

A Thief Called Comparison Pt. 2

Run Your Own Race

Discussion Notes- October 12, 2025

1. What's something unique about your own life journey that you're thankful for?

Comparison robs us of joy, peace, and purpose by distracting us from the unique race God has set before us. Just as the sun and moon shine in their own time, we are each called to live out our own God-given journey and pace. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus reminds us that faithfulness with what we've been given (whether much or little) brings God joy and leads to increase. When we compare our progress to others, we waste precious time and energy that could be used to glorify God and grow what He's entrusted to us. Instead of looking sideways, we are called to look upward to the One who defines our worth and directs our race.

Read Matthew 25:14-26

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?"

Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents to illustrate how the Kingdom of Heaven works. A master entrusts his servants with different amounts of money, five, two, and one talent; each according to their ability. The servants who received five and two talents immediately put theirs to work and doubled what they were given. But the servant with one talent hid his and did nothing with it. When the master returned, he praised the first two for their faithfulness and rewarded them with greater responsibility, but he rebuked the third servant for wasting what was entrusted to him.

2. What stands out to you about the different ways the servants handled what they were given?

Read Galatians 6:4-7

“But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

In the parable, the servant with one talent let fear guide his actions. Instead of investing what his master gave him, he hid it, afraid of failing or not measuring up. Comparison often does the same to us: when we fix our eyes on others, fear of not being enough can paralyze us from stepping into what God's called us to do. God calls us to faithfulness, not comparison, trusting that obedience is greater than outcome. When we focus on our own calling instead of comparing ourselves to others, we find freedom and fulfillment in doing what God has placed before us. As Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:4 (NLT), we are to “pay careful attention to our own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.”

3. Why do you think comparison can lead to fear or inaction, like the servant who buried his talent? How have you seen this play out in your own life?

Read Colossians 3:22-24

“Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30), each servant was entrusted with something different, but all were expected to be faithful with what their master gave them. The servants who invested their talents worked diligently for their master's sake—not to outdo one another, but to honor the one who entrusted them. Likewise, Colossians 3:22–24 reminds us to work “with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord... as for the Lord and not for men.” When we fix our eyes on pleasing people or comparing our progress to others, we waste the time and opportunities God has given us. But when we serve wholeheartedly for the Lord, even the smallest act of faithfulness becomes meaningful and eternal.

4. “To waste your time is to waste your life.” What's one way comparison has caused you to waste time or energy recently?

Read Ephesians 5:15-16

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”

Each moment spent comparing ourselves to others is a moment lost from the unique work God has given us to do.

5. What's one practical step you can take this week to focus less on others and more on what God has placed in front of you?

Prayer and Closing:

- Pray for contentment and gratitude in the season you're in.
- Pray for focus to use your time wisely for God's purposes.
- Pray for freedom from comparison and the courage to run your own race.

Digging Deeper: Nehemiah — Staying Focused on Your Race

Nehemiah was an Israelite serving as cupbearer to the king of Persia when he heard that Jerusalem's walls lay in ruins. Deeply moved, he sought God's favor and courage to rebuild them. Despite facing constant criticism, comparison, and distractions from enemies like Sanballat and Tobiah, Nehemiah refused to quit or get sidetracked.

Read Nehemiah 2:17-20

"Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.' And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' So they strengthened their hands for the good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, 'What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?'"

While others mocked his progress or questioned his ability, Nehemiah understood that the assignment was from God and not man. His phrase, *"I am carrying on a great work and cannot come down,"* captures the heart of what it means to run your own race: staying focused on what God has given you to do, regardless of what others are saying or doing.

Read Nehemiah 6:1–4, 9

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, 'Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono.' But they intended to do me harm. And I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?' And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner."

Comparison often begins when we start *looking sideways* at how others are running their race, leading their ministry, or building their "walls." Nehemiah's story reminds us that distraction, criticism, and comparison are all tools the enemy uses to pull us off course.

Instead of defending himself or competing with others, Nehemiah kept his eyes on the task and his heart set on God's purpose. He didn't let fear, opinions, or rivalries slow him down. Like the faithful servants in the Parable of the Talents, he stayed diligent and finished what God entrusted to him.

When you're tempted to look at someone else's pace or platform, remember Nehemiah's words: *"I am doing a great work and cannot come down."*

Read Nehemiah 6:16

"And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God."

1. Nehemiah faced constant opposition and distraction but refused to come down from his "great work." What are some ways comparison or criticism can distract you from the race God has given you to run?
2. Nehemiah prayed, "Now strengthen my hands." How can prayer help you stay focused when you're tempted to compare your progress or pace to others?
3. What is one "great work" God has placed in front of you right now? How can you guard your focus and faithfulness in it this week?