

Abide – Maximizing Your Blessings

3/10/24

Matthew 25:14-30

Sunday AM

Weddings! Most people only have one, but some people have more than one. Like the lady who married a banker. After he passed, she married an actor – who also passed away. So, for her 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage, she chose a pastor – but sadly, he passed too. So, finally, she married a mortician. When somebody asked her about her (4) weddings she explained, “It wasn’t an accident marrying a banker, an actor, a preacher, and a mortician. I planned it that way: One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go!”

As we continue our study of what it means to **abide** in Christ, let me remind you that **abiding** is living plugged into and empowered by H.S. by *remaining connected w/ and aligned under God*.

**Meaning** – the abiding life is living in a close, continual, non-transactional relationship w/ Jesus that involves choosing to stay connected to Him by responding to the leading of the H.S. so that each day you become more dependent on Him and a little less dependent on yourself in every area of your life. To help us abide – God has given us differing spiritual activities like worship, prayer, stewardship, and the Bible to help us live intimately/dependently w/ Him.

Today, we’re going to talk about the most essential element to abiding – and that is **stewardship**.

To help us, I want us to look at the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. It’s (1) or (3) parables that all have to do w/ the future return of Jesus.

**A parable is nothing more than a story w/ a point – an earthly lesson w/ a spiritual punchline.**

**Now** – in most cases, a parable will have a primary and secondary lesson – and the only way to discern which is which is by defining the context of the parable.

**For example** – in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus was answering the question of how to have eternal life – yet most people think the focus is on the secondary lesson of being a good neighbor.

Or how about the parable of the **Lost Sons** – most people focus on the younger brother who left home to squander his inheritance; yet the context of the parable had nothing to do w/ the little brother and everything to do w/ the older brother who represented the Pharisees – who were close to the Father but far from the truth. Still, there’s a powerful 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson w/ the little brother about the Biblical pattern of repentance.

In Matthew 25, the primary lesson of the Parable of the Talents is about living every moment of every day in anticipation of the Lord’s return – making the most of what God has entrusted to you to serve His G.C. The **secondary lesson** in this story pertains to how we’re to steward our lives as we await His return.

*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one – each according to his ability; and then he went on a journey. The one who had received the five talents went and traded w/ them, and made another five talents. Likewise, the one who had received two gained two more. But the one who had received one went and hid His lord’s money in the ground. After a long time, the lord of those servants returned to settle accounts w/ them. The one who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good/faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things – enter into the joy of your lord.’ To the one who had received two talents, he came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good/faithful servant; you have been faithful*

*over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ Then, the one who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. I was afraid – so, I hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord said to him, ‘You wicked/lazy servant, you knew I reap where I haven’t sown, and gather where I haven’t scattered seed. So, you ought to have deposited my money w/ the bankers, and at my coming, I would’ve received back my own w/ interest. So, take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents – for to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who doesn’t have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

**Everything in life (and the abiding life) is about stewardship.** Every gift. Every blessing. Every relationship. Every detail of every moment of every day is about how we steward/enjoy life. **Everything! Spiritually speaking** – God calls us stewards of every gift, talent, blessing, relationship, and dollar we see.

**steward** – *one who manages the affairs of another.* Their sole charge is to take care of what has been entrusted to them – to build on it and make it grow.

**Problem is** – we seem to think that b/c something is in our possession; it’s our possession – and in turn, we see ourselves as owners instead of as stewards. We’ve convinced ourselves that if we can **desire** it, **get** it, **keep** it, and/or **spend** it – then it’s ours and God has no rights/access to it. *But this is simply not true.*

*The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Psalm 24:1*

## I The **ENTRUSTED** Principle

*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling into a far country, who called his servants, and **entrusted** his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; each according to his ability; then, he went on a journey.*

The man traveling is **Jesus** and we are the **servants** who’ve been entrusted w/ God’s blessings/ministry.

Notice first that you have been **entrusted**.

**entrusted** – was the practice of putting something of value into the care of another person for safekeeping to be kept for a time and later collected – which was common in N.T. days when there were no banks.

Jesus was telling the disciples that He was about to leave but before He did, He was making them custodians of His mission/ministry – and that He was expecting them to make the most of it.

**BTW** – we too have been entrusted w/ the ministry of the Kingdom, the witness of Jesus, and the G.C.

*Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted w/ the Gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 1 Thessalonians 2:4*

Notice also what we’ve been entrusted with – **talents**.

**talent** – refers to a measure of wealth – whether money or some precious commodity like gold or silver.

This is a reference to anything/everything God has entrusted to us including our *time, talents, tongue, treasures, temple, testimony, tasks, and relational ties* – to help us to accomplish His mission thru our lives.

**IOW** – every single aspect of your life is a gift from God that He calls you to steward to serve/honor Him.

Note how we've been entrusted – **according to our ability**. That is – in His sovereignty, God has given differently to people based on their abilities and capacity to be managed/multiplied for His glory.

So, while seemingly arbitrarily, God gives a little to some and much more to others; yet whatever He gives, the expectation is still the same – **do something w/ it!**

## II The **EMPOWERMENT** Principle

*To the one who received five talents went and traded w/ the same and made more five talents. Likewise, the one who received two, he also gained two more. But to the one who received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his money. (15-16)*

The **Empowerment Principle** means God hasn't just entrusted you w/ something important, but He's also enabled you and expects you to do something w/ it.

**Meaning** – that while God has entrusted so many things into our care, He expects us to steward them in a way that honors Him and points people to Jesus; *b/c to whom much is given, much is required.*

**SEE** – God didn't give you the abilities, opportunities, and blessings He's given you for them to be wasted or hoarded on you – He gave you what He gave you to make an earthly/eternal difference for His glory.

I think about the parable of the Rich Fool in **Luke 12** – the man amasses a little bit of wealth, but rather than share it, he's greedy w/ it and tears down his barns to build new ones to store his wealth. Yet before he can enjoy it, he dies – leaving it all behind. And Jesus called this sort of life philosophy foolish!

**WHY?** B/c He died believing the myth of more. He died thinking more would one day be enough.

Do you think that if I gave my daughters my credit cards and released them to go on an unlimited shopping spree at the Avenue it'd be enough – or that they would be satisfied? **Well, we'll never know.**

**LISTEN** – One day, we'll all give an account of how we've stewarded what God has entrusted to us to be used for Kingdom purposes. But until then, God expects us to put these blessings to good use multiplying them to honor Him and bless others.

**NOW** – I'm going to go out on a limb and say that God would rather you lose it all investing it for His glory than profit 100-fold investing it for your glory.

## III The **EXPECTATION** Principle

*After a long time, the Lord of these servants returned and reckoned w/ them. (19)*

**This is a simple rule** – one day, *we will all give an account of what we've done w/ what has been entrusted to us when Christ returns* – so we're to live each moment stewarding what He has entrusted to us so that when He returns you will be found worthy.

**SEE** – God expects us (and will hold us accountable) to use our blessings and commission to honor Him.

So, you can be like the man w/ 5 talents or the man w/ 2 talents and make the most of what you've been given to serve/honor God, or you misunderstand/misuse your blessings – but you will give an account.

**IOW** – we can live as if God doesn't exist, doesn't care, or is ready to zap us for not stewarding well – or we can live encouraged that God wants to work in/thru our lives for greater things than we can imagine.

This is a good place to insert the principle of the tithe. The **tithe** refers to the first 10<sup>th</sup> or the first/best of what God has given to us – and never the least/leftovers.

**DYK** – God introduced the tithe long before the Law – and He gave it to help us never lose perspective of who He is and our need for Him. He also gave it to give us accountability so that we might always use our blessings to serve/honor Him.

I believe the tithe applies to every area of our lives – that is, God wants us to give Him the first/best 10<sup>th</sup> of our *time, talents, treasures, tongue, temple, testimony, tasks*, and relational *ties*.

**For example** – in a 10-minute conversation, if I commit to speak about spiritual things for 1 minute, how will that impact the other 9 minutes?

When it comes to the tithe, while it covers multiple areas, the key area is w/ our treasures/money. This is why Jesus said in the SOTM that *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* – and that *no one can serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other – b/c you cannot serve God and money.*

**SEE** – God understands that money is the (g)od of this world – and if we're not careful, it'll become the idol that drives our lives and the object of our worship.

So, to help us keep perspective and provide us w/ a little accountability so that He is free to bless us when we steward His blessings in our lives – God requires us to give Him our first/best.

**For me** – it always goes back to Cain/Abel – Cain offered God his least/leftovers and God rejected his offering, but he gladly accepted Abel's offering b/c it represented his first/best.

**TRUTH** – if anyone deserves to receive our first/best instead of our least/leftovers – it's Jesus! This is why stewardship is so paramount to abiding in Him.

#### IV The **ENJOYMENT** Principle

*His lord said, well done, good/faithful servant; you've been faithful over a few things, I'll make you ruler over many things: enter you into my joy*

Can I share a similar word from God in Proverbs 3:9?

*Honor the Lord w/ your wealth, w/ the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over w/ new wine.*

This is the rule of enjoyment or compensation. It simply says – **God will take care of you when you steward your life/blessings to honor Him.**

This is God's promise in Matthew 6:25-34 – when He encourages us not to worry but to trust and enjoy.

God wants to bless us in every area of our lives, but we have to put Him first. We have to steward our lives to give Him our first/best instead of our least/leftovers.

In the book, *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn offers a great illustration on stewardship. He wrote – Imagine you were living during the last days of the Civil War. While you're from upstate N.Y., you've been living in Virginia doing business during the War. Of course, over time, you've accumulated a lot of Confederate money. So, as the war winds down and you see that the North is going to win the war in just a matter of weeks – what are you going to do w/ your Confederate money? If you're wise, you're going to convert the Confederate currency into U.S. currency b/c you know it'll be the only money that'll have value after the war... Of course, in the short term, you'll keep just enough Confederate money to meet your needs. But if you're unwise, you'll continue to accumulate and even hoard all the Confederate money you can get. But when the war ends, you'll quickly learn that all you can do w/ that money is use it for wallpaper, b/c it has no value.

This is a great illustration for abiding in Christ thru stewarding our blessings to honor Him. As citizens of heaven, knowing that one day soon we step into the arms of Jesus – we possess insider info about what's going to happen when Jesus returns or when we die. In that instant, all the money, jewels, and investments that seemed so essential while here on earth will become totally worthless – just like that Confederate currency. But if we will abide in Him, stewarding our blessings for His glory – He promises a crown of life and the words – *Well Done, My good/faithful servant!*