

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Jonathan Pokluda  
Series: The Good Life  
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### The Good Gifts

Good Morning Church! Let's go, it is good to be with you. Listen, if you are a guest with us visiting from somewhere else, welcome home. We're glad that you would entrust us with your Sunday morning as we open God's word. If we haven't met, my name is JP or Jonathan Pokluda, and I have the privilege of serving on staff here. And today, the privilege of opening God's word to see what He has for us.

This past week my family and I, we've had some guests that were visiting from out of town. They stayed with us. They have some kids that are around our kid's age and so I wanted to show them a good time. So just trying to think, OK where do we want to go in Waco? So, I took the kids and we kind of went on an adventure looking for just fun to have. Have you guys been to Main Event? What a wonderful place, a wonderful time. You know an amazing way to spend money.

So, I took five of our kids to Main Event and I was going to get them each a game card. You play games, it is an arcade, so you play games there. And I thought each of them would have \$20 and that would be a way to pass the time in Waco, TX and just to show them what we have. And instead, as I did that, I realized if you get one game card for \$100 they give you \$35 extra in gameplay. I'm not going to leave that on the table you know. So, I get one game card of \$100 with \$35 extra in gameplay. And so, we gathered up and I was like you have one card - which is tough because they play and then they got run over here and swipe it for this person, but they'll figure it out. And just to make matters interesting, I said, "Hey, here's the deal. Let's see how many tickets we can get. That's what we're here to do. We're going to get as many tickets as we can, so afterwards we're going to go in this little toy center, this prize center. We're going to get prizes, you know, that's where we're going to collect your tickets. Let's get as many tickets as we can. Maybe we can get a prize that we could all enjoy - some game. Maybe we'll leave with the car. Who knows how many tickets you're going to get, right?"

And so, they kind of went in there with a different objective. How many tickets can we get while we're here? The way that you do this is you're trying to audit who is good at what. Oh, you are good at the basketball game? You stay right here and just rack up. Oh, SkeetBall is your thing? You stay right here and just, you know, collect those tickets. You're trying to audit your gifts and use your gifts for a return. Life is this way.

Life is this way. This principle that we're experiencing in Main Event is really an idea that the scripture sets in front of us. That all of you are good at different things. You have gifts. God has entrusted to you gifts and He wants you to use those gifts for a Kingdom return. And so, it starts with understanding, "Hey, what are those gifts?" Let me audit them and figure them out and then what does a Kingdom return look like? And that's what we'll be speaking about today as we move into our series; deeper into our series The Good Life. We're talking about what does the scripture say the good life is?

Week One, we said, "Hey, the good life comes from stewarding your body." It is a stewardship series. Stewarding your body in a way that honors God. How can you honor God with your body? Stewarding - that word - just means how do I use well what I possess, what I have access to. So, we started talking about the body.

Then last week we said, "What about the mind?" God has given you a mind. How do you use your mind in a way that honors God? Set your mind on the things above. Renew your mind. How are you careful with what you let influence your mind, so that you can live the good life? This week is a pivot. It's a turn, a shift in the series. Everyone has a body, and everyone has a mind, but now we're going to talk, move toward like your individual possessions. Things that you have that might be diverse or different from others around you. And how do you use those things for a Kingdom return?

And so, we're talking about stewardship of gifts this morning. You might even say talents, is a word that the Scripture uses - talents. How do we use our talents? And so, every single one of you has been given gifts. We could separate these into three categories: time, abilities, and resources. If we're going to use kind of an alliteration there, I've heard it said times, talents, and treasures. Everyone has time, talents, and treasures. Time is how long you are on this earth until Jesus returns or you expire. That's how much time you have to get as many tickets as you can. OK? Your talents, this is our focus today, this is your giftings. Maybe you're good at the guitar or you sing well. Maybe you run fast, or you have a mind for business. Maybe you're an amazing nurturer, a great mom. Maybe you're an awesome teacher. God gave you gifts that you should use – you are expected to use - for His Kingdom. Everyone's going to use their gifts. The problem is some of us just use them on us. That's not the good life. The good life is using those gifts as they were intended, for Him. And then as we talk about resources, these are also gifts. Resources are what do you have available to you? It can be in your garage, in a storage unit, it could be your house. Possessions or collections; what do you have available to you and how do you use those resources for a Kingdom investment?

True or false? True or false question? You will be judged at the end of your life based on how you used your gifts for a Kingdom return. True or false? If you think through that what would you say? Here's what I want you to know. Jesus thought so. And Jesus taught so. You can sit there and maybe right now you're a guest and not so familiar with the Bible. You're arguing with me in your head. That's OK, you're welcome here, but you need to land somewhere. What I don't want you to do is spend your life arguing with the scripture. I want you to land somewhere and

say, “Oh yeah, this is my conviction. According to the Holy Spirit as a follower of Jesus Christ this is what I believe God expects me to do with what He's entrusted to me.” And we're going to look at a story. It's found in Matthew chapter 25. If you want to turn there, I'm going to be in Matthew chapter 25.

When our time was finished at Main Event there was an account given. There was a collection. There was this moment where we were able to measure how we did. We went into a room, you don't actually get tickets there, it all goes on your card. But they scan that card, and they give you a number. This is how many tickets you got. At the end of our life there is going to be an account given. We will be rewarded based on how we did with what we were given. This concept, it's baseline Christianity. I just don't think we think about it enough. I don't think we spend enough time thinking about this. And when we begin to think about this, it should shift—it should change what we do, how we live, how we spend, how we invest. And I think we have to ask how we're doing, as an individual and as a church body.

To set up and give you context for Matthew chapter 25. Jesus is preaching. This is a sermon that Jesus gave, like the Sermon on the Mount. This is known as the Olivet Discourse because here He's preaching on the Mount of Olives. His audience is Israel, or you might say 1st century God following Jews. So, they're listening to Him. His subject, what he's teaching about, is eschatology. Eschatology is the study of end times or the study of judgment. So, Jesus is saying, “Hey, I want you to understand what you need to do before I come back.” Because Israel believed that when the Messiah came, the Christ shows up, that He is going to build a Kingdom on the shoulders of the government. What the Jews were looking for was this conquering king to come and set them free from Roman oppression. The Roman Empire, the Roman government, is oppressing Jewish people and Jewish people every day are looking for hope—for this Messiah character, this Christ character, to come and to set them free on a on a white stallion with a sword in His hand to slay their enemies. And Jesus here is preaching and saying, “No, no, no. You don't understand. I'm going to do that. I'm going to come back like a warrior. But right now, you're in this in-between, where I'm going to die for you and you should live as though I'm coming back.” He sandwiches this story; it's called the parable of the talents. He sandwiches this story between The Parable of the 10 Virgins - where half of them were ready for the bridegroom to return and half of them weren't - and then The Parable of the Sheep and Goats. That's where He is sorting out these are goats, and these are sheep. It's a pretty heavy-handed chapter.

So, as you listen to it if you are like, man, He's coming with hellfire and brimstone. I'm just explaining to you Jesus' sermon. This is Jesus' sermon. This is His word. This is what he taught and we're going to unpack it today. And so, that last parable in this chapter it's about churchgoers, people who were in church all the time, and He says, “Depart from me. I never knew you.” And they said, “But wait, wait, hold on. We prophesied in your name.” He said, “No, no, no, no. That was about you. That wasn't about me.” And they were like, “We did ministry!” He is like, “I don't know you. I don't know.”

I want to make this really clear before we dive into the text. I am going to read it to you. I am going to read the whole parable to you. I believe you're saved by grace through faith. I believe you are saved by grace through faith. It's what you believe, not what you do. And I believe that your behavior always follows your belief. So, what you do is always going to be rooted in what you believe. That a true belief in God is followed by a life following God, worshipping God, living as though this is not our home. And that's what I think Jesus is trying to teach us this morning.

Let me just read this and pull you into text, so just listen with me for a minute. He says, **“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 of gold, and to another one bag of gold, 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 only 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’ve 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 in the good life. Share in 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 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 10 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.’” Matthew 25:14-30**

This is a parable. A parable is a story told to illustrate a point. In a parable there are actors, there are characters. They represent people, but they don't represent them perfectly. So, the master here represents God. Not perfectly. It doesn't teach us all about the character of God, but it teaches us something about God. The servants represent God's followers. People who claim to know God. It doesn't represent all kinds of people who claim to know God, but it teaches us something about people who claim to know God. We have to approach this story that Jesus told in a sermon and unpack it like a riddle. What is he trying to say to them? And what is the eternal truth or the

everlasting truth that we can grab as a church today and apply it to our lives? That's the question we're asking today.

And so, as we read this, you have to say, 'Okay, why did God put this here? What does He want?' And so, there are three servants. Each of them is given bags of gold, different amounts. Two double it and they receive the same reward for doubling the master's investments. One does nothing with it. He buries it and he receives a punishment, a scolding, if you will. So, Jesus is telling this 2000 years ago to instruct us on some way to live. What I'll do is I'll take this parable, I'll break it up into three sections, and we'll learn how to live a good life from it.

I'll say this here, parenthetically. Ella Snodgrass is a member here who wrote an amazing Devo on this passage of scripture in the Bible Reading Plan. And in fact, in my preparation for this morning I went and read her Devo and I love that because that's Ella using her God-given gifts for the Kingdom. She can write! She read this, she put stories around it and unpacked it, and she used her gifts within the body for advancement of the Kingdom. It is her living out this passage, that irony. As we move through here we're going to look at the opportunity, the reward, and the judgment. The opportunity, the reward given, and the judgment.

Let me say something also interesting about this passage. In the NIV, the New International Version, what I teach from it is interpreted bags of gold. In your version, or I would say more accurately, it is interpreted talents. A talent was a measurement of money. It was the equivalent of 20 years wages. So, they say bags of gold because quite literally it would have been bags of gold. But when this story was told, the word that was used is a word that we now translate in English to talent. Like a talent show, that word. Like you have talent. He's talented. He can sing really well or she can play the violin. She's very talented. That word comes from this chapter. That word was born out of this sermon. And so, the reason that we use that word now as somebody who's gifted is because it says he gave to them according to their abilities. And so, when you think talent that comes right here from this story.

*1. The good life starts with using the gifts we've been given.*

You want to live the good life? You want to find the good life? You want to live life as it was intended to live according to the author of life? The good life starts with using the gifts you've been given, or even realizing that you've been given good gifts from a good God. That every single one of you has been entrusted with gifts and you're called to steward those gifts. James says this, **"Every good and perfect gift comes down from the father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."** James 1:17 He's consistent in His generosity and kindness to us. He gives us good gifts. The gift that you have, the gifts that you have, they were not meant for you to use on you; to build a bigger kingdom for you. They were meant for you to steward for Kingdom purposes. The biggest gift that you have received is the gospel. That you know the creator of the heavens and the earth because you have trusted that He sent His son, Jesus Christ to die for your sins. He defeated death and raised from the dead, and that same spirit that raised Him from the dead can live in you and direct you as you live on this earth. Anybody,

for all of church history, all of church history; whoever had received that gift made it their life mission to share that gift. Like that was a key part. A motivator of their existence is 'I've received the gospel and now I want to share the gospel'. And the way that they would share the gospel is using the gifts, the tangible earthly gifts that were made available to them, so that they could attach the gospel to that. So what do you have that you are leveraging for the Kingdom?

Weston, when we were at Main Event, my son, is going around and getting our ticket game on. He says, "Dad, I want to ride the roller coasters!" A simulated virtual reality roller coaster where you lay down in this thing, it moves around and there's a screen in front of you. "Dad, I want to do that." "No son. That doesn't give us any tickets. There's no return on that." "Yeah, but Dad I want to ride the roller coaster. I said, "That is not why we are here. There's lots of other things to do. There's roller coasters to be ridden, there's shooting games to be played. There are motorcycles that you can race. But that's not why we're there. We're there to get a return on our investment. We're there to collect those tickets. Son you got to focus." But he's like, "Dad, I am not good at basketball. I good at SkeetBall. Those aren't my gifts." "Alright, no problem. Come over here to The Price is Right wheel. All you have to do is crank this thing down, it spins, it is going to give you tickets." So sure enough, he pulls that lever. I walk off, right? I'm running the card for somebody else. He pulls that lever and it lands on the jackpot. Hundreds of tickets! He is like, "Dad look! I am really good at it!" And so it's a joy, it is a joy, when you use your gifts as they were intended, you find life there. When you don't use them as they were intended, you find death there.

It's fun, this is the life, to use the things that God has entrusted to you for His purpose. It is life! And so, everyone has gifts, right? We we're talking about time, talent, treasure. Everyone has these gifts. When you hear gifts, I want you to think about time, talent, treasure - all the time. What do I have available to me and how can I use those things? This could be a house. It could be a lake house. It could be an empty bedroom. Please don't turn that empty bedroom into a closet to collect more stuff. You know, that's not what that's for. This could be a vehicle. Something in your garage; something in your closet; something you're collecting. It could be something that you're good at. It could be a pickup truck. Alright? I'm not saying, "Hey, don't have nice things." Have nice things. Get a pickup truck, lift it, put big tires on it and a sound system if you want and then use it like crazy for the Kingdom of God. Steward it well. Use that thing! Right? That's what we're talking about here. What do I have available to me to use.

When you hear using... I think we can put this on the screen. Gift equals time, talent, treasures. When we talk about using those gifts, you're using them to serve people and you're sharing them with others. You're saying, "Hey, how can I use my time, talent, and treasures to serve other people in the name of Jesus Christ and to share these things with them? I just have them temporarily. Life is short. How can I use them?" By serving and sharing. I'm trying to keep this really simple for you. What does it mean to use it? Serve with them and share them.

The scripture, it teaches, that you can literally store up treasures in heaven. Like literally right now, how you live, you're taking things and you're putting them in eternity for you to enjoy

forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. You think, “Aw, he is calling you be selfless.” I’m calling you to be Kingdom selfish. You’re going to be there for a lot longer than you’re here. All you have to do right now, the only thing you have to do, is believe what this says, and you will be the wisest investor on Earth. Taking things that God entrust to you here and putting it in forever, not just to die in a box like so many others do with lots of things that then their kids have to sort through and figure out what to do with. “Oh, but man, I lived a good life.” No, you didn’t. No, you didn’t.

Man, I have met with so many people with so much stuff; collections of stuff and they’re miserable. ‘But they’re Instagram reel doesn’t look like they’re miserable.’ That is the highlight reel. ‘Their marriage looks amazing,’ Then it ends! It’s not amazing. We’re getting duped. This is the good life. This is how you win. Any gift that you don’t use or any gift that you use solely on yourself for your benefit becomes a weight that dilutes your faith. God feels further. You feel richer. God feels further. You get weighed down by the things of the world. So what’s the solution? You use those things of the world for the Kingdom.

Back in the text, verse 19. **“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 in the good life. Come and share in your master’s happiness.’”** The servant with five talents and the servant with two talents both doubled their Masters investment and they were both rewarded the same. With the good life. Come and share in your master’s happiness, right? Let me double what you have done. You double what you’ve done and well done you have been faithful. You have been faithful.

They weren’t graded on how much they had. They were graded on what they did with what they had. Very important distinction!

## *2. Good stewardship of gifts is rewarded.*

Good stewardship of gifts is rewarded. You have been faithful with a few things. The aim is faithfulness. The goal for the follower of Jesus Christ is faithfulness. That you would be faithful with where, when, and what you have been given. What does it look like right now for you to be faithful?

As I said, it is important to realize that this was not a game of how much they had, but what they did with what they had. The Bible, the scripture, repeatedly warns us against comparison. I think what we tend to do is say, “I want their gift. Why didn’t I get that? I should have their spouse,

their neighborhood, their car, their job. I don't understand God. What about me?" And we compare ourselves. We compare our gifts with other gifts to the detriment of using our gifts. It moves us to this place of apathy, this kind of paralysis by comparison. "But what about me? Why don't I?" Listen, I am the dad of three kids. I feel zero, zero responsibility, zero need to parent all three of them the same. People ask all the time, "Well, what age do you give your kids a phone?" It's not an age. It's when they're ready individually. They're all different. Like there's no, "It's not fair. She got it when she was 12...13...14..." No, no, no. It is when you are ready. We study, we become a student of you, and we want to entrust to you what you can steward well. Right?

So, as you look and audit the gifts that you've been entrusted with, how are you doing at stewarding those gifts well? The Bible constantly warns against comparison. I'll give you a few verses. John 21, Peter sees John and says, **"Lord, what about him?" And Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."** You need to be faithful with what you have, not with what he has. Matthew 20:14, **"Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who has hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want to do with my own money. Are you envious because I am generous?"**

He is repeatedly saying, 'Hey, stop worrying about other people.' This is another parable. 'Stop worrying about other people. Focus on what I've given you. Be grateful for what I've given you and use well what the Lord has given you.' Your time, your talents, and your treasures have been entrusted to you by God, for God. My only question right now is do you believe this? And if you are like, "Oh yeah, I believe that." I'm would just say, what would it look like if you believed that? What would that look like?

If Weston just wants to have a great time at Main Event, he can. There's lots of things to do. Lots of roller coasters that can be ridden there. There's lots of arcade games that can be played there. There are lots of motorcycles and race cars that can be driven there. There's lots of ways to have fun there, but that's not why we're there.

It is a satanic, naturalistic, atheistic worldview to live here on this earth and just think, "Hey, where can I go and what can I do to have as much temporary pleasure as I possibly can?" That's not a biblical worldview. That is not you living on this earth, "Like hey, I know I'm going to die. I'm going to be somewhere forever and have the opportunity store up things there." You are faced with a crisis of faith at that point. Do I really believe this stuff? Do I really? Or am I just kind of going through the motions, playing games, hedging my bets, superstitiously hoping that God blesses the fact that I showed up somewhere for an hour and a half on Sunday? That's different. That's different.

See, when you when you really get this, it's life changing. It is a perspective shift. I have had the privilege of watching people get this. All of the sudden it is like I am living differently. Vacations are no longer vacations; they are mission trips. So I go to Cabo but go to Cabo strategically. You got to ask why do I have this Uber driver? Why am I staying next to these people who are loud, you know, what's the opportunity there? Who is this server? All of a sudden you begin to see

things through a Kingdom lens. You say, “Oh, I am just here but a bit. Just for a moment. How do I steward my life here well?”

Talent shows aren't shows at all, they are contests. This word talent comes from right here. Talent shows aren't shows. There's always a winner, there's a loser. There is golden buzzer, you know? It's a contest. It's a contest. What I'm telling you right now, is you are all in a talent show. Everyone right now is in a talent show. And the really good news, if it's a singing contest, you're not going to be graded on how well you sang. You're going to be graded on how well you sang with the voice you were given. Does that make sense? That's a shift. How did I do with what was entrusted to me? If you have been given a beautiful voice, more is expected from you. It's like God grades with a handicap. Golf? Bowling? Anybody? You know, I mean, He levels the playing field. He says all I'm going to hold you responsible to is doing well with what you've been given. So if you have more, you have a greater responsibility to do Kingdom work with it.

Verse 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. 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 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 10 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.”** Now this is like, you know, when the young person comes to work and says, “I know you wanted me to come to work today. So, I've just been sitting here, scrolling through my phone.” “No, I didn't just want you to come to work. I had something I wanted you to do. It wasn't about just being present. You misunderstood the assignment. You misunderstood the assignment.”

There's something else happening here that I want to bring your attention to. There's a temptation to read this at face value. He's like, “I knew you were greedy.” And he's like, “Since you knew I was greedy, you should have...” Those ‘knew’, the two k n e w there, they're different. The second knew, where the master responds **“since you knew”** that *knew* is the Greek word *ido*. That word, almost everywhere, is translated perceived. So he says, **“I knew you were,”** and he goes, well, since you thought that. Since that's what you thought... And what the master is saying to him is, “No, your actions don't even align with what you say you believe about me, which by the way, is incorrect. He's like, no, no, no, you're just lazy. Let's be honest, you were just apathetic. You didn't want to do anything. Like you said, ‘Oh, he gave me some stuff. Let me bury it and go do whatever I want to do. And then when he comes back, I'll just give it back to him. And hopefully it will be fine.’ It is like, “No, no, no. I gave you that stuff for a reason.”

And I believe those words matter, because I believe what Jesus is teaching here is that the third servant doesn't know the master. He doesn't know the master. He's misunderstanding not just the assignment, but who is giving him the assignment.

3. *Misunderstanding the goodness of God has grave consequences.*

Misunderstanding the goodness of God has grave consequences. This past week, or last weekend, we also went to the fair. I know. Pray for us, we're broke. (laughter) Yeah, the fair. We went on the day that the kids get in free. So we're like, hey this is fun. We have our little coupon. They're like, "Oh, you have to buy the wristband." Oh, ok, what's the wristband cost? Alright, wow! Hey kids, y'all get wristbands. It turns out you can ride as many rides as you want to ride. You can go on all the rides all day as many times you want. So, they're in the fair. Monica and I are just sitting in the heat, enjoying, the kids. Let's do the roller coaster. Do the roller coaster – do it ten times. Let's do the fun house. Go over here, you know, have one here. Right? And then Western comes up and he's like, "Hey Dad, can I do the machine gun game? Where you shoot the star out with the with the machine BB gun thing." And I am like, "Hey, can you use the wristbands in the games?" No, got to have magic card. Magic card... Now what's magic about the cards is it makes your money disappear. And I'm like, "Son, we don't have a magic part. And so no, we can't play it." And just for one second, he like just...he's a good kid, but for one minute he's like, "Dad, you don't want me to have fun?" (Deep sigh from JP)

Well, let's audit this situation, son. So I come in here and I paid \$22,000 or whatever it was so that you can have a ride all you want wristband. I sit in the sun, just delighting as you and your siblings get to ride as many rides as you want to ride. And the only thing that I say is don't eat from that tree. I mean, don't do this. Yeah, um.... And honestly, like, it blows my mind that God doesn't just wipe us out more. I am like God, you're so patient with me. When he says that I am like, that is just like me. "But you..." "What about?" And if I am God, I might be like, "Oh goodness, you've got breath in your lungs. Your heart beats in your chest. You're sitting in that central air and heat-controlled building on a comfortable chair. You've gotten there somehow, like a car or something. And none of you, nobody – there will be 3000 people in this room today - not one of them who hasn't eaten recently. Unless you're fasting. We are not hungry. You probably had a bed that you slept in. Probably also in a central air and heat-controlled environment. And you are like, "Yeah, but I'm single!" "I have to marry them?" "These kids?" "This house!" "This neighborhood." "What about their car?" And I am just surprised God is not like (wipes his hand as though he is wiping something off a table) you know. Funeral!

I love this church. I love this church. I really have fallen in love with this church. It's quite the diversity of backgrounds and even beliefs honestly. We gather around the resurrected Jesus Christ, that we believe that He's died for our sins and raised from the dead and that His Holy Spirit indwells us. But here, like this morning, there's charismatic background. There are people here that speak in tongues. There's hyper reform like disciples of John Calvin. And then there's Armenians and there's dispensational theologians sitting right next to covenant theologians. There are egalitarians by complementarians. And there's folks with Methodist backgrounds and

Catholic backgrounds and Lutheran backgrounds and all the hyper, uber Baptists like, I'm only here because it's our middle name kind of people, right? We are all here, lifting our hands, raising our hands. Praise God - worthy of it all. There are folks here that are like high grace, like God is forgiving, slow to anger, abounding in love. The Scripture says all of those things. Then there are folks that are here that are like do more. He's the judge and the day is coming. And all of us... Then there are folks here that are like, I don't know what any of those words mean. And we are so glad you're here. Like I love that you're here. Praise God! Jesus crucified, resurrected. Praise God.

I have to read this verse though. Jesus, these are words of Jesus. He said this, **“And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** In Luke's account he says, **“But those enemies of mine did not want me to be king over them - bring them here and kill them in front of me.”** That is a harsh word. It's a harsh word. Regardless of what you believe, your background, what you know to be true about God - Jesus said these words while he was on this earth and we are faced with them right now. So if you go to your car and are like, “Woah that was a really hard sermon.” I am just explaining the words of Jesus. Why? So you read that and you go, “why?”. Because God, I know you're compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love. I know this is true of your character. You run you embrace. You love me and are not counting my sins, I know that's true. Why this harsh word? And then I just think about my own parenting experience when my kids are just fighting in the back seat, I am like “Hey, cut it out.” Not a harsh warrant, just stop. But when my kids are running in the street and a car is coming for them it's a harsh rebuke. It's such a harsh rebuke. I want to stop them in their tracks. I want their attention. “You are going the wrong way!” And I think that's why Jesus uses such a harsh verbiage here. He is like, “I need your attention on this one, you are going the wrong way. And we're not playing games this matters. You will not find the good life.” What does He want for you? A good life. Depending on what you mean by that, a life walking in relationship with Him. Filled with His Holy Spirit doing incredible things on this earth in His name. But we are fine riding roller coasters. One more roller coaster. Let's go again one more ride. One more amusement.

In summary: the good life starts with realizing what you've been given; good stewardship is rewarded; and a misunderstanding of the goodness of God has grave consequences.

The third servant didn't know God. You cannot, you will not... No one in the history of all the creation, hasn't ever experienced the good life and not known God. It won't happen. You won't be the first. The good life starts with knowing God. The good life starts with preparing for the better life. The good life is living this life knowing that a better life is coming. A forever life.

Imagine, they didn't, but if Western in that moment was like, “You just want us to get tickets because you want all the tickets! Dad you just want a bunch of tickets. You're just trying to get all our tickets.” Do you know what they did with those tickets? We walk into a room full of prizes. I waited in line as they looked at all the prizes. I said, “Hey, why don't we give Monopoly? What about Twister. What about Trouble? A game, we can all play a game.” They

said, “No dad, we want candy.” “Ok, you can get candy.” They go over there and get 2,500 tickets worth of candy. They set it on the counter. I give them the card. They set the candy on the counter, put it in a bag. Take it home. You know how much candy I got? You know how much candy I got? I got no candy. It was all their candy.

That's what I want you to understand. God, He's just giving you really great advice. You think, “Yeah, he just wants us to bless Him.” No, he is blessing you through your obedience. God rewards generosity. Don't confuse me for the man on the TV. That is not what I'm saying, I'm saying what this says. He absolutely rewards generosity. It is so clear.

It's not like you give to this place and I get a bonus. That's not how that works. I'm just passing on to you really good investing council. You waste it on you, and it is wasted. It is wasted. You spend it on you for ways that you can give it back to others, it's different. The good life is preparing for the better life.

Let me pray you would.

Father, would you help us do that? We cannot do it without you. Would you help us to prepare for the better life? Even as we sing and say you are worthy. As we surrender all... As we say those words, as we sing them to you, help it to be true of our lives. I pray that your Holy Spirit would do a unique work in us this morning so that we leave this place less embittered; less cynical; less critical; less greedy; less materialistic. With less complaints and more gratitude, with more generosity, more hope, more joy, more peace. Would you do that in us now? In Jesus name, Amen