

Halfway

God hates “half-way.” From His condemnation of Laodicia (Revelation 3:16) to his encouragement to the Colossians (Colossians 3:23), God has never minced words concerning His attitude on Christian loyalty. Fence-riding, wishy-washy, oscillating Christians are not only repugnant to God but also contribute to a church’s ineffectiveness. Jesus made it plain: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). So, what prospective disciple “sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke 14:28). Becoming a Christian is serious business.

Jesus reinforced this Divine disposition in Matthew 25:14ff. In the Parable of the Talents, Christ offered the following lessons:

[1] We all have talents. In this parable, there were no “no-talent” people. To believe that your place in the Kingdom is merely a matter of presence is to misunderstand the very nature of Christian service. Filling a pew is not what Christ had in mind when He spoke of service. And, whereas you have value in God’s eyes, it is not because you bring something to the table that God cannot do without. Nevertheless, the God-given talents that you do have are rightfully God’s; they belong to Him and should be readily and happily relinquished on demand.

[2] Our talents differ. It takes a mix of different abilities to make the body whole. “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” (1 Corinthians 12:17). Instead of exercising a petty jealousy because someone else has ability in some area that exceeds ours, we should (in the humble servant-attitude) support, encourage, and promote them in their service to the King. Playing second fiddle often makes the first fiddle sound a lot better.

[3] Having different talents in differing degrees does not excuse us from using what we have. I know that I cannot do some things as well as others but my condemnation will not rest upon my inability to perform but, rather, upon my lack of desire to perform. “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2 Corinthians 8:12). The one talent man was not condemned for having one talent, but for not using what he had. The church needs skilled leaders but she needs ditch-diggers, too. And, if that is what I can do, then I should do it well.

[4] God does not employ comparative theology. He praised the two-talent man for his faithfulness based upon his ability. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). He condemned the one-talent man for his failure to use what he had. Too often, we fail to realize that when the transmission is transferring power to move the vehicle forward, it only takes one small gear in a transmission to go haywire and metal goes everywhere and the vehicle comes to an ugly, screeching halt. What you do in service for Christ’s kingdom is vital and valuable.

And [5], what we do with our “talent” has eternal consequences. If we choose to bury our talent, we will stand some day and give an account. And all the rationalizations and excuses that don’t really hold water today will not douse the fires of Hell’s eternity. The most fearful scene pictured in the Bible will be the judgment of poor stewards. “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27). Just imagine living your entire life with a buried talent (which would be a miserable existence to begin with), knowing all the while that nothing but damnation awaits you for your eternal life.

God hates halfway. When the Jerusalem church ran into its first problem (cf. Acts 6), two things quickly happened: the need went public and servants were set to the task. There is something you can do.