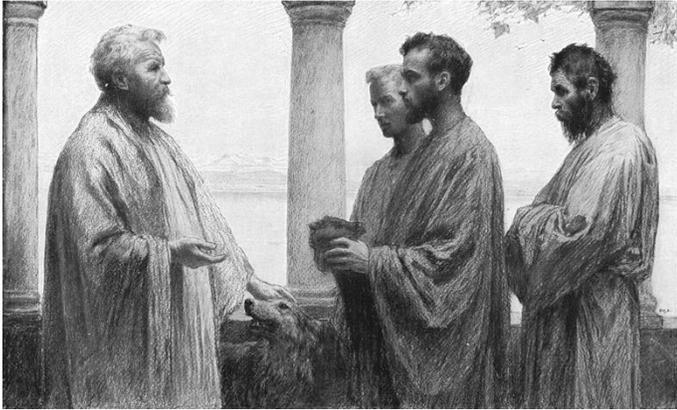


# Risk



If someone asked you to look after some money and said that they were going away for a while, what would you do?

Most of us would put it somewhere secure so that we could give it back when the owner returned.

If we are asked to take care of something really valuable the most important thing is to keep it safe and not lose it.

If it is a huge amount of money, we might hesitate to hide it under the bed or at the back of the cutlery drawer. In that case, perhaps we would put it in the bank.

The third servant does not use the bankers but that might be because he did not trust them. Even in modern times banks have gone bust.

So what has he done wrong?



His description of the master as one who reaps where he does not sow or gather where he does not scatter shows he knew that something more was expected of him. The master describes him as wicked and lazy for precisely this reason; the servant knew what his master was like.

The master expected his servant to make a profit.



There are various ways of making a buck. A visit to a bookmaker or a casino might bring in a return but it's a bit risky. Trading in stocks and shares is, for most of us, a different world, and even that can lead to disaster.

There is a reason why bookmakers and casino houses rarely go bankrupt. And stock markets have been known to crash.

Perhaps the servant was expected to invest in something steady.

There were few big industries in the time of Jesus but there were some. Perhaps farming or fishing would have been a good place to start. A wisely bought vineyard or olive grove could produce a profit gradually.



The parable relates that the person given five talents went off promptly and traded with them. He did not hesitate. This person had no self-doubt. Full of skill, it is highly unlikely he will turn up at the master's reckoning saying 'I lost it all, but that's life, you win some, you lose some.' He's a winner, every time.

The second servant, is not so gifted but he too doubled his money.

But what if you feel you are not talented or if you lack confidence?

Should I buy a vineyard or a fishing boat and hire a crew? There can be a drought and there are all those diseases vines can catch. Boats have been known to sink!

The danger, of course, is that I can talk myself into complete inaction. We are back to hiding the money somewhere safe and we still know that the master will expect something on his return.



Perhaps one of the messages of Jesus in this parable is that we have to take risks. That may not mean a trip to Las Vegas but I have to try something.

The servant with the five talents could have lost everything and so could the second.

Maybe the master wanted them to risk his wrath but still try. Would he have blamed them if the books had not shown a healthy return?

We have to remember that it is a parable and not real life. It is a tale told to make us think and change the way we live.

God may be asking me to try something I think is beyond me. It is too easy to imagine that great things are done by other people.

He might be prompting me to build bridges or make a contribution that I would expect from someone better qualified, more experienced, more free, younger, older, fitter or wiser.

Jesus told a story of a master who had only two reliable servants. What kind of servant am I?