

January 20, 2019 – Elmont Baptist Church
Message Series: EnTRUSTed: Our Money and Our Mission
Week 2: Ownership & Stewardship
Text: Matthew 25:14-30

It's been a great past couple of years in our home where Amy and I can leave the house alone! We can go out and leave our daughters there without much worry. That's about our favorite part of life right now. Often when we leave, we leave a few commands. There are general and now unspoken ones that are always in force, don't burn the house down, don't fight using weapons of any kind, you know, those kinds. More so, there are commands that we spelled out when we leave – doing dishes and laundry mostly things like that. Rarely has there been a time when we get home and those commands are not followed. It's always a joy when we come back and those things are done. Even though the expectation was that they obey, we still say "thank you" and tell them how much we appreciate it.

Our passage today is a parable. It's a common way Jesus would teach to give the people an earthly story they could relate to in order to teach a spiritual lesson. Since it is an earthly story, we have to careful not to try to carry the illustration out too far. Earthly things have limits and spiritual things do not.

READ TEXT

Let's recap the story and explain a couple of things. Important details – Talent: measurement of weight of precious metal. Commonly 1 talent = 6000 denarii = approx. 20 yrs wages. Trips taken could last a long time as travel was not predictable nor easy.

Jesus is teaching His disciples about His second coming through parables. In this passage, He is the Master as He is about to go away, but will come again. He is teaching about how to faithfully advance His Kingdom while He is away, and even though He will be gone a long time, to keep expecting His return. Just like when we leave our daughters home with tasks to accomplish, Jesus has done the same with His followers.

So how do we relate to this? What is a talent for us? Are we just talking about money? That's a big one, because as we saw last week from Matthew 6, where we store up treasure is a direct indicator or where our heart is. So this has a great deal to do with money and possessions, but also all that we have been entrusted with. Things like time, money, opportunities, and abilities.

Hopefully from this passage we will see that...

Those who know the King, trust His goodness and use all they have been entrusted with to advance His Kingdom until He returns.

Those Who Know the King...

✓ **Trust His Goodness...**

- Relationship drives response – Love > Trust > Obey or Disobey > Distrust > Love of self/world
- Eagerness or laziness

We don't get as much insight into the first two servants, but there a couple of clues as to what they thought about their master. Verse 16 says that the first servant went "at once" and verse 17 says the second "so also" did. There was an eager desire to carry out the task they were given. The fact that they traded or invested in order to make a profit meant that they probably watched closely the things that their master did. When he

returned they didn't come to him with fear or nervousness, but were excited to report on all they had done. They knew him well enough to trust his goodness and understand what he wanted them to accomplish. With the last servant we know exactly what he thought about his master. He makes some very bold statements and attacks his character in order to justify his actions. The last servant didn't know his master. He claimed to know what he was all about, but didn't. Those who do not know Jesus, do not faithfully serve Jesus. Those who do not faithfully serve Jesus, do not know Jesus. Faith will always yield faithfulness. Not every moment of every day. We all struggle for moments or even seasons, but if you've never had a passion to advance the Kingdom of Jesus, then please don't think that Jesus is your King.

✓ **...And Use All They have been Entrusted with...**

- Everything belongs to the Lord
- But is entrusted to us as He sees fit

We have to recognize that we are stewards, not owners. There is no way that the servants in this parable confused that fact. They knew exactly who owned what. They had been entrusted and that meant someone else owned it. Even the last servant knew what belonged to his master. And the owner gave it as he discerned the abilities of each servant. That was his right and he was right. He entrusted fairly, but not equally.

Ray Pritchard – *Learn from this a crucial truth: God is not obligated to treat you like he treats anyone else. He can give you more or less than others. And he does! You have more than some and less than others. You have more money and talent and opportunity, more strength, better health, and better connections than others. And you have less of all that than others. In the great pecking order of life, there are always people above us, people on our level, and people beneath us. That reality leaves us with two choices:*

- a) You can gripe about your situation and use it as an excuse,*
- b) Or you can accept it and start where you are and do what you can.*

The question for us is, do you recognize that you own nothing? Your next breath belongs to the Lord. It's all His, but He loves you and has entrusted so much to you, so that you can use it to advance His Kingdom.

✓ **...To Advance His Kingdom...**

- Always involves faith
- Therefore always involves risk

There is one Kingdom to advance because there is only one Kingdom that will last forever, and you and I have been entrusted with time, money, opportunities, and abilities to use to be a part of this advancement. I wish that alone removed the feeling of risk, but doesn't completely. C. S. Lewis said that the way to know you are living by faith is that what you are doing for God scares you. If it doesn't, he said, there is no faith involved. Faith is trusting God without seeing all the details or end result. So, on our end, there's risk. A lot of "what if's?" Most decisions that you're 75% sure at best, and that 25% is still a big unknown. We have to remember that we are called to invest what Jesus has entrusted to us to advance His Kingdom. When we constantly remind ourselves that we are not owners, but stewards this makes more sense. All of the sudden, Kingdom advancing doesn't get

our leftovers, because we don't own anything. This is true for each of us individually and for all us collectively as the local church. As someone smarter than me pointed out, "in the life of the church there are three stages: Risk-taker, care-taker, and undertaker."

✓ **...Until He Returns.**

- To reward the risk-takers
- To cast out the cowardly

We will give an account for our work. Individually. Each one of us. It won't be church by church, but person by person. Were each of us faithful with what God entrusted to us? Are you being faithful – full of faith – with all that you've been entrusted with to advance the Kingdom of God until Christ returns? Now this does not mean that we are saved by works. We need to make clear that we are not saved by good works, but we are saved to do good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 explains this well. Two servants are commended upon the master's return and the other is condemned. Two are rewarded with praise, more responsibility, and the promise of being in the joy of their master. The last servant is condemned as wicked and lazy. The differences here are drastic. Good and faithful vs wicked and lazy. Joy of the master vs gnashing of teeth. This last servant didn't kill or steal, he didn't squander the master's money. He just did nothing to advance the Kingdom with what he was entrusted with. As JD Greear point out, "wicked can apply as much to a failure to invest your life to the fullest potential, as it can to the most egregious violation of the laws of God." The master was gone for maybe a couple of years or more. The first two servants spent the entire time their master was gone working to expand his wealth as far as they could. The last servant spent a few minutes burying what he was entrusted with and then the rest of the time was all for himself. The last servant was lazy and because he didn't know his master's heart, he was afraid to take a risk in order to advance his master's Kingdom.

What is a right response to this passage? It's to examine your heart and evaluate if the advancing the Kingdom of Jesus really matters to you. If it does you should be able to easily identify several ways you are using your time, money, opportunities, and abilities to make much of Jesus. This is not just about tithing or attending a church service, but it does include both of those things. This is about knowing Jesus as King and understanding you are a steward of anything and everything have, and all of it is for the glory of God.

Pastor, Chuck Swindoll challenges believers to live with excellence, to go the second mile, to stop making excuses for non-performance, to turn our faith into deeds that change the world. And his words help in terms of being good stewards of all we have been entrusted with. He says that excellence is possible if you ...

- Care more than others think is wise
- Risk more than others think is safe
- Dream more than others think is practical
- Expect more than others think is possible.