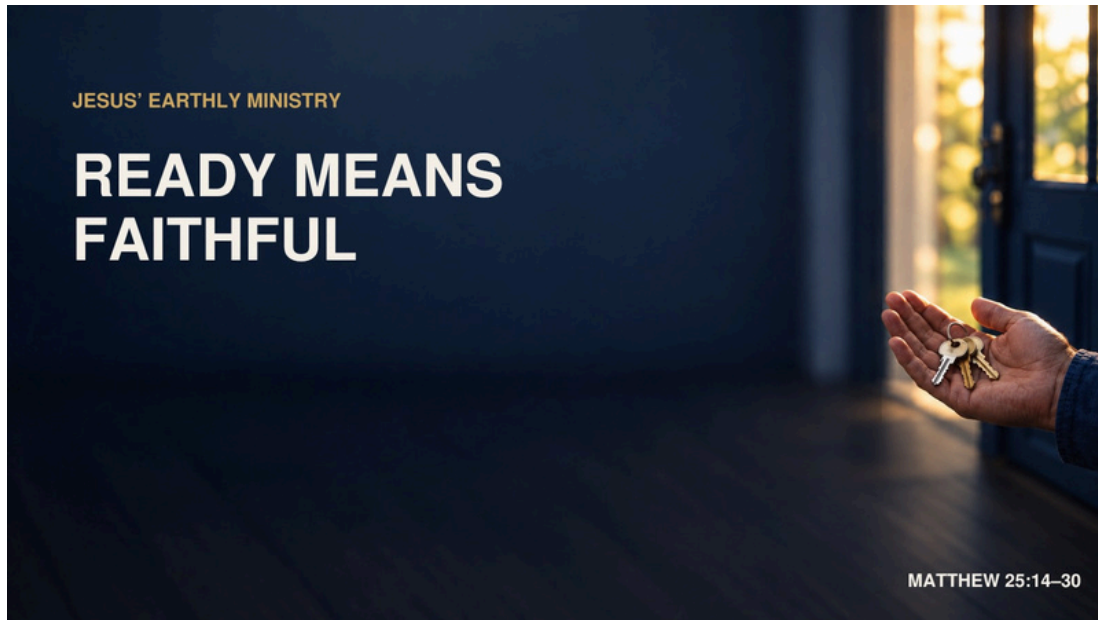


WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

**5-Day Devotional
based on Sunday's message:**



Ready Means Faithful
Matthew 25:14-30

Provided by



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Matthew 25:14-30

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last, dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.' The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.' The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.' But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Day 1: What Is Already In Your Hands

Devotional

When has someone trusted you with something that did not belong to you? Perhaps you held a house key, cared for a pet, completed an important task, or watched over something valuable. The object may have been small, but the trust behind it gave the responsibility weight. Jesus begins this parable with a master placing his own property into the hands of three servants. The servants do not own what they receive. They are stewards, people trusted to care for what belongs to another. Even the servant who receives one talent is given a fortune. No one in the story is empty-handed. Our lives are received in the same way. Our time, relationships, opportunities, abilities, resources, and knowledge of the gospel belong to Christ before they belong to us. We may use them, enjoy them, and develop them, but we do not have to invent their purpose. Faithfulness begins by asking what Jesus wants to accomplish through what He has already placed within our reach.

Going Deeper

A talent in this passage was a unit of money, not a modern word for a natural ability. One talent may have represented about six thousand days of wages. Jesus uses a valuable financial trust to speak about the whole life placed under His authority. Christian stewardship begins with ownership: everything belongs to the Master, and we have the privilege of serving His purposes with it.

Quote

“This does not belong to me, but it has been placed in my care.”

Bible Verse

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last, dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.” - Matthew 25:14-15

Reflection Question

What has Jesus placed under your care in this season of life? How would you handle one of those responsibilities differently if you remembered that it still belongs to Him?

Today's Practice

Choose one responsibility you normally treat as merely yours. Before you begin it today, pause and offer it back to Jesus: “This belongs to You. Help me care for it faithfully.”

Prayer

Jesus, everything I have comes from You. Help me recognize what You have placed in my care and use it for Your purposes. Make me faithful with what is already in my hands. Amen.

Day 2: Free From Comparison

Devotional

Where does comparison get your attention most quickly? You may notice someone else's home, energy, family, influence, ability, or opportunity and wonder why your life looks different. Comparison can leave us feeling superior when we seem to have more and insignificant when we seem to have less. The master gives five talents to one servant, two to another, and one to the last. Jesus does not explain or apologize for the unequal amounts. He simply tells us that the master knows his servants and distributes his property according to their abilities. Each receives a meaningful assignment, and each is responsible for his response. Comparison turns our eyes toward someone else's hands. Faithfulness brings our attention back to the Master. The servant with two talents does not complain that he received fewer than the first. He goes to work with what he has. His freedom to act begins when another servant's assignment no longer determines the value of his own.

Going Deeper

The kingdom of God is not built by identical people receiving identical responsibilities. Christ knows our capacities, seasons, limitations, and opportunities. He is not asking us to reproduce another person's calling. He calls us to trust His wisdom and serve faithfully where He has placed us. This guards us from envy when others receive more visible opportunities and from pride when our responsibility appears larger.

Quote

"The amount differs from servant to servant. The responsibility to be faithful does not."

Bible Verse

"He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last, dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money." — Matthew 25:15-18

Reflection Question

Whose life or assignment are you most tempted to measure against your own? What responsibility becomes clearer when you stop watching what Christ has placed in someone else's hands?

Today's Practice

Encourage one person whose faithfulness you have noticed. Then return to your own assignment and complete one responsibility without measuring it against theirs.

Prayer

Father, forgive me for the ways comparison feeds pride or discouragement. Teach me to receive my place in Your work with gratitude and to be faithful with what You have given me. Amen.

Day 3: When Fear Buries Obedience

Devotional

What have you postponed because you could not be certain how it would turn out? We often describe delay as caution. Sometimes it is wisdom to wait, gather information, or seek counsel. At other times, waiting becomes a respectable way to avoid an obedience Jesus has already made clear. Picture the third servant away from the house. Hear the shovel scrape against packed soil. See him lower the master's money into the hole, cover it, and smooth the ground. Burying treasure could protect it from theft, so his decision may have looked careful. Yet preservation was not his assignment. His safe choice guaranteed that nothing would be done for the master. The servant later admits that fear guided him. We can hear similar fear in our own explanations: "I am not ready." "Someone else would do it better." "People may respond badly." "I need to know the result before I begin." Faithfulness does not promise control. It trusts Christ enough to obey what He has made clear and leaves the outcome in His hands.

Going Deeper

Fear is tied to the servant's view of his master. He calls the master harsh and uses that judgment as an excuse for inactivity. What we believe about Jesus shapes how we respond to Him. The Master who commands obedience is also the Savior who gave Himself for us. His grace does not remove responsibility. It gives us a secure place from which to obey.

Quote

"Sometimes disobedience is loud. Sometimes it looks like a carefully covered hole."

Bible Verse

"The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money." — Matthew 25:16–18

"Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.' But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' - Matthew 25:24–27

Reflection Question

Where might fear be hiding beneath words such as caution, timing, or preparation? What act of obedience has Jesus made clear even though He has not shown you the outcome?

Today's Practice

Take the first concrete step toward one responsibility you have postponed. Keep the step small enough to complete today, but specific enough that the responsibility is no longer buried.

Prayer

Jesus, You know the fears beneath my delays. Help me trust Your character, obey what You have made clear, and leave the results with You. Bring my faithfulness above ground today. Amen.

Day 4: The Master's Joy

Devotional

Whose approval has the strongest pull on you? We can spend enormous energy trying to be noticed by a supervisor, family member, congregation, customer, or online audience. The desire to hear “well done” is not wrong, but it becomes exhausting when we seek those words from people who cannot see the whole story. After a long time, the master returns. The first servant presents ten talents, while the second presents four. Their results are not equal, yet the master speaks the same words to each: “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” He does not praise one as excellent and the other as acceptable. He recognizes that both used what they had been given. Jesus sees obedience that receives no applause. He sees the patient care offered at home, the honest work completed when no one checks, the quiet generosity, the prayer kept private, and the service that never reaches a platform. Human recognition is uneven, but the Master's knowledge is complete. Faithfulness can continue without being visible because Christ Himself is the One we serve.

Going Deeper

The reward includes more responsibility and the invitation, “Let's celebrate together!” Heaven is not pictured as meaningless inactivity. Faithful servants enter the joy of their Master and continue to share in His work. The greatest reward is not public recognition or possession. It is life with Christ, welcomed by Him and participating fully in what gives Him joy.

Quote

“The results differ, but the commendation is identical.”

Bible Verse

“After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’ The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!’ The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’ The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!’” — Matthew 25:19-23

Reflection Question

Where has the desire to be noticed begun to shape your willingness to serve? What faithful responsibility would still be worth doing if Christ were the only One who saw it?

Today's Practice

Complete one act of service that is unlikely to be noticed. Resist the urge to mention it afterward, and receive the quiet joy of offering it directly to Christ.

Prayer

Jesus, free me from living for uneven human approval. Help me serve with joy when my obedience is unseen, confident that You know every faithful act. May Your “well done” become the approval I desire most. Amen.

Day 5: Ready Means Faithful

Devotional

If Jesus returned today, what would your present pattern of life say about your relationship with Him? That question may stir hope, urgency, resistance, or fear. Jesus ends this parable with accountability because the Master's return is certain. Every servant must answer for what happened while he was away. The third servant returns exactly what he received. He may expect his careful preservation to excuse him, but the master calls him wicked and lazy. Doing nothing was not neutral. His inactivity exposed a settled refusal to trust and serve the one he called master. Jesus warns us against carrying His name while keeping every part of life unavailable to Him. This warning does not mean that faithful service purchases salvation. Ephesians 2:8–10 gives the order clearly: God saves by grace through faith, and those He makes new are created for good works. We do not obey so Christ will finally accept us. We obey because His grace has brought us near, changed our allegiance, and given us a place in His work.

Going Deeper

Matthew 24–25 repeatedly connects waiting with faithful living. Readiness is not found in predicting dates, maintaining religious appearances, or producing the same results as someone else. It is found in trusting the returning King and responding to what He has entrusted. A living profession of faith grows into a life that is increasingly available to Jesus.

Quote

“While we wait for Jesus to return, we show that we are ready through faithful obedience. Ready means faithful.”

Bible Verse

“Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’ But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’ Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” - Matthew 25:24-30

Reflection Question

What does your current pattern of life reveal about how you view Jesus as Master? What responsibility needs to become available to Christ as an expression of living faith?

Today's Practice

Tell one trusted Christian the responsibility you identified this week and the step you intend to take. Ask that person to pray for you and check in before the week ends.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the grace that saves me and gives me a place in Your work. Keep me from empty profession, fearful delay, and wasted opportunity. Form in me a life of faithful obedience as I wait for Your return. Amen.