey family. The Toffey's had two children. One year they had a vacation in Florida. They spent a fortune to see Disney World. On their way back to NJ, they stayed overnight in a motel. They spent their afternoon together in a pool there. As they were driving back home, the parents asked the kids what the highlight of their trip to Florida was. Without any hesitation, kids said that the time they spent with the parents in the pool. Not Mickey Mouse or Sleeping Beauty. Not all the rides they had, either. Nor the food they ate. The kids measured the success of the trip quite differently than the parents have thought. So does our Heavenly Father. He measures our success differently.

Content

Henry Nouwen was a Catholic priest and well-known author of over 20 books. He taught years at Yale and Harvard. For some reason, that didn't bring him happiness or peace. So, he quit the job, went to Peru in South America to live among the poorest of the poor. It didn't satisfy him, either. So, he came back to US and did more soul searching. Finally, he settled in a faith community in Toronto, Canada, called "Daybreak," where the mentally retarded people lived.

The first day he entered the community, he expected that everyone would recognize his outstanding achievements as scholar and author. *Professor, we are so impressed with your resume!* He sure hoped to hear such a greeting! To his great disappointment, however, it never happened. Not even one soul recognized his brilliance. On the contrary, all they cared about was whether he was going to stay with them or not. If you were Mr. Nouwen, how would you feel to live among the least and the most insignificant people in the world who care less how many trophies you have? We all pursue success. But let's make sure we pursue success that matters eternally. I would call it true success.

Consider our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God, who is equal to God and to Him every creature bows down. He emptied Himself and came to earth, not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Think of the way He came to earth. No fanfare. No celebration. Just a humble birth, born of

a virgin mother and laid in a manger---animal feeding tube! While He was growing up in Nazareth, some townsfolk showed no respect at all. In fact, they called Him “Son of Mary,” instead of “Son of Joseph.” It was a derogatory term in those days meaning an illegitimate child. He endured all of that. Think of the way He ended His life on earth. After ministering to thousands of people for three years, healing them, teaching them, and praying for them, He was executed on the cross with criminals.

Dying on the cross... what kind of death was it? It was a Roman capital punishment for convicted felons. Equivalent to electric chair nowadays. Crucifixion was no pleasant way of dying. It was violent. Humiliating. Hanging naked on the cross in public. Bleeding until you expire along with excruciating pain. For hours. Nonstop. Nobody in those days, even today, would want that kind of way of dying. Cross was the symbol of humiliation, failure, and curse from God. Yet, Christ chose that path---all to please His Father in Heaven. He chose such a life to fulfill God’s will for Him on behalf of sinners like you and me.

The point is that He didn’t mind how it looked to others. It was a total failure in the eyes of the world. But He would care less. All He cared about was how God would think of Him and His obedience. *If dying on the cross was God’s will for Me, He said, so be it. If I would be ridiculed and mocked, so be it. As long as that’s what My Father wants Me to do, I will do it.* That’s Jesus’ attitude toward success.

Let me tell you. His life was cut short in His 30s. He died miserably. He was betrayed by one of His own disciples. The other 11 disciples, they too abandoned Him when He needed them the most. Indeed, His life was a total failure in the worldly standards, but in God’s eyes it was the ultimate victory. God’s measure of success is so apart from the worldly measure. Question is: Do you agree, accept, and even live by such God’s measurement of success?

Three Aspects of True Success

God’s Word tells us about three aspects of true success.

1. True success is a **success that counts in God’s eyes**. To do God’s will is a true success. You may be nobody in the world, but in God’s eyes you can be somebody and vice versa. Just remember: Every life will be measured on divine scales of success. A huge success in the world may be found deficient in God’s eyes. E.g. The Writing on the Wall. During a great feast held by King Belshazzar, the last king of Babylonian Kingdom, a mysterious hand appeared and wrote some words on the

wall. The writing says: *Mene mene ‘Tekēl’ uParsin—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient* (Daniel 5:27). Although Belshazzar had everything anyone wanted, still he was found short in God’s eyes.

Interestingly, in the last judgment, Jesus the Messiah will measure everybody with the same scales of God in His hand. Revelation 6:5—*When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come!” I looked, and behold, a black horse, and the one who sat on it had a pair of **scales** in his hand.* Let your life count as success on God’s scales.

2. True success means **faithfulness** to the work God has assigned us to. It doesn’t matter who we are, what we are doing, wherever we are, or however small our task is. In all we do, God expects us to be faithful (Colossians 3:22). E.g. Brother Lawrence. Working in the kitchen doing the dishes. For years. None of his superiors are remembered years later, but people of God love his devotional book “In the presence of God.” Ask yourself, “Am I faithful to God who has called me into this job/family/church/situation?” On God’s scales of success, being faithful weighs the most.

3. True success always brings forth **rewards from God**.

In today’s text, we see three servants and one master. All three servants had one thing in common. They all worked for the same master. They all were entrusted with master’s money in different amounts. The master expected results of his investment from ALL his servants. After some time, he returned, and he wanted to hear how his servants did with the money he had given in their care. The first two servants made profits investing their master’s money. Again, the profit each servant made was not the same amount, however, both servants got the exact same praise from their master. “**Well done, good and faithful slave.** I will put you in charge of many things; enter the joy of your master (v. 21, 22).” Likewise, those who serve the Lord faithfully will receive heavenly rewards. The crown of life, righteousness, and glory await us.

The trouble with the third servant was not the amount of money he was entrusted with. Rather, *he didn’t do anything* with the master’s money. Perhaps, he didn’t like the master to begin with. Maybe, he was envious of his fellow servants who got more money than he did. Perhaps, he was just lazy and timid. Or, he didn’t want to be held accountable for his master’s money. Whatever it was, the master harshly reprimanded him, calling him, “**You worthless, lazy slave!**” (v. 26).

The lesson of the story is: God knows our abilities and gives us a task in our life. Some of us get more than the others. What matters is to do something with what God has entrusted in our care. It doesn't matter, whether you are a judge, policeman, politician, teacher, custodian, driver, mom, dad, or grandparent. It matters what we do with God-given responsibilities and talents. If Jesus comes again today, and asks us, "How have you done with what I have entrusted in your care?" What will you bring out to Him? Will you get compliments or reprimands? May all of us receive praise and reward from Him.

Conclusion

Do you want to be successful in your life? Then, don't pursue the worldly success. Rather follow God's standards. Aim for the success that matters eternally. Next, be faithful to the task God has called you to. Whatever form it may be. God has given you life and opportunity. Don't bury them in the ground. Don't be timid. Don't be lazy. Do something with it. Make the most of it. If you do, then God will reward you with heavenly rewards. He will tell you, "Well done! Good and faithful servant! Enter the joy of your Master!" Amen.