

Made To Multiply

Matthew 25:14-30

6.28.09 ~ BKC ~ CFWBC

ILLUST: Happy Father's Day. We love our dad's here at church. Dads are so vital, so influential ... often in the American home, so goes the dad – so goes the family. Dad's keep advancing forward for Jesus Christ. Your spouse needs you, your kids need you, your grandkids need you, your community needs you and your church needs you.

We are down a number of people because we already have a good group from our church that have gone over to church camp for this coming week. We want God to work in the hearts of our young people. Let's pray this whole week for our camp staff and students. May it be a life changing week for all.

Lastly, we need to pray for God's chosen nation, the people of Israel. Scripture asks us to pray for Israel and the peace of Jerusalem and I can't think of a better time than now to do it.

INTRO: Sour dough bread starter. Similar to friendship bread. I'm not an expert in preparing it ... but I am an expert in eating it. From what I understand, my wife was given some starter a year or two ago. All starter has a bacteria in it (a yeast) that naturally multiplies and grows the starter dough. Daily, you need to work it (add flour, water, etc.) and multiply it in order to keep it going. The starter my wife has at home came from a friend and goes back about 35 years. The interesting thing about sour dough starter, if you don't feed and multiply it – if you just try to preserve it in its current form ... it will quickly mold and then you will lose it. You can stick it in the fridge to try to extend it in its current state ... but the time comes quickly where, if you try to preserve it and don't multiply it, you'll lose the whole thing. **It's the classic case of use it or lose it** or in this situation, **it's either growing or it's going**. Multiply it to keep it going ... try to preserve it, you will lose it.

Turn to Matthew 25:14-30 - This very principle is clearly seen in today's passage. Jesus is describing the "Kingdom of Heaven" and He teaches us this truth ... that **God's Kingdom is "Made To Multiply."** The kingdom where God rules, the place where His values reign, among many other things, bears the reality that it was made to multiply.

Now this shouldn't surprise us a whole lot ...

Mt. 13:8, 23 – 30X, 60X, 100X from one mustard seed!

Mt. 9:37-38 – the harvest truly is plentiful

John 15:8 – God has ordained that you bear much fruit

Acts 16:5 – Church grew daily in numbers

Col. 1:6 – Gospel is bearing fruit and growing

And in our passage today, it emphasizes the reality of faith-filled, proactive growth of God's kingdom. Mt. 25:20, 22 – 5+5 talents; 2+2 talents and the 1 talent.

If you are at Matthew 25, I'd like to read through this account from v. 14-30.

Matthew 25:14-30

"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 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!' The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold. See, I have gained two 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 gathering where you have not scattered seed. 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.'"

This passage isn't elaborate or complicated. The main principles and priorities pop out at us and capture our attention – just the way God intended them to. So in this passage we see ...

Two Priorities for Kingdom minded believers and churches ...

1. They Prioritize Multiplication over Preservation. V. 19-25

Growth over status quo. Surging over stagnancy. Well, what builds into this multiplication mindset?

This comes when we realize that it's His Kingdom, not ours! *"you entrusted me with ..."*

***"entrusted"* – to hand over one's possessions**

Repeated 3x in this passage. Also, v. 25 "here is **what belongs to you**" and v. 27 "you could have put **my money** ..."

Believers and churches prioritize multiplication over preservation when they come to grips that we aren't the king, this isn't our kingdom, this isn't our castle and everything we have is from Him and for Him. People can debate how much a "talent was worth" but there is no debate who the talent belonged to ... the master – not the servant.

What was a talent in Mt. 25? A "talent" was a unit of money – which is why it's translated here "bags of gold". Some believe it to be worth about 20 years wages. The master handed His servants a HUGE responsibility with high expectations. **Now, this passage is not focused on money but rather around the Kingdom of Heaven – which is why it says, "The kingdom of heaven is like." So how much is God's kingdom worth?** He bought it with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. That is the value of what we have been handed. So to put this discussion in the context of the Kingdom of heaven, this isn't our kingdom. We're not the king. This church doesn't belong to us. We didn't die for these people. We don't develop the kingdom around us, our comfort or our agenda – **That is outside of our authority.** And we don't set the growth expectations of God's Kingdom. We've been entrusted with someone else's valuable possession. Those who understand this best value multiplication over preservation.

This comes when we sense the urgency of His mission. *"went at once ..."* v. 16-17

***"went at once"* – no delay. They immediately started his mission.**

Even though it was "a long time" before the master returned, these first two servants wasted no time getting to work and staying at work until the master returned. There was a strong sense of urgency. They knew the master's expectations and mission and they wasted no time getting to work and staying at work.

This comes when we realize the master will return to settle accounts. V. 19

“settle accounts” – logos ... “word” – probably verbal conditions that will eventually be legered to see if the outcome meets expectations.

This wasn't a surprise to the three servants. This was a part of the verbal understanding at the beginning of the assignment ... the master entrusted them with his most valuable possessions and they all knew there would be a time of accounting for what they did with it. And it is no different for us. I don't think there's any surprise for believers that the master is coming back. I know that there are different views on the exact timing of His return BUT all believers agree that He is coming back.

ILLUSTR: When I married Lisa, part of the agreement was that I watch Hallmark movies and home remodel shows. Pray for me. On the remodel shows, the homeowner gives them the keys to their home, gives them a large budget to work with and tells them what areas of the house they want remodeled and then they leave for a number of weeks. One thing that I like about these shows is when the homeowner comes back after being away for a while – the big reveal. The couple doing the remodeling has been working their tails off, has used up the homeowner's money to work on the homeowner's house and is so excited to show what they've done. Sometimes it's hard to tell who is more excited about the big reveal – the homeowner or the one who did the work.

So, in this Bible passage, can you imagine the excitement for these two servants who doubled the master's money? Can you imagine what they must have felt knowing what they were going to hand over to the master, knowing how happy He'd be with all the effort. You gave me \$500K and I was able to turn it into \$1M. And then to hear – “excellent work. You are a good worker – You took some great risks and doubled my investment. Come on in to my place where we will celebrate together.”

We know what the multiplication looked like but what about the preservation? That servant hid the gold in the ground and he just handed it back to the master after the long duration that he was gone. To some, this doesn't sound too bad. At least he didn't lose it. At least he didn't blow it. In fact, this is how some believers view faithfulness. It's merely showing up. You may not be productive but at least you were there. Here's reality for the 3rd servant – it wasn't his money to determine what he want to do with it. The master entrusted the money with expectations – that weren't met. He didn't blow the master's money, but he blew all that time that we'll never get back. He blew opportunity. He blew his responsibility to grow the master's investment. He blew any trust the master had in him and, in the end, he blew his relationship with the master – because, instead of being in the master's house celebrating, he was tossed outside into the darkness. Who did he think he was to do what he wanted to do with His master's investment? Rather than faithful – the master called this man wicked and lazy. “Why do you think I gave you the money in the first place?” And when the master showed up, it was painfully obvious who believed it was the master's money, who believed in the assignment, who felt the urgency and who ended up celebrating with the master.

The first priority of Kingdom-minded believer's and churches is that they prioritize multiplication over preservation. The second priority for kingdom-minded believers and churches ...

2. They Prioritize Faith over Fear. V. 25

So why did servant #3 with the one talent not work to multiply it? “I was afraid!”

“So I was afraid ...”

Three responses to fear that we often talk about are fight, flight or FREEZE – with freeze normally being the top response. I know personally that fear causes paralysis. We don't move forward – we stay put. And there are many things that we can be afraid of. Guess what the top things believers are afraid of when it comes to deciding multiplication or preservation? Who will be upset. What will people think or say about me? Or, I've been hurt before, what could happen to me if I take a risk?

Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”

In fear, we prioritize comfort, sameness, safety, security and the path of least resistance. In fear, we lock up ... shut up ... put up ... and eventually give up. Fear is fully incompatible with faith and it is incompatible with growth or multiplication.

I was always taught that faithfulness was just hanging on or merely sticking it out to the end. But in this parable, Jesus gives a different perspective. Look at “faithful” as “being full of faith”. Being faithful is action. It’s passion. If it is a race, it’s leaving it all on the track. It’s taking risks – pushing the limits. It’s air-gasping, vein-popping effort – especially on that last lap and then sticking our chest out over the finish line because we know there’s no better master to work for and there’s no better cause than multiplying His kingdom.

ILLUSTR: That was Burt. He was a retired plumber from NJ that moved near us in upstate NY when he retired. Mouth of a sailor. Didn’t care about God, church or anything associated with it, until one day his wife left the TV on and Billy Graham was preaching. That changed everything. We met Burt (and Ruth) when he was in his mid-70’s. Maybe it was because he came to Christ later in life with a host of regrets for his first 65 years ... whatever it was, Burt wasn’t like the others in my ministry in NY. This guy preached at the nursing homes, served as a deacon, involved himself in nearly every project at church, built relationships with those in the community and encouraged me, his young pastor, like no other to not be satisfied with the status quo but to take risks because he felt the urgency, the passion and he ran his final lap and stuck his chest out as he crossed the finish line at 92. You can blame him for my mindset, because Burt, the oldest man in the church, when he saw me discouraged or bugged up by complaints that things weren’t the way they’d always been, he’d say ... “don’t listen to them, Pastor. It’s not their kingdom you are building.” Burt didn’t live out his Christian life in fear. And Burt Landon is how we got our name for our oldest son, Landon. Not only did God say to Burt “well done good and faith-filled servant, we wanted to remember his faith down here as well.”

So what is the state of God’s Kingdom? The church is growing at exponential rates in:

China: over the last 3 decades the total number of Christians in China has grown from 18 million to an estimated 234 million people. Despite communism, despite persecution, despite not having church buildings, programs and events - demographers estimate that more believers worship in communist China on any given Sunday than do in the USA.

Africa: In the last 15 years alone, the Church in Africa has seen a 51 percent increase, which works out on average at around 33,000 people either becoming Christians or being born into Christian families each day in Africa, totaling over 500 million believers that’s about 150 more people than the total current population of the US.

South America is seeing great growth for the gospel. Even **Nigeria and Sudan**, despite horrific persecution are seeing surges of growth for the Christian church.

Well, guess what country is struggling the most with multiplication for God’s Kingdom? **The United States of America.**

Conventional numbers report that nearly 80% of Bible-believing churches in America are plateaued (preserved) or declining and many of them would be doctrinally similar to us. There is only 1 state in the entire US that has experienced an increase in church attendance in the last 10 years and it’s not TN. TN’s attendance has actually gone down 9% in the last decade. No longer does our nation look like one of the first 2 servants but rather our nation is filled with believers and churches who resemble the 3rd servant.

Those postured toward mere preservation will, sadly, lose what they thought to preserve. V. 28-30

Obviously, I’m speaking from this passage because we have a monumental opportunity to grow our multiplication mindset together as a church. God has given us something of outrageous value and He has high expectations of what we do with it. Friends, please take this passage to heart – pray about it – ask God how He wants you to respond to it for the betterment of His Kingdom.

But the real reason why I wanted to preach this today was for me. 3 years ago, I stepped away from pastoral ministry after being terribly wounded. I came to TN and was more than happy to never step back into a pastoral position again. It was nice to be anonymous and not be pastor piniata with people taking whatever whacks and cheap shots they want to. Like servant #3 – my perspective of the master became negatively jaded and I was fearful of what man could do to me. After 30 years in ministry, I didn't want to put myself in that position ever again – I froze. There were times I was asked to preach at various churches and when I'd finish my wife would gently tell me ... "God made you for more. You have a gift and a calling that you need to use." This passage told me that I can't let my fear of man's judgement or of people's opinion drive my decision to dig a hole and bury what God has given me. I need to be a pastor and a prophet and get back to a multiplication mindset for God's Kingdom. I know we are considering a reset for our church ... but truthfully, this opportunity has been a reset for this pastor to get his sneakers back on and get back into the race of multiplication.

So, during this final song, I'm going to be the first to come down front, make public my decision to reject a preservation mentality and reignite my multiplication mentality for God's Kingdom. If you want to know what I'll be praying, it's this ... **"God. I'm not the master. I'm not the king. This isn't my church and this isn't my kingdom – it's yours! Help me not be satisfied with the status quo. Please shrink my fear of man's judgement and grow my faith and vision toward multiplication of your kingdom."** Maybe God is doing something in your heart today as well – if so, great. He's real good at doing that. You can pray in your seat or come and join me up front in this same prayer.

Song ... "Come on my soul, o don't you get shy on me ..."

Closing Words:

The master will build His church – it's going to happen. And those who think preservation over multiplication will, sadly, lose what they think they preserve. The master is coming back ... I want to celebrate with Him – and I hope you do too!

Next week we are back in Esther – and I can't wait. Be praying for church camp this week and also for our special church meeting next Sunday evening at 5pm. Love you all – see you next Sunday.