

Trending 2015
Loose Ends
August 2, 2015

PRELUDE – Your Love Never Fails
Congregational Songs – Your Love Never Fails /
Our God
Feature – Torn

Good morning everyone.

Obviously that song is about a romantic relationship gone wrong but I think it also illustrates the reality of the world in which we live – a reality that is highlighted by the cultural issues we’ve been talking about over the past month. Reality is that the world we live in is torn by sin. “All of creation was subjected to its curse” the Apostle Paul wrote.ⁱ And we are all bound and broken by that curse in one way or another.

We saw this in the first week of the series when we looked at the issue of religious liberty. The Puritans – tens of thousands of godly and

committed Christian men and women – came to this land in hopes of escaping the religious persecution they were experiencing in Europe. And, yet, when other Christians disagreed with them they turned around and did what was done to them. They persecuted them. Why? Because the Puritans (as pure as they were) were also bound and broken by the sin within and so even they contributed to the tearing of the world.

In the second week, when we talked about racism, we saw that what happened here in the United States is the result of one of the greatest global conspiracies ever: for nearly three centuries, Southern plantation owners in this country paid European slave traders to buy men and women from African tribal leaders who sold their own people and other tribes into slavery. And because of their sin, entire generations of African Americans have been bound and broken in ways that most of us will never experience.

In the third week, we looked at the issue of

transgenderism – a subject which has been brought front and center by Bruce Jenner’s recent “transition” – and we saw how easy it is for humans to be deceived by the enemy of our souls into believing lies about ourselves and about God. And that deception then leads us to do things that further tear the world and results in even more bondage and brokenness.

And then, finally, last week when Shannon talked to us about what’s happening these days in the world of social media, we saw it again. What had been created for good – the ability to share information with others in a way that could not have happened even 15 years ago – far too often turns nice people into haters. But the problem, as Shannon pointed out, isn’t with social media platforms. *It’s with us.* We’re bound and broken by the curse of sin. And that curse runs through everything we touch and everything we do.

Now, the reason I’m telling you this is not to

depress you or to encourage you to try and build some kind of “spiritual bomb shelter” in an attempt to keep away the evil of the world (the Puritans tried that but it didn’t work). The reason I’m telling you this is to encourage you to put the hot button issues of our day into the proper spiritual context. When you finally understand that the root problem in all of these issues (and many others) is *sin*, you will also understand that these issues will never be fully solved until Jesus returns and sets all things right.

And that day *is* coming the Bible tells us – a day when there will no longer be any curseⁱⁱ and the throne of God will be among human beings. But until that day comes, we need to understand that ...

- People will always abuse freedom and hypocritically deny it to others.
- People will always be suspicious of and look down on and take advantage of others who

don't share the same skin color or language.

- People will always be confused and deceived about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- And people will always take the best of what is created and twist it and use it for evil.

That's what it means to live in a world that is torn. That's what it means to be a fallen human being.

Furthermore, and maybe even more importantly, we also need to understand that *every proposed solution* to every problem in this world is going to fall short because it comes from or through bound and broken people. No one sees the whole picture and no one has the complete right answer. It's impossible. It's beyond us.

And when you understand that, it helps you avoid being overly-simplistic and dogmatic

about your viewpoints because you realize that you and the members of your “tribe” (whether that tribe is Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or Socialist; white, black, Latino, or Asian or any other tribe) are probably wrong at some point and therefore you are foolish to be judgmental and condemning of those who hold opposing viewpoints.

And if you’re a Christian (who is also from the tribe of Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or Socialist; white, black, Latino, or Asian or any other tribe) *that matters much* because our primary job in this world as followers of Jesus is not to be “right” about religious liberty or racism or transgenderism or the use of social media or any other issue but to love others as God in Christ has loved us – with no strings attached, just as we are and not as we should be – so that they, too, will open themselves to his grace.

That, for a Christian, trumps every other agenda.

Follow God's example, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV)

Now, that doesn't mean we can't have opinions – even strong opinions – and share those opinions and vote those opinions or even run for office, but it does mean that as we do so we are to be gracious to others who we believe “fall short of the mark” in their opinions ... in the same way that God is gracious to us even though we fall short.

One of the fascinating things about this kind of series – and this is the third year I've done a summer “hot topics” series – is that it serves to reveal where we are in that.

Here's what I mean: Every message I've given in this series has produced some level of reaction in every person listening and sometimes people

share that reaction with me. Many of them say something like, “I appreciate that you tell us how you believe the scripture applies to this issue even though you know it won’t be popular.”

Some will go on to say that they agree with me and others will go on to tell me that they disagree (which is fine because even though I think my positions on these issues are biblically-informed, I also realize they are not perfect because of the sin within me. I’m certainly off in what I am thinking or how I am expressing what I think).

Now, most of those who disagree do so in a manner that reflects what I was just talking about. I know they love me. I know they want what’s best for this church. So, I’m OK with them being very direct with me. For example ...

- One woman came to talk to me after the racism message and said, “I think what you said could have been said so much better. I

think the way you did it was divisive instead of unifying” and then went on to explain why. I didn’t enjoy hearing that but she had a point and she was coming from a good place so it was OK.

- Another guy took me out to lunch after the transgender message and told me why he had some struggles with what I was saying. He was very direct, too, and we even got into politics. But it was coming from a good place and that was OK.

And in both of those situations I was encouraged because *what they did and how they did it was a sign of spiritual growth and maturity in them.*

They were handling the issue the way Christians are supposed to handle it.

“If another believer sins against you (even if it’s the pastor!), go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and

confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses.” Matthew 18:15-16 (NLT)

Unfortunately, sadly, there are people who do not handle it in this way. Sometimes they don't say anything – they just get mad and assume the worst about me and they leave. Every week in this series, I saw at least one person get up and leave the service in the middle of the message. And they weren't going to the bathroom.

And sometimes people do say something but they do it anonymously. After the racism message, a guy called the office and, instead of arranging to speak with me personally, told our receptionist to pass on the message ...

- That Sunday's sermon was the biggest pile of liberal crap he'd ever heard

- That there was no such thing as white privilege
- That I should have had Al Sharpton do the closing prayer.
- And that I should know that we just lost three families from the church because of what I said.

Of course, he wouldn't give his name or a number for me to call him back.

And I'll be honest with you, my first reaction to that is anger. I just want to smack people who don't have the guts to sign their name to a negative comment card or who are too lazy or cowardly to speak to me directly ... *but then I realize*: this is just one more example of the torn world in which we live and the fact that people are bound and broken by sin. And we all really do need the truth and grace that comes from a relationship with Christ and his church to transform us from the inside out. There is no other hope.

So, even though I am a little discouraged by those kinds of responses they remind me once again that the Gospel matters and what we are doing together as a church matters ... which is a good thing.

Enough about all of that. Let's move on. In the rest of the time that I have this morning, I'm going to attempt to address a few of the questions that were raised as well as some loose ends I think I need to tie up. And I should say that if you were not here for one of the messages that I am about to refer to, you can always go back and check it out via our app – North Heartland Comm Church.

Every week we post the audio, video and text of the message for that Sunday. It's really cool and it works great at keeping you connected to the church when you're away. We were at the lake last weekend but I still got to hear Shannon's message (which I thought was awesome).

Ok, here we go.

Religious Liberty

In the week that we devoted to the issue of religious liberty (which is front and center in recent days because of the legalization of gay marriage), we took a look at the history: how religious freedom was one of the foundational pillars in the formation of our nation, why it was listed first in the Bill of Rights and the incredible value it holds even for those who are irreligious.

Then I gave a list of several implications for those of us who are Christians, including that we must confidently (but graciously) challenge attempts to exclude religious thought from the public square. Every political discussion is, at its foundation, moral. And morality and religion are tied together. It's that simple.

However, I also said that ...

We must also recognize that our religious liberty does not trump the civil rights of others.

This is the way our system is designed to work ... which means that even though churches will not be forced to do gay weddings (as that would be the state controlling the church which the Constitution prohibits), Christians who own a bakery (for example) are not going to be able to opt out of serving gay couples any more than they can opt out of serving interracial couples.

In this nation, a decision to refuse to do business with someone for reasons such as race or sexual orientation – even if it is against our conscience – denies them the right to participate equally in society. And that’s a violation of their civil rights.

One of the great questions I got about that was “so why should our government tell us *anything* about who we do business with? Why should a gay-owned bakery be forced to serve Christians

if they don't want to? Why should a white owner have to do business with African Americans if they don't want to – and vice versa? Why shouldn't there be freedom to make those kinds of decisions?"

Now, just to be clear, the point of the question wasn't that business owners *shouldn't* serve people who are different from them. It was that maybe the government shouldn't be telling us or forcing us to play by what seems to be an arbitrary set of rules.

Of course, you could make that same argument about many things the government says businesses can do or not do.

- Why does the government get to tax earnings?
- Why can they tell you a minimum wage you have to pay?
- How close a liquor store or bar can be to a church building?

- Why can they prohibit insider trading by top executives?

If the government can't tell you who you must serve in order to protect civil rights, then they probably shouldn't tell you those things either. In fact, they probably shouldn't tell you how fast you can drive on the roads. Or what age you have to be in order to drive a car. I think you can see that the list could go on forever.

And if it *did* go on forever to the point where government had no authority and therefore no reason to exist, that would not be called freedom. It would be called *anarchy*.

And the Bible *does* have something to say about that. *It's bad*. It's not a very healthy way for human beings to live.

In fact, in both Testaments Old and New, the principle is clear that “having *bad* government is better than having *no* government (or anarchy).”

This is why, for instance, in the Old Testament the Book of Judges repeatedly tells us “There was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” followed by descriptions of evil and chaos and disobedience to God that existed in Israel for 400 years.

It’s also why, in the first century, under the rule of the Roman Empire (which was led by Emperor Nero who was a vile and crazy man), the Apostle Paul wrote that ...

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. Romans 13:1 (NLT)

I can imagine people thinking, “Really, Paul? Even Nero?”

“Yep,” Paul says. “Even Nero.”

“And pray for him, too,” Paul wrote.

Pray ... even for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 1 Timothy 2:2 (NET)

... because that’s the divinely ordained role of government: to preserve *order* – the ability for people to live “peaceful and quiet lives” primarily by protecting them from the evil conduct of their neighbors.ⁱⁱⁱ

That’s why Paul wrote:

*The one in authority is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.
Romans 13:3, 4 (NIV)*

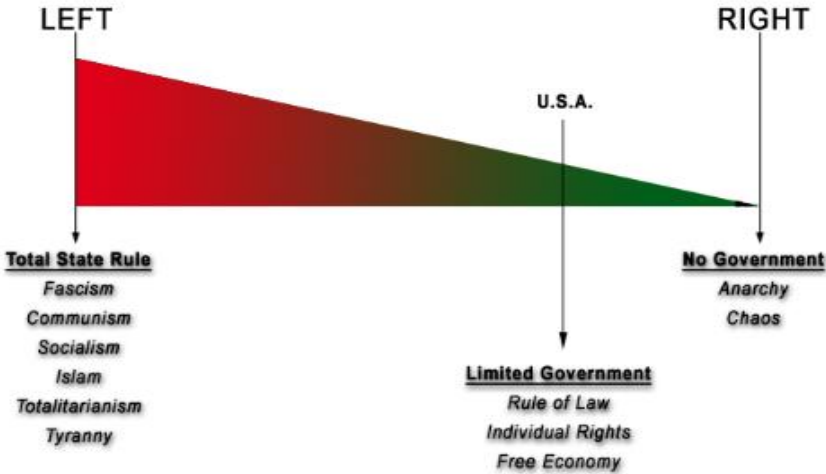
Even bad government and bad laws are more useful to God than no government and no law.

Of course (and obviously), *good* government is

better than *bad* government and that's what we should strive for whenever possible. And, in fact, when considered in relation to the entire spectrum of what could exist, what we currently have in this country *is* good – at least as good as what bound and broken humans can create.

One of the most helpful diagrams I came across in my research for that message (which I did not have time to address that day) illustrated this very clearly.

The True Political Spectrum



<http://therightplanet.com>

On the left edge of the spectrum is totalitarianism – where the ruler does what is right in *his* own eyes. On the right is anarchy – where each individual does what is right in *their* own eyes.

What they have in common is lawlessness. On the left, the ruler is above the law. On the right, the people are above the law. Both extremes are bad although biblically, as we have seen, the leftmost is better than the rightmost because it at least preserves some level of order in society.^{iv}

But the larger point, as I said in that message, is that the United States was the first political state organized that far away from the left edge. And our founders did it that way because they believed not only that God had given individuals the right to freedom, but also that the moral character of our nation (which they saw as the responsibility of the church) would keep us from sliding too far to the right ... into anarchy.

Ok, enough of that. I hope that was at least somewhat helpful in thinking about the issue of freedom in general.

Disordered Sexuality

But let's talk for just a minute about a question that came up after the message I did on Bruce Jenner and the broad acceptance in our culture of the idea that people are "born that way" or that "God must have made them that way" and, therefore, following that desire is not only OK but to be encouraged and applauded.

That, as we saw and heard in his own words, was Bruce's rationale for the decision to have himself "rebuilt" to look like a woman. And it's also the rationale for those who are sexually attracted to those of the same gender, i.e. "I was born gay and, therefore, this is how I should live."

Of course, the science on that is far from settled.

If there really is such a thing as a “gay gene” or “transgender gene” that actually leads people away from sexual behavior that has the capability to reproduce and further the human race, it’s not clear why it would survive the process of evolution. Genes and evolution don’t work that way.

However, as I said in the message, I don’t have any issue with the idea that some people are born with an attraction to the same sex or that they are born with the desire to be a different gender. That actually isn’t surprising to me at all since the Bible makes it very clear (and I won’t go back through all the verses I used to illustrate this – you can watch, listen to or read the message on the North Heartland app) ... the Bible makes it very clear that one of the results of the torn-ness of this world is *disordered desires* and that every human being is born with them in some fashion. Every one of us has an innate attraction to things that are neither good for us nor right in the sight of God. That’s what I mean

by disordered. Our desires are not pointed in the right direction.

But that is not *God's* doing or even our own doing. God didn't make us that way. We didn't choose to be that way. Instead, it's the result of what the ancient church fathers called "original sin." And original sin affects everyone in different ways.

- In some of us, the natural human desire for justice is disordered into anger and vengeance. And we find ourselves constantly drawn into those behaviors.
- In some of us the natural human desire to protect ourselves is disordered into selfishness and greed and the willingness to lie, cheat and steal – even if it's only in small ways. And we find ourselves constantly drawn to those kinds of behaviors.

- In some of us the natural human desire to be fed is disordered into gluttony and we eat and eat even though we *know* it's bad for us.
- In some, the natural desire to be in control is disordered into worry, anxiety and manipulative behavior.
- And the list could go on and on.

And it does, at least biblically speaking, to include disordered sexual desires ... of which attraction to one's own kind and transgenderism is a part.

Now, as I said in that message (and have said on many other occasions and will probably say on many more), that particular disordered desire is no worse than any other disordered desire. Even a cursory reading of the scripture will reveal that greed and gluttony and vengeance and heterosexual misbehavior are just as displeasing

to God as anything else.

However, even though it's no worse than any other disordered desire, it still an example of falling short of the mark; falling short of what God intended for humans to be as the creatures designed to reflect His image – His character and creativity and glory. And in the same way that it would be bogus to say “I was born selfish and greedy. God made me that way so it's ok to lie and cheat and steal” it's just as bogus to say, “I was born gay or trans. God made me that way and so it's ok for me to follow wherever that leads me.”

Now, after that message, the guy who took me to lunch raised a really good question. He said, “I'm not sure I agree with your application of the ‘disordered desire’ concept because I don't see what's so wrong with two people who happen to be the same gender getting married if they love each other.”

And that's a really good question because while it's obvious that the desire for self-protection is disordered when it produces lying, cheating and stealing, it's not as obvious why it's disordered when two people who happen to be the same gender want to get married and have sex and adopt kids and raise a family. How does that have any negative impact on society?

Quite frankly, when you look at it from the individual perspective and in the short term experience of human history, it probably has very little negative impact. I mean, who can be against any two people making a lifelong commitment to love and cherish each other and build a little a community rooted in that love? After all, heterosexual people aren't necessarily doing all that well at that.

And quite frankly, given the choice of living next to two gay men who have a stable home life or a straight guy who gets drunk and beats his wife and kids, in the short term, I'll take the two gay

guys because they are contributing more to the ability for people to live a “peaceful and quiet life” (as Paul put it) than the straight guy is.

But, in the long-term, I’d rather not have to make that choice because it is a choice between extremes where one *is* better than the other ... but neither is ideal ... just like totalitarianism is better than anarchy but neither one leads to what the Hebrew prophets called “shalom” – the full-flourishing not just of a few individuals here and there, but of a culture as a whole.

Furthermore, and this is a specifically Christian viewpoint (i.e. I don’t expect anyone who is not a believer in or a follower of Jesus to get this), for those of us who are Christians ... if we really are believers in and followers of Jesus, at some point we have to make the decision that we are going to base our moral reasoning not on “what seems right in our own eyes” (or in the eyes of our culture) but on the revelation of God that has been given to us in the scripture. At some point,

we're going to have to decide that God (as God) really does know more than we do.

“Why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say?”

Luke 6:46 (NLT)

And, for whatever reason, God says “this is not the way to live.” For whatever reason, God says that our disordered sexual desires are not to be followed any more than our disordered desire to get revenge or our disordered desire to eat 4,000 calories a day should be followed. For whatever reason, God has defined marriage as being between a man and a woman.

As I told my friend at lunch, the larger concern isn't necessarily that nice, responsible gay couple that we all know. It's the generations who are going to come after us who will reap the fruit of a culture taking yet another step away from God's revelation of how human beings best flourish.

And for Christians to point that out (with a gentleness and humility that comes from the knowledge that we too are sinners) is not hateful. It's not bigoted. It doesn't mean we want to deny anyone's civil rights. If gay marriage is the law of the land, we ought to respect that or willingly accept the penalty. Instead, our intention is to express our concern that originates not with us but in the loving heart of God himself.

Racism

Alright, now let's talk about the final issue – racism. (By the way, I'm not going to talk about Shannon's message on social media because she did it so well that there were no questions 😊).

But on the racism issue, as I have alluded to, there were a lot more questions and negative reactions. Part of that was my fault in that I should have been wise enough to spend two

weeks on it instead of one so I could have been more thorough in what I said. I should have known that of all the issues we were going to talk about in this series, racism would be the one that hits closest to home for most of us because the overwhelming majority of our congregation is Caucasian.

And it's very hard for white people (myself included) to hear anything at all on the subject without being at least a little sensitive and, in some cases, offended.

Part of that is because the narrative we've heard basically comes down to "the white guy was (and probably still is and always will be) the bad guy" and yet most of us – especially those of us who are Christians – don't feel any animosity towards people of color. We don't think of ourselves as a superior race as many of our ancestors did. We're beyond that. After all, didn't we elect Barack Obama? Twice? I'm serious. I know white folks who voted for him not because they agreed with

his politics but because they wanted to make a statement that they weren't racist.

Part of the negativity a lot of white people feel is because sometimes *it seems like* racism – as terrible as it was and in some places still is – has become a convenient excuse for people who are, in reality, just common criminals to act irresponsibly. Furthermore, it *seems like* “the race card” has become a way for some high-profile individuals to maintain their power in the African American community as they continue to play up division.

And when you load all of that up and then start talking about racism and what it was like and how the effects still linger today in spite of the many positive changes that *have* taken place ... it's going to be a little dicey.

So let me take one more run at this. And to do so, I want to cut right to the most offensive heart of the matter, which, for many white people is the

concept of “white privilege.” Based on the things I have read and the many conversations I have had with white people about it and, to be quite honest, *my own reaction* when I began to really try and understand the concept, I think that phrase might be as offensive to a white person as the N-word is to a black person.

To most white people, it is highly offensive, insulting and degrading to be accused of possessing such a position in this world and, by inference, willfully taking advantage of that position to the detriment of others. The concept of “white privilege” feels very personal. It feels like you are being called a racist. And there’s nothing you can do about because you were born that way.

But in reality, that’s not what is meant by the concept, at all. White privilege and being a racist are not the same thing. Here’s what it means.

If you are a person of white skin color, you

have certain advantages in comparison to those who do not.^v

And the corollary is also true. If you are not a person with white skin, you have certain disadvantages in comparison to those who do.

A few simple examples to illustrate:

- If you are white it's likely you have never even had to *think* about your race because it's just as likely you've never experienced discrimination because of it. That is not true for the vast majority of people of color.
- In addition, if you are white you can talk about racism without being perceived as self-interested or self-seeking.
- You can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having your co-workers suspect you got it because of your race.

- If your day is going badly, you don't need to wonder if each negative episode or situation had a racial component.^{vi}

Now, we can debate to what extent white privilege or non-white disadvantage exists. And I think it's fair to say that in some places it's a lot stronger than in others. But there is no denying that a major factor in the tensions that exist in places like Ferguson and inner-city Baltimore is that African Americans were told in past generations “*that* is your side of the town and *this* is ours.” And *their* side of the town got fewer resources and less respect while *ours* got more simply because they were black and we were white.

It's a historical fact called *redlining*.^{vii} And it's an example of the system granting privilege to whites that was not granted to blacks.

And the result of that system was that

generations of black kids grew up with inferior schools, housing and opportunities which, in many cases, created animosity and hatred as well as a sense of hopelessness and despair. And some of that still lingers today.

Of course, the question is ... what are we supposed to do about it now whether we're at the top of the white privilege heap (if there is such a thing) or whether we're at the bottom of the pit of racial disadvantage?

There's a passage of scripture that has been helpful to me in thinking about this question and I really regret not sharing this in the original message. And I should add right up front that what I am about to say and how I am about to apply this scripture is really intended for Christians. I think God has something to say to followers of Jesus – be they white or black – regarding this issue.

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25 we read that Jesus once said ...

“The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.”

Matthew 25:13-15 (NLT)

Jesus doesn't explain how the man defined or determined “ability” but it's pretty clear that he had no qualms about unevenly distributing his resources. There's nothing here about him being fair and unbiased in his decision-making. It's possible he could have looked at the three servants and said, “This one is better looking than the other two; he has a better family background; he's a part of the majority ethnic group so I'll give him more money than I give the

others.”

No matter how it happened, the first servant in Jesus’ story received a position and a privilege that the other two did not and it would have been foolish for him or them to deny it ... just like it would be foolish – and damaging to the cause of Christ – for white Christians to deny our privilege exists *at some level* and to deny the disadvantages that many people of color have to deal with.

Pastor Noah Filipiak puts it this way:

One of the reasons churches are so racially segregated (and why experts say the only way to become a multiracial church is to talk about things like white privilege and racial inequity) is because a person of color is going to have a very difficult time trusting a white community that never acknowledges their life experience. Saying “We don’t see color, we see all people the

same” is a cop-out and is another way of saying, “Your disadvantages don’t exist and don’t matter to us.”

If you had a friend who was abused as a child you would never say to them, “Well I wasn’t the one who abused you, so get over it.” Instead, you would listen with empathy and ask how you could help them move forward in their life.

Most people of color aren’t looking for a white person to give them their house, or for affirmative action style tokenism. They are looking for understanding.^{viii}

Anyway ... back to Jesus’ story. He continued:

“The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the

one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money."

"After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money."

Matthew 25:16-19 (NLT)

And if you've been in church for any period of time you know how it goes from here on out. The first two servants are commended and rewarded and celebrated for their diligence. The third servant, however, makes a bunch of excuses for his laziness. And, in response, the master says, "Take the little amount he had and give it to the first servant and then throw him out."

And here's the takeaway:

"To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be

taken away.”
25:29 (NLT)

Matthew

I think Jesus' point is pretty clear. It doesn't matter whether you're at the top or at the bottom. The expectation is that you will make the most of what you've been given *even if you've been given very little*. The fact that the first two servants had more and better privilege with respect to the third was of no consequence to the master. The underprivileged servant was expected to work as hard as the first two even though he probably would not generate the same result monetarily ... but he would get the same result in terms of commendation and celebration as well as increased responsibility.

Now, what is not apparent in this story – and what I pretty much hammered on in the original message – is that God actually holds the servant entrusted with the most privilege to a higher standard than the others. In Luke chapter 12, Jesus tells a similar story of a man who goes on a

journey but, instead of giving a servant part of his money, he puts him in charge over the entire household. He runs the place. It's his show. He is in the position of great privilege.

And Jesus defines God's expectation of him with this statement ...

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” Luke 12:48 (NET)

This is why I said if you're a white Christian and you've been educated and you have a good job and you live in a nice suburban neighborhood and you have lots of money going into your 401K and you're taking fancy vacations and buying new cars every other year ... and you don't give at least 10% to charity (whether it's the church or some other organization that directly helps people) ... I think you need to do a serious heart check and change that.

Of course, the same thing is true for a black or Latino or any other type of Christian who has a good education and makes lots of money and so on. To whom much is given much will be required regardless of color. But for me, personally, as a white male in this society, I think God might expect even more.

Conclusion

And you don't have to agree with me on that. That's just my personal conviction.

But I do think you have to agree (at least if you want to take Jesus seriously) that God loves us and wants us – regardless of our socioeconomic status – to be part of the solution. God wants us to take what he has given us – and make the most of it for his Kingdom and His glory. And then he wants to reward us for that service.

And speaking of service, it's high time we end this one. Would you pray with me?

<PRAYER>

Feature – The Lord’s Prayer

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Next Sunday – Carrollton in morning service / prelude for the concert later that afternoon
2. Pick up tickets for concert
3. “Modern day slaves” message moving to Aug 30

Endnotes

ⁱ Romans 8:20

ⁱⁱ Revelation 22:3

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-7-number-1/biblical-foundations-limited-government>

^{iv} <https://contrast2.wordpress.com/2010/02/18/every-man-did-what-was-right-in-his-own-eyes/>

^v [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/april-web-only/white-privilege-
unbiblical-moody-
mbiprivilege.html?share=%20CNaljraH%20qgT53qZqVXi2TqVvQQRfbH](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/april-web-only/white-privilege-unbiblical-moody-mbiprivilege.html?share=%20CNaljraH%20qgT53qZqVXi2TqVvQQRfbH)

^{vi} <http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/05/28/evidence-that-banks-still-deny-black-borrowers-just-as-they-did-50-years-ago/>

^{viii} From <http://www.atacrossroads.net/positioning-white-privilege-actually-can-talk/>