

Looking Back
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Good morning. It's hard to believe that this is the last Sunday Service of 2019. It seems like the calendar is speeding up without asking for permission. I've been looking forward to this Sunday for a while now because I wanted to talk to you about two things that really have the potential to change your life. It's a good time of the year to talk about them, and maybe even start incorporating them into your life.

The Habit of Evaluation
The Lifestyle of Stewardship

I'd like to talk about evaluation first because it's the actionable habit that I would like you to take home today. Stewardship is the why behind the habit.

e·val·u·a·tion

the making of a judgment of the amount, number, or value of; assess.

It's a powerful word.

Evaluations can be difficult.

Evaluation can also be joyous. Things are going great; things are going bad,

What did you learn this year?

What did you accomplish in your relationships?

How successful were you in your responsibilities?

How did you grow in your faith?

What should I do again?

What should I not do again?

Matthew 25

What is the kingdom of God like...Ten Virgins, (the gold bags), sheep and the goats?

Matthew 25:14-30

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

Some of you know that story...

¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ **"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.**

Then we get a description of what the settling of accounts looks like.

Jesus uses masterful story telling technique. Listen that the first two servants' stories are exactly the except for the amount of bag they had. The rhythm of their interaction almost lulls us asleep.

²⁰The 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.'

²¹"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!'

²²"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.'

²³"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!'

²⁴"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. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

The story sets itself up, because the other servants so far have both said, "Master you entrusted me"

"Master...!"

²⁶"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? ²⁷Well 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.'

²⁸"So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.²⁹ 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. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

1. Every Christian is called to be a good steward.

Every Christian is called to be a steward and not just a steward but a good steward.

stew·ard·ship

the job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property.

A steward is someone who takes what the master has given and adds to it. Produces something measurable with it. A Steward's job is to honor the master by their diligence and attention to his stuff. Not just to care for it but enhance it. A Steward doesn't concern themselves with when the master will return because their behavior is the same whether in the master's presence or in his absence. He or she is honest and loyal. Or to use the words of this parable they are good and faithful. This is called the...

The Lifestyle of Stewardship

If you are required to be a steward, then how can you know that you are a good steward? The answer is to develop a Habit of Evaluation. To take inventory of yourself to intentionally evaluate how you are handling the things that God has given you.

You know it's interesting we have evaluations on our children, they are called report cards. We have evaluations at work they are called yearly reviews, we will in many cases offer unsolicited reminders to our spouses of their shortcomings. But it seems increasingly rare to find people who regularly, thoughtfully, and prayerfully evaluate themselves.

Every Christian is called to be a good steward
Every good steward knows that everything belongs to God.

2. Everything belongs to God.

Everything you have. Your time, money, talent, resources, your wealth, and your capacity to generate wealth. Everything belongs to God.

Stewards treat everything they have been given as the property of God.

14" Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

It was not their property. It was the master's property and it was entrusted to them.

1 Peter 4:10

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

The talents and skills you have aren't for your own pleasure, they are intended for you to use to serve others, be a faithful steward of what God has given you.

A good question to ask yourself is, "What has God entrusted to me?"

3. How did I steward my time, talent, are resources?

This is where the idea of evaluation come in. To intentionally hold yourself accountable for what you are doing with the things God has given you.

Do you think that it might have been helpful for the third servant to do a little evaluation on himself? Do you think if he would have taken an honest look at himself, maybe peek over at the other servants and see how they were doing? Do you think that it might have changed the outcome of the story?

(John Maxwell page 101)

Romans 14:12

¹² ...each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

Because we know we will one day settle accounts with God. So, do what you can now to be sure you are honoring him with everything you have.

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

A worker who does not need to be ashamed. Remind me of the conversation of the first two servants with their master. When they presented what they had done with what he entrusted them with.

“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!’

4. Who would I trust to help me evaluate my life?

This last one is really just a suggestion not to evaluate yourself alone. We all have blind spots.

1 Timothy 4:16

¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

You cannot watch yourself by yourself.

The end of the year can be a reality check, we can often try to fix things on our own, our marriage, our disciplines or habits, our sin patterns. If you are able to please whole heartedly receive this encouragement.

**If you are facing down
the end of another year,
and you are still stuck,
it’s time to get help**

the greatest part of all of this is that help is available. Because he is faithful. He is faithful to bless us, give us a fresh start. Give us wisdom. He has given us everything we need for life and Godliness. Jesus is interceding for us by name. He has given the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. To empower us.

Closing

Great is thy faithfulness