

KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP

Text: Matthew 25:14-30

This parable is about stewardship. In the Bible, stewardship means managing God's creation and resources as a caretaker rather than an owner. The core idea is that God owns everything, and humans are the managers appointed to care for His world, time and gifts.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

What is meant by the talents? 5 talents represent roughly 100 years of wages for a common laborer, which equates to an estimated \$3 million to \$7 million in modern purchasing power. What this teaches us is that a lifetime of money was entrusted to these servants. So we interpret the parable in this fashion – it is a look at how well we as servants of Jesus Christ manage all that he has entrusted to us in our lives.

Each servant was given a different amount – This is because we all have been entrusted with different amounts of time, treasures and talents. The master in the story evaluated how much responsibility and wealth each servant could handle safely and wisely before leaving on his journey. By matching the funds to their individual skill levels, he did not overburden the servant with one talent or underutilize the servant with five.

When we think of what has been entrusted to us by the Lord, our lives primarily fall into three categories of which we need to manage well for the glory of God.

- **Time** – Jesus said in **John 9:4** I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. He meant that we need to make our time count by doing the will of God while we have time and opportunity. None of us know how much time we have so we need to manage our time wisely. The ministry of John the Baptist was 6 months. The ministry of Jesus Christ was 3 and a half years.

David Brainerd lived in the early 1700's in the New England states. He was frontier missionary to Native American communities in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, and New Jersey from 1743 to 1747. He experienced significant revivals among the Delaware Indians at his New Jersey mission. He saw so many converted in the meetings, they organized churches. David had tuberculosis and died at the age of 29, but he left behind his private journal detailing his spiritual struggles, physical illnesses, and deep devotion to God. His journal was published posthumously by his friend Jonathon

Edwards. *An account of the life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* was published in 1749 and has influenced many men of God through the years including John Wesley. David Brainerd didn't live a long life, but he managed his time well.

Think you are too old to do something significant for God? George Muller was a German preacher that became famous for establishing orphanages in England at a time when they didn't exist. Relying entirely on prayer and faith to fund his massive charitable work without ever asking anyone for money. Just over 10,000 orphans were cared for during his lifetime at the Ashley Down orphanage. He built five large orphanage houses that held up to 2,000 children at a time. He embarked on a global preaching tour spanning 17 years when he was at the age of 70. He traveled roughly 200,000 miles across 42 countries by ship, train, and carriage to preach the gospel. He died at the age of 92.

- **Treasure** – I'm referring to the wealth and material goods that the Lord has blessed you with. We manage those well when we are not stingy and self-centered. Jesus told a parable of a certain rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully. All he could think of was how he could hoard up all his fruit for himself. He planned to pull down his barns and build greater ones to hold them all. But he died suddenly in the parable, and everything was left to others. Jesus ended the parable by saying "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

The Dead Sea is dead because the Jordan river pours into it and there is no outlet. Water only leaves through the fast evaporation in the hot desert climate. When the water evaporates, it leaves all its salts and minerals behind that build up more and more. The Dead Sea is 10 saltier than the ocean – that prevents fish, plants, and other visible life from surviving in its waters. Believers who are stingy and self-centered with their treasure are like the Dead Sea, blessings have poured into them but nothing flows out of them to bless others so it just stagnates and dies.

- **Talents** – I'm referring to the natural talents, spiritual gifts, and resources that have been entrusted to you to use for 2 reasons: the glory of God and the good of others. Are you using the talents that God has given you so that God can be seen in the world around you? Do you use what the Lord has given to you so that others can be blessed? All spiritual gifting is for the benefit of others, not self. Let me give you some examples of Christians who have managed their talents well.

Thomas Kinkaid was an American artist and devout Christian. He was born-again at age 22 in 1980, claiming that his art "got saved" at the exact same time. He is known as the "Painter of Light". He viewed the glowing windows, radiant skies, and luminous lamplight in his pastoral scenes as physical metaphors for God's divine light. He frequently embedded

Christian symbols into his canvases, such as hidden crosses, Bible verse references and fish symbols. He demonstrated his commitment to his faith by giving all four of his daughters the middle name Christian. He was worth between 66 and 70 million dollars, making him one of the most successful living artists ever.

Dave Ramsey is an American radio personality who offers financial advice and an author. He is a born-again Christian that uses stewardship and wisdom from the Bible as core frameworks for managing money, marriage and leadership. He frequently speaks about his personal faith journey and relationship with Jesus Christ on the air. The Ramsey Show reaches over 18 million weekly listeners across radio and podcasts. Ramsey Solutions employs over 1,000 workers at its headquarters in Franklin, Tennessee. He authored multiple successful books all based on Biblical stewardship, avoiding debt and practicing generosity.

Samuel Truett Cathy was an American businessman, investor, author, and philanthropist who founded the fast-food restaurant chain Chick-fil-A. A devout Christian, he taught Sunday school to teenagers at the First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia for over 50 years. Sam Cathy is the reason that all Chick-fil-A restaurants are closed on Sundays because he wanted his workers to be free to go to church and spend time with their families. The company's corporate purpose is "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A". Sam Cathy and a group of leaders formally established this mission statement during a corporate meeting in the 1980's to guide the company's foundational values and direction. Sam Cathy integrated his personal faith and values into the management, culture and charitable giving of the organization.

The wicked and slothful servant – The servant who did nothing with the talent that was given to him but bury it. His problem was fear and mistrust of his lord. He called him a "hard man" revealing he did not really know him that well. He was inactive with what he had been given, and it brought no benefit to his lord or anyone else. He was rebuked, stripped and thrown into outer darkness.

Outer Darkness – Outer darkness is a term used three times all in the book of Matthew. It is not another name for hell. In Hebrew "outer darkness" meant being outside a kingdom at night and excluded from the joyful, light filled celebration. It means being excluded from the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth. Weeping and gnashing of teeth represents deep inner sorrow, regret, and extreme anguish. Reigning with Christ is conditioned upon our faithful serving of Christ and suffering for Christ. If we deny him service, he will deny us rewards and reign.