

Faithful Servants (Matthew 24:45-25:46)

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[0 : 0 0] who then is the faithful and wise servant whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time it will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns truly i tell you he will put him in charge of all his possessions but suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself my master is staying away a long time and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth at that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom five of them were foolish and five were wise the foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them the wise ones however took oil in jars along with their lamps the bridegroom was a long time in coming and they all became drowsy and fell asleep at midnight the cry rang up here's the bridegroom come out to meet him then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps the foolish ones said to the wise give us some of your oil our lamps are going out no they replied there may not be enough for both of us and for both us and you instead go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves but while they were on the way on their way to buy the oil the bridegroom arrived the virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet and the door was shut later the others also came lord lord they said open the door for us but he replied truly i tell you i don't know you therefore keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour again it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them to one he gave five bags of gold to another two bags and to another one bag each according to his ability then he went on his journey the man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more so also the ones the one with two bags of gold gained two more but the man who had received one bag went off dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them the man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five master he said you entrusted me with five bags of gold see i have gained five more his master replied well done good and faithful servant you have been faithful with a few things i will put you in charge of many things come and share your master's happiness then the man who had received one bag of gold came master he said i knew that you are a hard man harvesting where you have not sown and had a few so i was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground see here is what belongs to you his master replied you wicked lazy servant so you knew that i harvest where i have not sown and gather where i have not scattered seed well then you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers so that when i returned i would have received it back with interest

so take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags for whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance whoever does not have even what they have will be taken from them and throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him he will sit on his glorious throne all the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats he will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left then the king will say to those on his right come you who are blessed by my father take your inheritance the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world for i was hungry and you gave me something to eat i was thirsty and you gave me something to drink i was a stranger and you invited me in i needed clothes and you clothed me i was sick and you looked after me i was in prison and you came to visit me then the righteous will answer him lord when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink when did we

see you as a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothed you when did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you the king will reply truly i tell you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me then he will say to those on his left depart from me you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels for i was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat i was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink i was a stranger and you did not invite me in i needed clothes and you did not clothe me i was sick and in prison and you did not look after me they also will answer lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you he will reply truly i tell you whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me then they will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life thank you mariah and that was god's word read for us so uh beautifully and well uh thank you so much uh good afternoon everyone and uh we're gonna hear from god's word and try and understand and make sense of this uh larger uh teaching of the lord jesus uh but to do that we'll need god's help so let's pray let's ask ask for his help as he enlightens us through his word gracious father as we've just read um the the words of the lord jesus are challenging and confronting help us to make sense of it grasp it as faithful servants of yours we thank you that uh here in these uh wonderful words of christ we see wonderful pictures uh of a bridegroom a master and a shepherd and king and we we we know that jesus is all these three and more and so we look to him for for help as we understand and this god-breathed holy spirit inspired word we pray all these things in jesus name amen uh here at pcbc we've noticed uh there's a lot of talk about serving right so whether it's uh nominating people to serve in official roles of the church whether it's the last few weeks are hearing about the worship department or about the education department different areas where we could serve um maybe just a show of hands who here has served at pcbc in one shape or form another whether you just yep just put your hand up it can be big or small you've just done something for the good of someone else at church um yeah you don't have to be on a roster you just yeah that's right i reckon most of us have served to some degree right okay uh whether it's just welcoming someone whether it's just handing out chocolates and whether it's reading a bible verse uh yeah serving is you know just part and parcel of being in a church but why do you serve why do you serve it might not just be in this church you might serve as a you might volunteer for other groups um out uh out and yeah in society you might be serving voluntarily because you care for a family member right um that's unwell or needs extra support so in all these areas why do you serve perhaps some of us here um ask this question because you've been serving for a long time maybe once upon a time serving in church was something you wanted to do but now it's become an obligation there's no one else so you just keep serving why do you serve maybe if you're honest you'd answer because you have to or maybe you serve because deep down inside you you want others to notice you there's a special area in the church where it's um when you serve in this area people notice you appreciate you they might like you why do you serve perhaps if you are honest you might say you want others to see you i'm sure you can come up with all kinds of reasons and maybe they change week to week um hour to hour even but our attitude to serving uh can come from all kinds of different directions can't it it can be affected not just by what we think of others but i would suggest by what we think of god uh in a book i'm put the cover on um in this book a serving without sinking uh author john henley he was planting a church he was serving in all kinds of areas he he made this this observation that very often how he viewed christian service wasn't just shaped by how he saw himself but also how did he view god what was god like to him as he served and i want to suggest the way we view god does and will affect whether serving in his kingdom brings joy or frustration gladness or grief and i want us to notice that in today's section of jesus teaching remember these are his final words before he goes to the cross these are powerful important words he opens up with this phrase you see that in verse 45 um hopefully you have your bibles in front of you who then is the faithful and wise servant of course when jesus asks this question you know all of us can say that's you jesus right because of course he is the most faithful and wise servant to begin with he is the servant king he is the one who you know came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many but here he asks the question what kind of attitudes and characteristics does a faithful servant have and then after he poses this question we see story after story after story right a couple of parables and they're all linked together yes they're long yes they are all connected though they're connected to the theme of you know these are parables about people who wait right they have to wait for someone to return you notice that these are parables that end with eternal consequences you see the similarities there whether it's disorderly servants assuming their master is away and they can

party whether it's a bridal party waiting for the bridegroom whether it's servants with talents you know with resources just waiting for their master to come back each parable is teaching us a bit about what faithful and wise service looks like as we wait for the the bridegroom's return and so if we add all these parables together here is god teaching us richly what does it look like to be faithful and wise servants as we await our lord's return and yes we do need to mention the eternal consequences don't we right even in verse 46 look at how jesus compares a good servant managing his household master's household property well everyone getting their meals on time and then there's the wicked servant who uses um abuses his master's trust right gets drunk on his food while he's gone well when the master comes back it's not good news for one servant it's much better news for the other but what what's the key difference between the two servants it's how they view their master isn't it one knows correctly his master could come back anytime the other assumes incorrectly well he's gone for a while we can do whatever we want notice that jesus calls the first one blessed and the other one is cast out right there's a bit of hyperbole here but he's cast out cut up even he's thrown out with the hypocrites so who then is the faithful and wise servant i want to suggest from the three next three uh stories that we get three images that we can cling to all right uh of of god of christ um this is three things that a faithful and wise servant believes about jesus firstly he's our long expected bridegroom secondly he's our long-awaited master and thirdly he's our long foretold shepherd king and each of those pictures are so important right they will shape how you and i view our service and who we serve uh in the most part and they come through in each of these parables all right well first parable who then is a faithful and wise servant firstly from verses one to three uh 13 sorry we see in this chapter chapter 25 uh a story right that teaches a faithful and wise servant believes that jesus is the long expected bridegroom who will come unexpectedly for his church uh remind yourself of the story again at that time the kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom at most western weddings today including in new zealand the groomsmen you can imagine the ceremony they wait near the altar for the brides bridal party the bridesmaids to arrive right but in jesus's time and culture it's the reverse okay um in many parts of the world actually still today it's um the bridesmaids who wait for the groom and his party to arrive they kind of go house to house they visit different relatives and so on different places and it could take a while because the roads were rough or there might be a lot of family to visit on the way you can't refuse their hospitality so you just just take a while and so if you were part of that group of bridesmaids as it were waiting in you you know you'd have to wait and you wouldn't know how long you'd have to wait for this was a time when you didn't call each other and say yeah i'm just five minutes around the corner sometimes you'd have to wait a long time i find it striking in this story that the five foolish virgins well it wasn't just that they didn't have time to pick up what they needed it was that they weren't prepared and this shows us there's an individual responsibility isn't there to be ready for the bridegroom it's not something where someone else can say i'll make you ready for you readiness for the bridegroom to return cannot be shared each must had to be ready with their own oil for their lamp and this description of half the bridesmaids being ready half being unprepared i wonder if that's a picture of how ready the church is in general for the king the lord the bridegroom to return you know all of us we we want to enjoy the the bridegroom's presence don't we right we sing about it we we talk about it we're excited about jesus coming back and yet only half of them in the story had done what was needed to be ready for the bridegroom i'm sure all of them wanted to go in to the wedding feast all right and the reception but only half of them were prepared for the wait that's a pretty realistic picture of the church though isn't it we need to be honest not everyone who says i'm going to heaven or oh yeah i'm a christian actually listens to jesus's voice and is prepared for his return it's the case now and it will be when jesus comes back again we're not to be surprised the foolish virgins in the story they they missed the entry didn't they they weren't ready for the groom and even in the story they cried out to get in lord lord open for us but it was in vain but on the flip side sadly those who are prepared for the bridegroom you know think of the people in your lives who are living just for jesus 100 right or you know that their biggest priority is the lord all right the way they shape their lives the way they spend their time and their money sadly in our time and culture those who are prepared in this way they're often not always honored or respected even in church you might call them a bit too serious about their faith you might even feel discouraged if that's one of you that's you right by people who mock you or make fun of you for being too keen a christian maybe you might have parents or relatives that are just saying just cool it off a bit but this parable reminds us that you've made the

wise choice keep trusting him yes the bridegroom his delay we don't know when you know he'll come back the exact time and place but this delay means more time for others to then be prepared to meet him and that's a good thing and of course the bridegroom in this story represents christ himself the bible talks about jesus being a bridegroom did you know in ephesians chapter 5 verse 32 the apostle paul he makes it clear when he describes even the the union between a husband and a wife he talks about marriage and then he then says this mystery is profound and i'm saying it refers to christ in the church you see god's gift of marriage has a truer deeper purpose all right yes it brings blessings in the here and now but it's a picture a parable it points others to jesus the bridegroom who loved his bride the church have you ever thought about that before the good news of the bible is this jesus is the bridegroom who laid down his life for his bride when we accept his proposal to save us in this way whether you're married or single you'll one day walk up the aisle and be united with a love far richer and eternal than any other love in this planet do you believe this are you ready to meet your bridegroom see when you see jesus for who he truly is like this the one who loves us like a husband imagine how that can shape how we then pick up a guitar or serve on the sound desk or welcome someone who's new to church right you're not just doing a job you're serving your your bridegroom your husband one who encourages to keep watch until he finally comes back for his own our long expected bridegroom will return are you prepared to meet him as you serve faithfully uh here and now that's our first picture right god's faithful and wise servant knows that jesus the bridegroom is coming back unexpectedly yeah but he will come back but secondly let's see from verse 14 to 30 we get another parable right and this is one where a faithful and wise servant knows that jesus is our long-awaited master who entrusts his servants with his gifts a couple of things about this parable that i found really interesting now one is that again verse 19 he tells about a parable where there's a delay

[20 : 16] all right that's the common theme here but before the master goes on this long journey where he's delayed after a long time he gives his servants different amounts of his wealth all right again this is his money that he gives to him and we don't know what a talent you know looks like um but best guess is it was um a bag of gold of some kind and it's probably worth around 20 years salary or maybe half an auckland mortgage perhaps um so it's it's significant stuff right and so if you have five talents or 10 talents that's that's a big fortune right you could do some serious business with it and that was the point the master said i'm going away for a while i'm leaving these riches with you please make the most of it it's a test isn't it for each of the servants what will they do with the gifts that are given to them while the master is gone how will they invest their talents how will they show their loyalty and love to their master until he comes back as one author jc ryle put it if the first parable called us to be vigilant waiting for the lord's you know bridegreens return the second parable it's not about vigilance but it's being diligent working hard as faithful servants the church is called to keep watch use the talents our master has given us and look today in english we talk about talents as i don't know all kinds of things you can have a talent at um i don't know yeah a sport or uh you can have a talent a particular hobby you could be a talented dancer or singer we think of talented people as just as elite few right those who have remarkable abilities but here in the story anyone could get a talent right it's just a talent is just some of the master's wealth god's definition here is that everyone who belongs to the master gets talent from him so for some of you it might be a skill right it could be money it could be knowledge some of you have available time all right to invest in people you might have a sharp mind you might be able to think things through you might have a good memory where did you get these from the master himself himself has lent them to us to spend and invest for him for his kingdom and so when you have a talent or opportunity what you don't want to be is like the foolish man in the story right so you know go through a story 10 talents use well right sorry five talents use well two talents use well and then verse 18 the man goes and buries the talent but notice why in verse 25 right what does he say i was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground see here's what belongs to you can you see the main issue is not that he only got one bag of gold right that's not the excuse that's not the issue the main concern is that he has a wrong view of his master you may have been baptized but have no interest in god's word maybe you've joined the church but you've never lent your gifts but i don't want to then go to you and try and convince you to serve by saying oh everyone else is serving you need to as well that would put me you know that would just give a wrong impression of who your master is i would rather ask you who is your master is he someone you fear someone you love and serve what's your view of him because that's the main issue at stake here right here was the person who buried the talent he was afraid he feared his master he didn't have the right view of who his master who god is

and that happens to all of us i think from time to time look we all serve a master when the master you and i serve though is not jesus maybe it's money

ambition maybe your master is beauty and approval maybe your master is some kind of family obligation right that's what's enslaving you maybe what's mastering you is just hundreds of other idols okay good gifts that take the place of christ if that's the case then your wrong view of your master will then shape you and how you serve then faithful and wise service becomes impossible because you'll serve out of fear you'll be disappointed or dissatisfied or discouraged as you serve out of fear or maybe even if you serve your attitude will be you know infected with despair or being desperate but when the master you serve is christ and christ alone here is one lord jesus who we can share happiness with who we can share joy with he's not a harsh master he's a tender and caring master he's the master who serves us even he's the one who in him one day he will reward our service good and faithful servant he will declare and yes we need to wait a while but jesus as our master that's a gracious god right he's the one who's trusted us with his gifts to use diligently while he's away and when we see him as who he truly is then we're glad to use our gifts then we're glad to use whatever talents god gives us whatever they may be you might be a five talent girl or two talent guy but nothing is wasted in god's economy all right so long as you remember who you're serving you're serving not just any old person not just a distant person that doesn't care for you you're serving jesus your long-awaited master who loved you and served you first and so we work hard for him until he comes back because we know who he is we know how gentle and kind he is we know he is that kind of master one we'd all love to serve church what motivates us to serve faithfully and wisely firstly we're looking forwards to a long awaited bridegroom right he could return at any time and so we serve with vigilance secondly we we serve a long awaited master he's entrusted us with his gifts and so we serve with diligence and finally verse 31 to 46 gives us an important picture as well it shows us that a faithful and wise servant knows that jesus is the shepherd king long foretold he's going to come and gather his true flock one day have a look again verse 31 with me when the son of man comes and his glory and all the angels with him he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory all the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats he'll put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left by now hopefully you've noticed a repeated theme right at the end of each parable right bridegroom master now shepherd at the end of each parable when the lord returns there's a final judgment there's a final accounting there's a final sorting this is a closing assessment jesus has described the negative consequences of this sorting several ways we've already heard of weeping and gnashing of teeth we've seen a picture of being locked out of the banquet seen a picture of being thrown into darkness and eternal fire so jesus is clear there are different metaphors and pictures here but he's clear when he returns there will be a final verdict eternal consequences for how we're thought and acted here in this life and he can state this because he's more than just a teacher isn't he we have come to realize through matthew's gospel that jesus is not just a nice teacher that we can take or leave his teachings no what does verse 31 say when the son of man comes and then verse 34 says then the king will say these are one of the same people all right son of man is a description a biblical picture all right it's a name that comes all the way back from one of daniel's prophecies daniel chapter 7 right he envisages he sees one like a son of man right and he is like a king of the whole world that's who jesus is identifying himself as he's not just a teacher he's a king he's a shepherd and he will judge between the sheep and the goats that's his right to do so he will do his role like a shepherd does right shepherds their main concern is the sheep right so he's going to separate them this rich picture of course a shepherd who loves and cares for his sheep runs all the way through the bible doesn't it we think of psalm 23 the lord is my shepherd i shall not want isaiah 40 right he will tend us like a shepherd and elsewhere in the prophets so this picture is so vital for us when we serve when we think about serving jesus is our shepherd king now at first glance um this parable this final parable seems a little bit odd to us right in fact as maria read it i wonder if you thought oh that's funny it seems like this shepherd king is judging us based on whether we did good things right i was hungry and you gave me something to eat i was thirsty and you gave me something to drink and so on seems like he's just judging people based on their good deeds of charity is this jesus teaching that we are saved by what we do well some have gone actually so far to say look here is proof jesus is teaching a gospel or good news that is not about his death for our sins it's just about good deeds that we do so just be a good person and then you'll be one of the sheep is that what jesus is teaching here we want to be careful

we want to read this in context look on the one hand there's no doubt the bible does teach a close relationship between our faith in christ and what he's done on the cross for us and then our works that flow out from that ephesians 2:8 says it's by grace you've been saved through faith not a result of works but then it goes on to say verse 10 that he's our workmanship and he's prepared good works for us to do beforehand the two go together real living faith will lead to real living service i want to point out a few things from this story to show that i don't think this is teaching salvation by works look again at the picture of final judgment in verse 32 all right look at verse 32 to who's being judged it's all the nations or more literally all the tribes unlike what jesus's opponents the pharisees were teaching and assuming it's not just israel who are sheep and then every other nation who are the goats all right jesus is trying to redefine things he's trying to show people no actually from among all the people groups in the world there are those who are part of his flock his sheep and then there are those who are not that's the good news of the gospel right a sovereign god in love he has extended grace and mercy like a shepherd who loves his sheep and how does the king of kings address his sheep look at verse 34 the king will say to those on his right come you who are blessed by my father can you see the picture the sheep here did not earn their way into the king's favor did they right the separation actually has already occurred the verse earlier he'll put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left they're chosen based entirely on the shepherd's grace and mercy their place prepared since the foundation of the world that's what's going on here isn't it god's grace first and then the righteous with their good deeds i mean notice how surprised they are right when the lord commends them for their good works they actually say lord when did we do all this for you that's not the response of someone who's trying to do good things to earn their way to god that's not rather their works are just the natural fruit of their trust in the lord jesus as shepherd that's how serving should work shouldn't it the way we serve is not just to earn our way back to god not just to repay our debt back to god but that's just a natural outflow of us loving and following our shepherd king if you have it the other way around it'll be disastrous might as well not serve it all rather our works are the fruit of our faith in christ our love for god and our love for our neighbor should come out of knowing god's saving grace and blessing that's how it should work in god's world i mean also finally notice right verse 40 the king will reply i'll tell you the truth whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine you did for me right so this isn't just teaching do good things to everyone and anyone and then you'll be saved no it can't be because the focus here is our brothers and sisters in matthew's gospel brothers and sisters are those who do the will of our heavenly father that's what jesus said in matthew chapter 12 he's talking about disciples of jesus and actually blessing doing good to them all right so this parable is actually truly saying do your good deeds right when you do them to the people of god even the least of them all right that reflects a saving relationship that reflects you being part of god's kingdom you being part of the shepherd's flock if this parable's description of our shepherd king is true then all of us must one day give an account before him but whether he speaks to us as righteous as sheep or as wicked as goats it's going to come down to whether we've put our trust in him as our shepherd and king and so it would be remiss of me to not remind you if you've not done so today if you're here and you don't know and believe that jesus is your shepherd king don't leave it for another moment longer put your trust in him you can do it today and if this parable is true then it also goes without saying that how we treat brothers and sisters in christ matters right how we treat they're not just other sheep they're not just randoms on the street they're part of the body of believers they're part of god's flock they're they're part of the bride of christ this last parable is not just calling us towards a general social gospel where we just do good works to save us no but it's asking us to challenge us do you really love your brothers and sisters that god has gathered around do you really love them would you visit them in trouble in hospital even in prison would you pray for their troubles would you feed them when they're physically and spiritually hungry this parable is far more about how we respond to the shepherd king isn't it and it does remind us what faithful and why service looks like until jesus returns church it's possible for you and i to serve for all kinds of reasons isn't it to impress others to feel like you belong but all those reasons cannot hold the weight of your service of long-lasting life-giving service there's no saving grace there no here in these parables we learn of service with no strings attached we learn a service that comes from sheep who are loved by their shepherd king who follow him in grateful obedience it all turns on how we view god himself look it's possible for you and i to serve god thinking if i do this job if i serve this role this will make me good enough for him it's possible for us to say um i'll serve in this area because god gave me

this in my life this will pay him back but he's the king we can't pay the king back he's got everything nothing we do humanly can change how he has loved us first even before we knew him do you believe this do you serve like this listen to this wonderful summary john hinley says the only way to get our service of jesus right is to realize that supremely we don't serve him he serves us i'll say it again the way to get your service of jesus right is to realize that supremely we don't serve him he serves us every look at your serving role take 10 looks at the servant king now's the time to stop looking inwardly in ourselves or our ministry areas for our security and worth rather let us fix our eyes on jesus our bridegroom jesus our master jesus our shepherd king the way matthew 25 invites us to i wonder if that could transform your service here at this church today and let's be honest if you're too busy to even appreciate the one you serve maybe that's a good sign for you to pause and to spend more time to think of this servant king rather than just your service it's far better i think to stop and pause and take stock of who you serve and to give yourself again to him than to just keep going until you stop serving altogether because you've forgotten who you serve brothers and sisters faithful and wise service in god's kingdom is only possible once we truly know who we serve jesus the king of kings who served us first who's about to show us as he goes to the cross how costly that service was jesus a master who invests in us and invites us to diligently use what he gives us and jesus a husband who laid down his life for us when we look away at our flawed service we looked at jesus's flawless service that's when god can use you and i powerfully for his kingdom shall we pray heavenly father we thank you for these pictures of christ and even as we continue reflecting reminding ourselves to be captivated by the king of kings would you continue to work in our hearts

[40 : 38] and lies challenge any faulty thinking about why we serve in this church in our workplaces in our families help us look again to jesus may he be magnified may he be glorified may he be the one we serve because he served us first we thank you lord we pray all these things in jesus name amen amen thanks amen and stay amen