

**Matthew 25:14-30** *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> 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.’ <sup>21</sup> “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!’ <sup>22</sup> “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.’ <sup>23</sup> “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!’ <sup>24</sup> “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. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ <sup>26</sup> “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? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. <sup>28</sup> “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

The date was September 22. The year was 1776. He had been discovered and arrested as a spy and he was due to be hanged on a British gallows. That was when Captain Nathan Hale rather famously stated, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” What a strong commitment he showed to his fledgling country in rebellion against the British! What dedication and resolve to be willing to lose not only one life but as many as he might have been given in support of their mission to win their freedom! I wonder if we would have such a feeling and make a similar statement as believers in Jesus: “It’s too bad that I only have this one life that I can live for God!”

Our text before us today helps us to evaluate how we are living our lives for God. What would give us a similar commitment to our Savior as Nathan Hale had toward the USA? What would lead us to be so dedicated that we would be willing to not only live one life for our Savior but as many as he might give to us? It all stems from knowing our master. Stewardship, as we said last week, is managing all that God has given us for his glory and to carry out his purpose. Some would say that this Stewardship emphasis is all about money. We mentioned in our Bible Study portion last week that any stewardship emphasis in this day and age would have to talk about money because it is so intertwined in everything we do. But money isn’t our main focus. What really matters is knowing the master. When you know the master, when you know his deep and abiding love for you, when you know his generosity in both physical and spiritual things, then the rest will follow. Then you will have a different perspective on what you have and why God gave it to you. Then you will use what you have differently and put them to work joyfully and willingly to honor and glorify the king. ***What Really Matters is Knowing the Master.***

So what do we know about the Master from this parable? A parable is a heavenly story with an earthly meaning. While we can’t always connect every single detail of a parable to a spiritual point, we can make some connections. The Master going away on the journey who entrusted money to his servants is our heavenly Father. And there are some connections about who our heavenly Father is that we can make from this parable. We see first that he is generous. We don’t know exactly how much gold was in each bag, but even conservative estimates would say the value of a single bag of gold was \$1 million. He didn’t just give them some pocket change. He entrusted to each of them a substantial amount of money. We don’t have to look too far into our lives to understand how generous our heavenly Father is with us. He generously gives us material blessings: homes, cars, food, clothes, the time and money to spend on having fun. In America, we don’t face third world problems like no good drinking water or a lack of food or having to wear the 1 pair of clothes that we own day after day. Our first world problems are more like deciding which pair of shoes to wear with which outfit, what brand of product are we going to buy from the 15 different options, and the like. God is more than generous. He gives us all the resources we need to carry out the work he asks us to carry out.

We see also that God gives gifts in different proportions. He didn’t give each servant the same amount. He gave them according to their abilities. He gave these gifts proportionately. We also don’t have to look too far to see this. God doesn’t give us all the same amount of gifts. To some he gives more and to others he gives less. But to all he gives something. It’s easy to spend our time and energy focusing on what others have that we don’t have, but we do better to be thankful for what God has given to us.

We also know from this text that God expects his gifts to be put to use aggressively. The man who had 5 bags of gold didn’t just put one or two to work. He put all five to work. The man with two didn’t keep one safe and only put the other to work, he put them both to work. We see also that God measures according to what he’s given. He didn’t expect the servant who had 2 bags of gold to gain 5 more. He had two and put two to work and gained two more and God said, “Well

done, good and faithful servant.” God doesn’t hold unrealistic standards that expects from us way more than what he’s given to us. God only expects us to be faithful with what he’s given to us.

Finally, while not expressly described in this text, we know from the rest of Scripture of the Father’s deep and abiding love for us as his people. When we think of the generosity our Father in heaven has displayed toward us, the top of that list is him giving us his Son. Though the family ties between God the Father and his Son are greater than we can ever know—this was an eternal bond of love between the Father and the Son—the Father was willing to turn his back on his Son and completely abandon him to send him to the place where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth for all eternity as your substitute. God severed that eternal bond and dropped his only Son into the torturous, darkness of hell to pay for your sins. Even in hell, with the guilt of everyone counted against him, Jesus did not gnash his teeth in anger against God. In silent suffering he was damned and died for you so you can live with him forever.

It is this deep and abiding love for us that changes our perspective on the gifts God so generously gives to us here. It’s God’s love for us that compels us to devote ourselves so completely to working for him while we are here. This is what we saw in the two faithful servants of our text. The Father wants all the gifts he gives to us to be put to work for him. He trusts his servants to use what he has given him in a way that will please him and bring him a return. He richly blesses his followers with all that they need to continue the work of bringing salvation to the nations. He abundantly equips us for the work he calls us to carry out. He wants us to use all that we have as servants in his kingdom.

This is an important point and really gets to the crux of the issue this text presents. It wasn’t as much about what the wicked servant did as why he did it. He knew the master was hard and would come down on him for not gaining anything more. He knew that just putting it in the bank would have earned some interest. So why go and bury it in the ground? He did that out of contempt for the master. He knew this money wasn’t his and he resented using it to bring returns for the Master. He knew that he wasn’t going to get anything out of it, so in a show of contempt he chose not to put it to work at all. It’s interesting how Jesus tells this parable. He doesn’t have the servant with 5 bags of gold as the unfaithful one. I think this is so that we can all relate better to his point. If it were the servant who had 5 who didn’t use all of the gold faithfully, we could shrug it off and says, “What shame, but I’m not that guy. So I’m sure the Lord isn’t expecting as much from me. It’s no real tragedy if I don’t use what I have in service to the Lord. It’s small anyway. I’m sure God will understand.”

But it’s the least gifted servant who was the unfaithful one. He was unfaithful because he did not use his gifts at all. Notice...and this is a big point...it’s not that he did something wrong. He is taken to task for doing nothing at all! Whether you have a lot or a little, God wants you to be faithful with what he’s given you. He wants you with whatever you have to put it to work so that his kingdom can be preached and more people can learn about the salvation Jesus offers.

So I think this leads us to ask, “What are we doing with the gifts God has given to us?” How much of what God has given you have you buried in the ground of self-advancement or self-enjoyment rather than directing every gift you’ve been given toward the glory of God and the good of others? Do we see it as showing contempt toward God by not using what he has given us the way that he wants? Maybe we don’t think about it this way...but maybe we should. The first commandment which requires perfect love for God in all things...including in how we use our money...buries us in guilt that goes way over our heads. We don’t have to look too far to see the selfishness and stinginess that burrow their way into our hearts. We’ve had the thoughts run through our heads: “I’m not getting anything out of this so why should I give so much money away.” We all too easily forget who the Master is and lose sight of the love and generosity he has shown to us. We can even ask: if you don’t see everything you have as owned by the Master and you aren’t using it all for his glory...do you really know the master? These are important questions to ask because the consequences for such actions and attitudes are severe. The master said, “*And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” He’s talking about hell. The punishment for even one time failing to see and use what God has given to us the way that he wants is hell. One act of stinginess toward God, one selfish thought calls for us to be thrown into the eternal darkness and torture of hell. This text tells us the Father is also serious about wanting us to use all that we have and all that we are to serve him and bring him glory as we use it to further his kingdom and tell more people about him.

Thankfully, we know that our God is not only serious about sin, he is also serious about our salvation. Thankfully we know him as a gracious and compassionate God, who shows love to the third and fourth generation of those who love him and who does not hold our sins against us. Thankfully, we know him as our loving heavenly Father who rescued us from sin and promised to watch over us until we enter into eternal life.

You’ve only got one life to live. Many today are not willing to do anything that doesn’t benefit themselves or bring them profit or honor. This isn’t service. This isn’t the life your loving heavenly Father wants you to live. Service is not about what I can get out of something. Rather, it is this: how can I use what God has given me to benefit others—especially spiritually and eternally as I seek to share with them the salvation Jesus offers. In the end, none of this is ever about money. What really matters is knowing the Master. When you know him and the love that his in his heart for you and the generosity he has shown to you and the reason he has given these gifts to you, you can go out and live the one life you’ve been given for his glory and to advance his kingdom. This life you’ve been given by your Savior is a life you’ve been given to live for him. Let’s do that! Amen.