

Stewarding Your Life for God's Joy

Bible Verses Referenced: Matthew 25:14-30, Genesis 1:26-28, Jeremiah 33:3

Be so. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the gift of Your Word in it. We are challenged and convicted to give our entire lives to You. And so, we ask that the ministry of Your Word, the preaching of it will be Your Word for the sake and glory of Your Son, Jesus Christ, in His name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. So today I would like to reflect with you a little bit about the gospel passage we just heard, the parable of the talents.

And let me first start by just trying to help us understand what's going on with the parable. One of the things that we do every single year is we often put Scripture passages that go along with the theme of stewardship right at this time of year. And this is something that the church does. And so that's why we're reading this passage, because it has to do with stewardship.

And so, it's easy to kind of think about, well, do I need to give my 10% to the church or my seventh of my time? The tithe and the Sabbath is what the Lord is asking for us to give back to Him. But this parable is actually not so much just about the 10th and the 7th, as it is about the 90% and the 6/7th of our time.

In other words, this is a parable that is about all of what the Lord has given to us and has been entrusted to us with our lives. The story goes of a man who is described as the master, and this is the one who represents, of course, God, who gives or entrusts to his servants, his slaves, a sum of some money, which are described as talents.

Now, one of the things that is a little confusing about this is we use the term talents for things like, you know, I can, you know, do, I can dance, or I can sing, or I have, you know, something I'm good at, like my wife's really talented at pickleball or, you know, something like that. So, this is not what a talent was back in that day. A talent was a unit of measure. It was something that was used that you would weigh against something else.

And so, a talent weighs about 60 to 100 pounds. So, this is a big, big unit of measure. So if you had a talent of gold, you'd have a lot of gold. Or if you had a talent of silver, that would be a lot of silver. But you could measure anything. You could have a talent of wheat, or you could have a talent of, I don't know, shoes, I don't know, I'm making stuff up.

But the idea is, is that the master has given a big sum of something. We don't know exactly what it is. It's just described as five talents, two talents, one talent. But he gave a whole lot of stuff to his servants. And it says, "Each according to their abilities." So, this is about us. God has given each one of us some stuff, some things.

Could be a house, could be a business, could be an education, could be some time, whatever it is. He's given you things and a lot of things, right? And the Lord has also uniquely endowed every single person with unique abilities. And so, he's given you some things to work with, some stuff, and he's also given you some abilities.

And then he goes away and lets you have at it. So, this is the vision, actually, of what humanity has been put on this planet to do in the first place. When God made human beings, He gave them the created order, and He put us in there to till it, to make something of it. The gold was in the hills. It needed to be mined.

The garden needed to be tended. There was this old preacher who came out to visit one of his parishioners out at the farm, and he was talking to the farmer, and they're just kind of surveying the fields and looking at all the big farm and everything is just neatly rode and great straight rows.

And the preacher says to the farmer, he says, "Boy, you and God have really done a lot with this place." And the farmer takes his hat off and he hits his jeans with it, and he says, "Yeah, but you should have

seen it when God had it by Himself." Well, that's kind of the idea, actually, is that God gave us untended stuff, the stuff of our lives.

And he expects us. In fact, this is a parable actually about the accountability that God has for us, that one day we will have to come before the Lord, our Master, and He's going to take an account. What have you done with the stuff of your life? How have you used your abilities that I gave you and all the things that I gave you? What have you done with it?

Now, this is not a call for everybody to be the same. In fact, part of what's unique about this parable is everybody's different. They all have different abilities. They have different amounts of things, different amounts of stuff. We don't know exactly what stuff was given to them. And so we have to use our imagination and apply it to our own lives. But what's wonderful about it is it's really about our attitude of how we relate to God with respect to the stewardship of our lives.

That word stewardship is a very interesting word. These servants in this parable are stewards. And in the Greek, it's the word *oikonomos*. Can you recognize the English word economics? *Oikos* is a house or a household and *NOMOS* was the management or the law of the house. And so economics is the law of households or the management of households.

And so every single one of us has an economics to our life, a way in which we're stewarding our households and the businesses that we've been given, the jobs that we've been given, the families that we've been given. And the Lord is paying attention to how we're stewarding 100% of it. And so one of the things about the view of God, so you have one, two of them have five talents, two talents.

These guys take what God has given them, the stuff and their abilities, and they multiply it. They do something with it. Turn five talents into five more talents, two talents into two more talents. And so listen to what the Lord says when he comes back and he sees what they have done with their talents. He says to them, "Well done, good and faithful servants. You have been faithful over a little. Now I will set you over much.

Enter into the joy of your master." I'm going to cue in on that word joy. Do you know that the Lord delights in watching you be productive with your life? And it doesn't matter exactly what, I mean, each one of you has been uniquely placed on this planet to do something, but you may not think about things this way, but if say you're a banker, do you know the Lord delights watching you manage your banquet?

The Lord delights watching stewards of airline stewardesses do their job well. The Lord delights and teachers teaching their classrooms well or artists painting beautiful artwork. The Lord takes pleasure and enjoys watching you multiply what He has given you and do something with it.

Now the one guy has a negative view about God and the master. He takes what was given to him and he just buries it in the ground. Doesn't do anything with his life, really. And the reason is because his view of the master is that he's hard. That he's a hard man, reaping where you do not sow, gathering where you scattered no seed. What does that mean?

Reaping where you don't sow and scattering where you don't sow any seeds? Well, it's a farming metaphor, but basically what it means is, is I just think all you care about is the bottom line. All you care about is getting your money. I was reading an article about a journalist actually by the journalist about himself and the art of writing. And he was describing how he had lost the joy of writing. This is Benjamin Nugent from The New York Times.

In 2013, he wrote, "When good writing was my only goal, I made the quality of my work the measure of my worth." In other words, what this author had done is made the bottom line of writing the measure of his value of himself. And he lost the joy of the process of writing. Put it another way.

This is Peter Drucker, a business commentator. He says, "Profit for a company is like oxygen for a person." Well, if you don't have enough of it, you're out of the game. But if you think your life is only about breathing, well, then you're really missing something. That was the problem of the man that only had one talent. He thought it was only about making a profit, and so he lost the joy of life.

Or like a person who thinks, my job is just to breathe. What a waste of humanity. See, the Lord puts you on this planet for a unique and very important purpose. Do you know what it is? Do you have an understanding of how God has uniquely gifted you with particular abilities and all of these things that He has given you.

I don't know what they are, but He's given you some stuff. And what are you doing with it? Are you using it for His joy and His delight? I love the line from *The Chariots of Fire*, which is a very famous line where it's Eric Lydell. And he says, I know that God has put me here for a purpose, and that when I run, I feel God's pleasure. He was a runner.

And God's purpose for his life was to run races. And he knew that when he was doing what he was put on this planet to do, to run, that the God of heaven was staring down at him and going, run, Eric, run. I delight in that. Brings the joy of the Master.

What is it that delights the heart of God about your life and what you're doing with His things that He's entrusted you with? I did a funeral this past week for a woman named Christy Chickering. She was one of my friends from Houston, Texas, and I flew to Houston.

She died way too young of cancer, but Christie's job in life, and she really understood her calling, was actually to help other people find their callings in life. She was a consultant for the oil industry, but every single person that she came into contact with, she was going to help them find what God had uniquely put them on this planet to do. One of the things that they passed out at the funeral was this little bookmark, which was Christie's life verse.

This was her favorite passage of Scripture, and it set the tone for everything that she did in her consulting business. It's Jeremiah 33:3. It reads this, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." What Christie understood that verse to mean is that God has unique plans for you. But you need to ask him what that is.

And when you ask him, "Lord, what is your will for my life?" Then he will answer you. He'll tell you exactly what he wants you to do with your life. And when he tells you, it will be wonderful and amazing. She had this vision, not just for individuals, but she thought every business that she consulted with had a unique purpose and plan for which God had intended it.

In fact, she had that vision for the entire oil industry. She saw the oil industry as being something that had God's unique plan and purpose for its stewardship of the resources of oil on this planet. What an amazing way to look at life, to see that God has a plan and a purpose for everything that we have, everything that we've been entrusted with, and every ability that we have.

And that when we use those plans for His glory, no matter what it is, even an oil executive, that you will be delighting his heart. You know, Christie called that a treasure hunt. She said, "Every single day I get out of bed in the morning and I say to the Lord, what is the secret that you're going to reveal to me today?" And she was always on the lookout for it.

Maybe it was in a person or in some new thing that she would learn or some conversation that she would have. But as she would go through the day, she would say, "Lord, what is that thing, that person that you have for me today that will be that treasure where I'll say, "That's why you gave me this day." What an amazing way to steward every single day of our lives is to look at what God has given us and talents, tons of stuff, and look at our abilities and ask the question, what do you want me to do with this today?