

Invitation to Greatness: Becoming a Good and Faithful Servant (Mt. 25)

I. GOD INVITES EVERYONE TO BE GREAT IN HIS KINGDOM

¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks (consistently) one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches (encourages) them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)

¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Mt. 23:11-12)

A. God invites everyone to be great in His Kingdom. This is a core teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (constitution of the Kingdom). We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because the great God designed our spirit with this longing. We must repent for seeking it in a wrong way as well as for neglecting to seek it in the way Jesus exhorted us to. Without the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is much more difficult to sustain.

B. Jesus taught that there would be a range of degrees of glory and greatness in God's Kingdom including those who are called the least and the greatest. Our rewards in eternity greatly differ from one another. The largest star known is the Pistol Star, which has a mass about 100-150 times that of the Sun, and is about 10 million times brighter.

⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)

C. God invites us to greatness without regard to our outward achievements or the size of our ministry impact. Rather, it is based on the development of our inner man in love, meekness, and revelation or in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

D. Obedience in the least or small areas of life depicts a deep and faithful secret life with God. Many believers simply disregard obeying God in the smaller areas of their life like their thoughts and words. They do not want to wrestle through these issues. Over 25 times in the OT, God urged Israel to be careful to obey all of His commandments (Deut. 4:6; 5:1, 32; 6:3, 25; 8:1; 11:32; 12:1, 32; 16:12; 17:10, 19; 26:16; 28:13; 32:46; Josh. 1:7-8; 22:5; 23:11; 2 Kings 17:37; 21:8; 1 Chr. 28:8; 2 Chr. 33:8; Ezek. 20:21; 36:27 NAS).

³² Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deut. 12:32)

E. It is necessary to be found faithful in pursuing 100-fold obedience if we are to receive the maximum blessing of what God has offered or invited each one of us from our obedience in this life. The pursuit of 100-fold obedience includes making a *covenant with our eyes* (Ps. 101:3; Job 31:1), *bridling our speech* (Jas 3:2; Eph. 4:29-5:4), *managing our time* (Eph. 5:15-16; Ps. 90:12) *and money* to increase the Kingdom (beyond personal comfort and honor) (1 Tim. 6:8; Mt. 6:19-21) as we engage in *communing prayer* with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

- F. Some of the matters of the Word are weightier than others, but all must be obeyed.
²³ *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. (Mt. 23:23)*
- G. Jesus revealed a new paradigm for greatness. We focus on being great in His sight rather than in the sight of men. This greatness will be fully manifest in the age-to-come not in this age. It will be based on our heart responses not on natural gifting and resources and is thus, available to all.
- H. The opportunity for promotion in God’s sight is vast and available to all. However, we must pursue greatness in the right way through meekness and servanthood. We also must understand the timing of its release in stages. Its full manifestation will not be seen until the Millennium.
²⁶ *Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. (Mt. 20:26-27)*
- I. Jesus taught on God’s invitation for our greatness more than any other man in Scripture. He referred to this vast subject directly and indirectly as He called people to be first, to gain treasure in heaven, or to receive rewards from the Father (which is a major theme in the Sermon on the Mount that is emphasized in Mt. 6:1-20).

II. HAVING A RIGHT VIEW OF AUTHORITY IN THE MILLENNIAL GOVERNMENT

- A. Our view of authority shapes our view of seeking rewards in ruling the nations with Jesus after His Second Coming. If we see authority as the way to establish our honor before people, then we may not seek rewards. This paradigm of authority is based on the “pride of being over people.”
- B. Jesus cherishes the partnership involved in ruling with His Father. In a similar way, we will also enjoy each step of the process of working closely with Jesus to bring the earth under the Father’s authority. Jesus enjoys what happens in the heart of His people when He promotes them. He has joy in His relationship with them. We will delight in (joy) having the ability and authority to impart the Father’s ways and values to those He loves in the Millennium.
²¹ *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. (Mt. 25:21)*
- C. *The Bridal paradigm of authority and reward is to be with Him where He is and doing what He is doing.* It is being involved in what He calls precious. We will cherish and enjoy working closely with the One we love in the details of discipling the nations to bring people we love to the fullness of blessing under the Father’s authority. This paradigm is established on love.
- D. *If we view authority as the way to close partnership with Jesus in establishing on earth what is dear to His heart,* then we will want the fullness of authority that God has invited us to walk in during the Millennial Kingdom. Think of the person you most love, enjoy and admire; you would enjoy working closely with that person to glorify God and enrich others.

III. DIFFICULT: FOR THOSE GREAT NOW TO BE GREAT IN THE AGE-TO-COME

- A. When referring to the rich young ruler, Jesus revealed that many who are “first” in prominence, gifting, and privilege, along with putting themselves first in their lives in this age will be “last” in the Millennium. He also revealed that some of those who are last in prominence, skill and privilege and who put themselves last, will be first in prominence and glory in the Millennium.

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich (great in money or prominence) man to enter the (fullness of) kingdom of heaven...27 Peter said, "We have left all and followed You. What shall we have?" 28 Jesus said, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (Millennium), when the Son of Man sits on the Throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold...30 But many (majority) who are first (prominence, gifting, and privilege, etc.) will be last, and the last first. (Mt. 19:21-30)

- B. There is an inherent dilemma in “being first” in privilege and prominence in this age because it creates social and time pressures that may distract us from developing meekness. This ultimately can lead the great (rich in money, prominence, gifting) to be “last” in honor in the age-to-come.
- C. Some believers who are last in privilege now, will also be last in the Kingdom in the age-to-come because they lack faithfulness in their obedience to God. Also, some who are first in this age in prominence will also be first in the age-to-come if they live faithfully in obedience.

IV. GOD’S WAY TO SEEK GREATNESS: BECOMING A GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

¹⁴ 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. 15 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. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them." 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." 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...25 I was afraid...and hid your talent in the ground...28 Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. (Mt. 25:14-29)

- A. In Mt. 25, Jesus taught two parables. The first one focused on acquiring the ‘oil of intimacy’ so that our lamps do not go out. The second parable focused on the need for faithfulness. We cannot sustain a lifestyle of faithfulness without the ‘oil of intimacy.’ The implications of the principles set forth in this parable are vast to all who take hold of Jesus’ invitation to greatness.
- B. Jesus delivered his goods to each. To one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. He gave to each according to their own ability (Mt. 25:15) We are all entrusted with talents or specific capacities or abilities that include what has been given to us in our mind, emotions, body, soul, spirit, giftings, achievements, and ministry impact. Our most valuable talents are those in our inner man (mind and emotions).
- C. The one with five talents traded or invested them and gained five more (Mt. 25:16-17). Those who value these talents invest time and energy to multiply them in righteousness, peace, and joy. God measures the quality (not the size) of our impact on others by the righteousness, peace, and joy that we help them walk in.

¹⁷ *The kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)*

- D. We have been entrusted with only a *few things* (Mt. 25:21). The great God invites everyone to be great in His Kingdom without regard to our outward achievements or the size of our ministry impact. Rather, it is based on the development of our inner man in love, meekness, and revelation or in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.
- E. We need to see the value of faithfulness in very little or in the day of small beginnings. Over 99% of the Body of Christ is given small things (very little) in terms of their sphere of accomplishments or ministry impact.

¹⁷ *Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17)*

¹⁰ *For who has despised the day of small things? (Zech. 4:10)*

V. WELL DONE: JESUS’ AFFIRMATION OF OUR HEART, CHOICES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- A. At the time of the Second Coming, Jesus will settle accounts with His people (Mt. 25:19). We are evaluated according to what was entrusted to us, not what we do not have. Some have such anxiety, anger, or despair over what they do not have that they do not invest what they do have. We are not evaluated by what others have or what we do not have.
- B. Well done, is the evaluation of the life of the faithful at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- C. It is not enough to gain an entrance into heaven, the Lord offers us grace to live in a way that we hear, “well done.” We must have a vision to hear Jesus say, “well done” at the end of our life. We must set our heart to walk in excellence in our relationship with Jesus. People easily settle for second best because obstacles or opportunities come their way that causes them to conclude that the season is not right for them to fully press into God with diligence and faithfulness.

- D. We seek to go above and beyond the minimum requirements in the kingdom to walk with God with a heart overflowing in love and obedience. Paul referred to this as abounding in love so that we would walk blameless in every issue in our life.

⁹ This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more...¹⁰ that you may be sincere (obedience) and without offense (compromise) till the day of Christ, (Phil. 1:9-10)

- E. Paul sought to walk in the highest dimension of God's call on his life. We want the highest things that God will give the human spirit.

¹² I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me...¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14)

- F. Jesus gives us three specific realities of living well in God's presence. They include being good, being faithful and having a servant spirit that perseveres with only a few things that are small.

VI. GOOD: SETTING OUR HEART WITH GOOD INTENTIONS TO FULLY OBEY JESUS

- A. To do good speaks of the sincere intentions and determination of our heart to do God's will in each area of our life. In other words, we set our heart to pursue good in the use of our time, talents, treasures, mind, emotions, will, body, soul, spirit, circumstances, and ministry.

- B. Jesus invites us all to be great by obeying Him which includes even the least areas of our life.

¹⁹ Whoever does and teaches them (least of God's commands), he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)

- C. God takes into account our weakness. Our best efforts only produce flawed faithfulness. God's editing process in grace takes into account our sinful weakness. Our faithfulness will fail on occasion, however, our consistent resolve and war against our sin and weakness to fully obey God and walk in meekness is what the Lord counts as a life of faithfulness. In the Lord's kindness, the saints are esteemed as faithful and are thus, rewarded beyond what we deserve.

¹⁴ For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:14)

VII. FAITHFUL: FOLLOW THROUGH IN OUR INTENTIONS THROUGH LIFE'S SEASONS

- A. Faithfulness is follow through in our intentions to do good in the face of pressure, obstacles, difficulty, mundaneness, smallness, and temptation. Steadiness over the years is emphasized here. It takes a quality decision to sustain follow through. A superficial or sentimental decision will not sustain us. We can only do this with confidence that we know it matters to God.

- B. Difficult circumstances – many give up at the slightest resistance when facing difficulty. They conclude that God sovereignly changed the season. Whereas, God wanted them to press through the obstacles and overcome and not to so quickly yield. David ran through the troop of resistance and overcame the wall of opposition.

²⁹ For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall. (Ps. 18:29)

- C. Opposition by people – pressure from people causes many to be distracted from faithfulness.
- D. Diligence in the mundane – is important in the little areas in our secret life in God. Jesus leads His Kingdom as He promotes or demotes His people according to this principle.
¹⁰ He who is faithful in what is least (small areas) is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. (Lk. 16:10)
- E. Enduring temptation – we resist private temptations because of our love for Jesus.
¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (counted worthy), he will receive the crown of life...promised to those who love Him. (Jas 1:12)

VIII. SERVANT SPIRIT: LIVING FOR ANOTHER PERSON AND TIME FRAME

- A. To be called a servant is the ultimate affirmation of Christlikeness and greatness (Mt. 20:26-28).
- B. Cultivating grace for a servant spirit is the only way to sustain faithfulness through decades. We can only persevere consistently in the small things because we have a life paradigm of being a servant that seeks to be faithful to do good for another (Jesus) with rewards at another time. Seeking an immediate pay off from men causes us to lose our zeal for faithfulness in smallness.

IX. RULING OVER MANY THINGS: ALL HAVE MUCH OPPORTUNITY FOR PROMOTION

- A. Jesus reveals the great exchange of “few things” to “many things.” God esteems, remembers and rewards our small expressions of obedience in our mind, emotions, and will.
²¹ You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. (Mt. 25:21)
- B. God pays so well in our few things. To have confidence in this is to greatly impact our heart.

X. ENTER THE JOY OF THE LORD: ENERGIZED BY SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE

- ²¹ I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord. (Mt. 25:21)*
- A. We can receive tokens of Jesus’ affirmation, “well done” even now. We enter His joy as we know that Jesus esteems our attempts to grow in righteousness and by having confidence that the choices we make matter to God because our efforts in small things matter.
- B. Every hour is sacred with this revelation. Every hour is for my benefit if I seize the opportunity. We must let this joy wash our spirit and invigorate our heart with the glory of how relevant and important each hour of our life is.
- C. Boredom or burn out has no room in this paradigm. They are both eliminated to the degree that I connect with this reality. We replace it by the wonder of the daily adventure of pleasing God in the war against lust. We can live with a bright spirit because of this reality (Jn. 5:35, Lk. 11:33).