

Soul-winning: Anxiety – Matthew 25:14-30

I. Introduction:

- A. Let's use this parable as an illustration. Let's make a parable out of the parable.
1. Let's say that among the talents given by the King of the kingdom of Heaven was the gospel.
 2. Focusing on the third servant, we see him burying the gospel, rather than sharing and investing it.
 3. When he was called to his master's judgment seat, how did he explain his disobedience?
 4. First, he pointed to the character of his Lord – *"Thou art an hard man..." (verse 24).*
 - a. He might have said, *"I didn't want to make a mistake under the harsh glare of your omniscience.*
 - b. *I thought, you'd punish me if I lost your talent, sharing it with someone, so I did nothing."*
 5. Being so concerned with the doctrinal details of salvation by grace, he didn't invest it.
 - a. He was afraid that he couldn't explain the doctrine of justification or imputation, so he didn't even talk about simple forgiveness of sin.
 - b. Or to protect himself from giving the gospel to some non-elect person, he didn't give it to anyone.
 6. Was it the nature of his employer which kept him from his duty? I don't think so.
 7. That was nothing but an excuse.
- B. In **verse 25** he expressed the true reason for his disobedience: he was afraid. But afraid of what?
1. As I just said, he mentioned a fear of his employer.
 - a. He was afraid of the man who blessed him by putting a roof over his head, giving a daily provision of food, protecting from his enemies, and giving him a purpose in life.
 - b. What had the Master, in His grace, done to create this fear?
 2. I don't think it was really all about his fear of his employer.
- C. Of what was he really afraid? Since this is an undeveloped parable, we can insert all sorts of explanations.
1. There wasn't anything illegal about investing this talent, so it wasn't a fear of **prosecution**.
 2. But what about **persecution**?
 - a. He could have been afraid of the people or businesses with whom he might have invested the talent.
 - b. *"What if, knowing I have this talent, they try to steal it from me, beating me or even killing me?"*
 - c. That wasn't a problem with the other servants with more talents, but this man may have imagined it.
 3. Or he may have been afraid of the shame of failure. *"What will I say to my master, if I lose it?"*
 - a. This takes the focus from his fear of his *"hard"* Master to himself.
 - b. If this was the case, then the man was more concerned about his pride than about his Master?
 - c. If this was the case, then he was **afraid** of suffering a little **shame**. That can be a painful thing.
 4. Was that really this man's problem, or was it something else?

II. Multitudes of Christians have never brought a soul to the Saviour.

- A. And sadder still is the fact that most have never even tried.
1. Most professing Christians have never simply said, with the woman of Samaria, *"Come see a man which told me all things ever I did; is not this the Christ?"*
 2. Most Christians have never joined Andrew who went to his brother, Simon, saying, *"We have found the Messiah."* *"Come with me to Jesus."*
- B. Why do you suppose that is?
1. It is not because those people are not truly saved. I am talking about genuine Christians.
 2. It is not because they haven't been given that talent of saving grace.
 3. It is not because their Master hasn't commissioned them to start making investments.
 4. It is not because they are hermits, living off the grid, and having no neighbors in whom to invest their talent.
 5. And it is not because they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit – the seal of their own redemption, and the empowerment of their service.
 6. It's because their imaginations have created an inward **fear** of some sort
 7. it's because they become **anxious** whenever they think about investing.

- C. Believe me, I am not looking down my extremely long nose at anyone.
1. I have been as guilty of this as anyone else many times, off and on during my life.
 - a. Furthermore, we see examples of this throughout God's Word.
 - b. The Bible describes people who became really anxious when the Lord commissioned them to start making investments of His gifts to them – His talents.
 2. God told **Moses** to share the talent He had given to him with his kinsmen and with the Egyptians.
 - a. The man immediately started stuttering and stammering – both metaphorically and literally.
 3. **Abraham**, out of fear, attempted to hide his talent from Abimelech and an Egyptian Pharaoh. Disaster.
 4. Later, the Lord went to **Jeremiah**.,
 - a. He tried to bury the talent given to him, until it burned a hole in his pocket so to speak.
 - b. *“Then (Jeremiah) said, I will not make mention of him (Jehovah), nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” – Jeremiah 20:9.*
 5. **Jonah** expressed a stupid doctrinal reason to bury his talent.
 - a. *“Lord, I knew that you'd be merciful to those wicked Assyrians.”*
 - b. He sounds almost like those hyper-calvinists who say, *“God will save whomsoever He will without me investing anything in them.”*
 6. **Peter** tried to hide his talent lest the Romans, might see it.

III. I am getting a bit off track: let's return to the subject of anxiety in regard to talent-sharing.

- A. The man in the Lord's parable, and most certainly Moses, hid their talents out of fear and/or anxiety.
1. *“Anxiety”* might be defined as **uneasiness** in regard to something – in this case to personal evangelism.
 2. The word comes to us from a **Latin verb** which speaks of *“being pressed tightly.”*
 3. Webster's 1828 dictionary adds that it is a *“lack of peace of mind”* and even a *“painful uneasiness.”*
- B. Countless thousands of Christians become anxious when they think about sharing the gospel with others.
1. It can even be a **painful** anxiety. They get nervous and tense. Their stomachs clench.
 2. Their hands may begin to sweat. They might begin to tremble, and their brain refuses to focus.
 3. Their heart rate may increase and some might even hyperventilate to the point of panic.
 4. I am not exaggerating.
 5. Why is that?
 6. Again, I am not trying to be unkind, because I know what it is to hyperventilate when under spotlight.
- C. I'll get to the real reason for this anxiety in a minute, but some of the peripheral causes include: **Past failures**.
1. **Moses**, like **Jonah**, had been sailing to his Tarshish, because forty years earlier, he had attempted to do the work of God without divine direction and in the strength of his flesh, and he fell flat on his face.
 2. He knew that the Lord had called him to become the means of salvation for the people of Israel.
 3. He, in a sense, carried the gospel of freedom within the depths of his soul – a talent from the Lord.
 4. But the first time he attempted to share it with one of his neighbors, the man said, *“Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” (Exodus 2:14).*
 5. That sounds very similar to, *“Who are you to tell me that I am a sinner or that I need of a Saviour. I am every bit as good a person as you are.”*
 6. In the next verse we see Moses fleeing from his calling and responsibility into the Midian wilderness.
 7. At that point he had not learned that God's work can be successfully accomplished through us only by the Lord himself.
 8. Moses' past failure filled him with anxiety when it came time to resume his calling.
- D. I assume that early in his life, after being raised in Pharaoh's house, Moses might have felt some fleshly self-confidence.
1. But having fled into the land of Midian, meeting Jethro, marrying his daughter and spending the next forty years living among sheep, he had become somewhat sheepish himself.

2. At that point in his life, he had become rather **timid**.
 3. When God put the talent he earlier fumbled back into his hand, Moses essentially told the Lord, *"I don't have the temperament for soul-winning. I'm not an outgoing person. I'm not a salesman.*
 - a. *I don't have the aptitude to do the work to which you are calling me.*
 - b. *I can't look my former neighbors in the eye and tell them they are lost and they need the Saviour."*
 4. Perhaps there was some anxiety coming from the depths of his timid soul, which made him hide his talent.
 5. I would venture to guess that among many, this is the primary reason most Christians never witness.
- E. Another reason might be attributed to **inexperience** and a **lack of training** for the work.
1. Obviously, everything we ever do was done at some point for the first time – walking, riding a bike, kissing our spouse.
 - a. I **can not** remember the first time I tried to share my faith, but it was probably with Larry Bahn.
 - b. I **can** remember, clearly remember, the first time I ever stood before a congregation and attempted to preach the gospel. Let's just say that it was short and not too sweet.
 - c. It was traumatic, caused by a certain amount of anxiety which was even greater the second time, because of my failure the first time.
 2. Moses, still trying to find an excuse for his talent hiding, pointed to his **lack** of evangelistic **skills**.
 3. So the Lord gave him a little illustration and instruction.
 - a. **Exodus 4:2** – *"And the Lord said unto him, what is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.*
 - b. *And God said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.*
 - c. *And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:*
 - d. *That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee."*
 4. Every Christian, if he truly is a Christian, already has enough basic knowledge to lead someone like himself to the Saviour.
 5. Sometimes the Lord has to point to what we already know and say, *"Grab it by the tail."*
 6. Yes, there are other things we might learn about investing, but we already know the rudimentary principles.
- F. Moses said to the Lord, *"But behold they will not believe me nor harken unto my voice; for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee"* (**Exodus 4:1**).
1. Part of Moses' anxiety was fear of failure. I can understand that.
 2. Nobody wants to be a failure, especially if they have pushed through their anxiety into reluctant obedience.
 3. Here is where some of my illustrations fail.
 - a. The servant of **Matthew 25 might** have invested and lost his Master's talent – a bundle of cash.
 - b. But I have a sneaking suspicion that had that been the case, the King of that kingdom would not have been as upset as He was for the neglect the servant had made.
 4. But our situation is different.
 - a. Moses and you and me, have not been given a physical talent which might be stolen or lost through mismanagement. We have been given something intangible and spiritual.
 - b. Our commodity is the gospel; it is a testimony of the grace of God; it is verbal; it is eternal.
 5. You might feel led of the Lord to give someone a copy of the Bible, and he could burn it – that is on him.
 - a. That gift might have cost you a few trips to Starbucks or a dinner with your spouse.
 - b. What that man did might sting just a little.
 6. But Moses' responsibility, and our commission, is simply to call people out of slavery.
 7. The only commodity we are investing are words, and whether anyone listens or responds we have not lost anything. No matter how many times we share this talent, we still have as much as we ever had.
 8. So share those words, and let the Holy Spirit empower them.

- G. We are not living in the 16th century when the Catholics or Protestants might arrest us for sharing the gospel.
1. We are have no reason to be anxious for our physical lives.
 2. But we might be anxious about losing that friend to whom we are trying to witness.
 3. And then there is that relative, who will remain a relative all our lives, becoming either closer to us or more distant as we witness to him.
 4. Or we might be afraid that by sharing the gospel with our neighbor we might create an enemy just 15 feet away on the other side of the fence.
 5. And then there is the possibility of alienating our employer or fellow workers. Here could be real dange.
 6. Believe me, I'm not minimizing or discounting that possibility or your anxiety.
 7. But I will point out what our Lord has said, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* – **Matthew 10:33**.
 - a. *"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life"* – **Matthew 19:29**.
 8. If we loose a friend or loved one in the process of our service that loss becomes a part of our investment, and on that investment there will be eternal interest paid.

IV. How can we get over our soul-winning anxiety?

- A. By walking beside Moses into Pharaoh's palace, stating our testimony, and walking out **without success**.
1. Failure – that doesn't sound like a positive solution? Maybe not, but it is Biblical.
 - a. How many times did Moses climb those familiar steps into the Egyptian palace?
 - b. And how often did he have to tell Israel that he was God's representative before they believed him?
 - c. With each presentation, there **were** a few more Hebrew believers.
 2. How can we cast aside our anxiety? By experience, whether we consider it a victory or not.
 3. I won't go into it right now, but I believe the Lord is as interested, or more interested, in His servants as He is in our evangelical victories.
 - a. He is as concerned about prodigal Jonah as He is in the souls of the people of Nineveh.
 - b. Remember that victory is in His hands. The profit is as much God's as is the talent we invest.
 4. Again, I ask, how many times does that baby have to fall before he learns to walk?
 5. God has put a desire in that baby's heart to walk, and he'll keep falling until he gets it right.
- B. How can we get rid of our soul-winning anxiety?
1. First, by casting aside each and every one of the excuses we have used to keep away from our obedience.
 - a. *"The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets"* – **Proverbs 26:13**.
 - b. No, there is no lion in the street. Most of our anxieties grow out of our imaginations.
 2. **Moses** said, *"O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am show of speech, and of a show tongue."*
 - a. *And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?"*
 - b. *"Don't throw that excuse at me."*
 3. **Gideon** said, *"Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."*
 - a. And the Lord said unto him, *"Surely, I will be with thee.."*
 - b. Your pedigree, whether secular or religious, is nothing to the Lord.
 - c. That investment company is not interested in you per se; they are interested in the money in your hand.
 4. **Jeremiah** told God, *"Behold I cannot speak for I am a child"* – **Jeremiah 1:7**.
 - a. *"But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."*
 - b. *Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."*
 5. The Lord essentially told Jeremiah to throw aside his anxiety.

- C. I'm not going to pretend that is an easy thing for everyone. It isn't.
1. But something else in the Lord's replies to each of these people, might be summarized with the idea: *"Look into my face and reach into my tool kit for the strength you need."*
 2. Paul told the **Philippians**, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me,"* implying, *"so can you."*
 3. You can share the gospel with others, investing in eternal souls.
 4. Paul said to the **Corinthians**, *"We are not sufficient in ourselves."*
 - a. *"But our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament."*
 - b. Our great strength may in part be linked to our lack of strength.
 - c. As the Lord told Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."*
 5. It is all right to be anxious when going into battle, but remember, the battle is the Lord's, and He will have the victory as He sees fit.
 6. *"Cast all your care and anxiety upon Him, for He careth for you"* as much as He cares for the commodity you are investing.
- D. Anxiety, ultimately, is a product of the flesh.
1. Does a spirit body have a nervous system. Do the angels of God ever get a case of *"the nerves?"*
 2. Our ability to serve God rests directly to how closely we draw nigh to the Lord.
 3. Most Christians live with the wrong goals for their lives, falling far short of the smile of God.
 4. Our **fear** should **not be** whether we successfully win that man to Christ.
 5. Our fear should be whether or not the Lord is pleased with us.
 6. There should be no fear when we are doing our best to make our investments in the Lord's name.