

*“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ 21His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ 23His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

There is a case in my closet – inside is a trumpet. That case has gone with me from closet to closet every time we have moved our bedroom – every time we have changed houses. A long time ago Sue asked me what I wanted for my birthday – a trumpet was my answer. I had dreams of my playing the trumpet – I know how a trumpet can sound- I love those tones as clear as crystal that slice through the air and lift the spirit. Sue spent a lot of our money buying a used trumpet for me. When I pulled back the wrapping paper I was delighted! Right from the first day I started playing – and on the second day – I am not sure I ever did practice on the third day - never after that. The other day I looked at the trumpet case – wondered if I should sell the trumpet – told myself I might yet learn to play that trumpet – left it where it was.

Before today not many of you knew of my trumpet – even though it has been mine all along it makes no difference in my life.

Jesus told a story about a master and his slaves, how he entrusted large sums of money with each of the slaves and went away. Two of the slaves doubled the money – the third buried it. When the master returned he was delighted with the slaves that used the money to make more money. Well done, good and trustworthy slave, was his greeting for each of them. And the third who returned exactly what he received? He was greeted with the words: “You wicked and lazy slave.”

Had I put my trumpet to use, last week I could have joined Dave Paine in lifting your spirits as we accompanied the first and last hymns. Because I was lazy, Dave had no partner as he played his trombone. I brought you no joy.

I am guessing each of you has a trumpet that never was played in your life somewhere. Something you wanted for yourself but never worked hard enough to have.

I have always been troubled by this parable of Jesus. Such harsh language for the weak one – “‘you wicked and lazy slave.’ Take what I gave to him and give it to the one who has the most. Throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Shouldn’t Jesus feel sorry for the weak ones – make allowances for me and you – say, “That’s okay?”

I suppose if it was really money we were talking about here – or failing to learn to play the trumpet that Jesus would say, “It is all right – don’t worry about it.” But this parable of Jesus is not about investing money nor is it about using our talents or abilities. For this is a parable about the Kingdom of God.

What is it that Jesus has entrusted to you and me? All the forgiveness and all the love and all the power and all the salvation that is ours through Jesus death on the cross. Through Jesus you are adopted as a child of God – through Jesus you have access to a direct line to God 24-7. But what if after Jesus had given his own life for us – what if you and I should just store everything Jesus has done for us in the closet? What if we did not let notes of joy ring out in all our living but leave Jesus’ love and Jesus’ forgiveness and Jesus’ power on the shelf? Oh, that trumpet

is mine but it might as well not be for all the difference it makes in my life. Jesus love is great enough to change us all – but talking about it is not the same as living that love.

Think of how my story of the trumpet would be changed if Sue, my wife, had sacrificed to buy me that trumpet. If she had worked long hours, gone without food, given up her most precious possession out of love for me and I never took the trumpet out of the case – can you image her calling me wicked – lazy? Jesus suffered and died for you because he knew how much you needed God in every part of your life. In your relationships at home, at work, at school, at play, in your buying, in your saving, in your giving your wealth to help others – Jesus wants God to be at the center. He gave his life to make that happen.

Why does Jesus care? Because Jesus gave you life and he wants the best life for you and your neighbor that can be. When God is in every part of your life blessings abound – your family, your community, your nation, are all blessed. And when God is put on the shelf to be gotten to someday we are all the losers.

Does this mean that you must be talking about God all the time? My talking about the trumpet today is not what Sue bought it for. Jesus did not die so you and I could fill our language with a lot of God talk. No, he wants to be Lord of your living – Lord over your choices of how you use your time, how you spend your money, what you seek for your community and your state and your nation. Thy will be done, we pray over and over. We live this prayer when God is served in every part of our life.