

When We Get It Right

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Scripture reading today is from the book of Matthew, chapter 25, verses 14 through 30.

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, and to another one bag, 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 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 have gained five more.

[1 : 08] 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.

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 that 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 ten bags.

[2 : 32] 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. This is the word of the Lord. So let's pray together.

Almighty gracious God, thank you for the gift that is this morning. And as we come together, Lord, we are on fire for you. You have moved in each of us and in each of our lives, and we are indeed on fire for you.

Lord, keep that fire blazing in a new way. Let it shine bright in the world so that others will come to see. Fall fresh in us, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray and ask.

Amen. So, final week of Defying Gravity. And as we are talking about stewardship and our generosity, we're going to be a little more uncomfortable today.

[3 : 34] And the reason why is because today we need to talk about the why part. You see, we've spent the past three weeks kind of talking about how giving and generosity kind of impacts us.

But today we need to talk about the why part. And that is a little shaky for some folks. Because what we want to do is move from this place where the world has this pull on us that keeps us from being who God is challenging us to be.

And let's lean a little further into what God's hope for us might be. And as we feel that pull from the world, that gets us a little twitchy.

So, how do we work our way through that? That's really our conversation today. So, having said that, let's remember one of the things we're talking about here is what we've called financial gravity.

In the book on which this sermon series is based, that's a term that refers to the things in our culture, the things in our lives that seem to get our best energy, our best money.

[4 : 52] And we think that we have to do these things, or at least we really want to do these things, hence their pull on us. Financial gravity.

And now, we get to this point of understanding when we get it right. When we get it right. So, how do we get there?

Well, first, let's remember where we were last week. Last week, I showed you a little video. It was a little short one-minute video that had people working on a ropes course.

Where folks were on zip lines and climbing different things. And most of you, when you first saw that video, had a particular reaction to it. That most of you kind of just shook your head and said, no, absolutely not.

Absolutely not. Because when the thought of doing that sort of stuff showed up, most folks were like, nope, that's not where I'm spending. That's not how I'm spending my time.

[5 : 55] Not what I really like doing. Not to mention that there's a scary piece to it. Let's just name that up for it. There's a scary piece to it.

And we want to talk about that first. Because remember what the lesson was. The lesson in that particular video was, what is it that you are counting on to keep you safe when you take those risks?

Because if you just do it with no precaution. If you do it with no thought. If you do it without using the safety apparatus you've been given. Then yeah, you should be scared.

But if you have actually held on to God.

If God is the thing that allows you to let go and take that step. Then you should be safe.

[6 : 57] If you believe that God is exactly who God says he would be. Then you can trust the risk.

So, when we end up in that place. And we start thinking about, well, how do we take that step? Now we get to pass how to why we need to take that step.

And today, Jesus has taught us why. You heard Tucker read the parable of the talents for us today. Most of us are familiar with that story.

That's one of those ones where if you've done Bible study for a while, you've probably heard it before. And it's also one that's sort of broken past the church. People kind of know what this story is about.

However, let me just get a little more context for somebody who may not have heard this or studied it to that level. So, you really got to appreciate what Jesus is doing in telling the story.

[7 : 57] This is one of a few stories he tells in a row. To teach his disciples about God's hopes once Jesus is not physically among them the same way.

And he starts laying out what are, in essence, expectations. And he tells a few different parables to get the wheels turning about this is the sort of way you need to conduct yourself if you're going to be a disciple.

And this is square in the middle of that conversation. So, having done that, we get to this idea of the talents.

Now, in the translation that we use today, you heard it as bag of gold, right? That the master gave this particular servant five bags of gold.

Now, in different translations, in the King James, which most of us grew up reading, and in some others, you will see that as a talent. Okay? Based on the Greek word that's actually there in the original.

[9 : 06] Now, the thing about that is a talent is actually a weight of money. That's why this idea of a bag of gold kind of how it gets translated.

But it's actually a weight of money. Now, the key here, and this is Jesus' point, is that we are talking about a lot of money. That's the piece you got to hear.

To put this into modern terms, a talent was worth about 6,000 days' work. Okay? So, do that in your head.

6,000 days' work. Okay? So, if we were doing it, one source kind of translates that to a talent being worth roughly \$2 million.

Okay? \$2 million. Close to that. Now, I don't know about your 6,000 days, but we're going to leave that alone.

[10 : 08] Now, \$2 million. So, this person gives talents to some of his staff.

To one, he gives five. To another, he gives two. And to a third, he gives one. And goes away on a journey.

And when he comes back, he wants to settle accounts. And you heard the story. It's pretty self-explanatory. The one who got five went to work and made five more. The other one who had two went to work.

Made two more. Then we get to our third guy. And depending on how well you've studied this story or how many times you've heard it before, we know what the third guy does.

He literally buries his talent. Right? That's where that servant, that's where that comes from. He buried his talent. And so, the master comes back and is looking for, well, what'd you do?

[11 : 24] And I want you to hear what this guy says in response. Because this is the key to our conversation today.

So, if you want to follow along in your Bibles, we are in verse 24. Verse 24. Matthew chapter 25, verse 24.

Then the man who 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 I went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.

Now, some folks, when they hear this story, they go, well, what's wrong with that? I mean, he didn't lose any money. And the master, when he left, he didn't really give explicit instructions that you were supposed to do anything.

[12 : 30] So, he took this money. He put it somewhere safe. Guy came back. He gave him back his money. What's the problem? Here's the problem.

And the problem lies in what the man says to the master. Because what he says to him is essentially this.

Well, here's the thing, boss. I think you're kind of a cheat. Because essentially, you count on us to do all the work for you and reap the benefits.

And because of that, you're also kind of a scary dude. In other words, harvesting where you have not planted seed. And a hard man.

So, because of that, I took what you gave me. I stuck it away. And now, here it is.

[13 : 36] Yay. Now, some folks still go, okay, well, I'm still, what's wrong with that? Well, the challenge here goes to what I told you before about what Jesus is doing in telling the story.

Because what Jesus is trying to teach the disciples is what God is hoping for that we, as his people, will do when Jesus is not physically there to lead them.

And the goal here is that if I have given you something, will you use it to advance the kingdom?

Will you use it to glorify my name? That's the challenge. Hence, I want you to hear two things again.

Because this person was given a talent. A gift of inestimable worth. And his thought was, well, since the boss is kind of scary.

[14 : 51] And the boss is kind of crooked. I'm just going to put it over here until he comes back.

Now, if you put that chunk back into the big picture, you see the problem with the approach. Because as we sit here and think about our own lives, as we sit here and contemplate what it means to be the people of God in this day, some will say, well, I can't possibly risk anymore.

There's no way. I mean, I live in the real world. And my bills are here. And my schedule is here.

And my commitments are here. And I can't possibly do more for God. So I'm just going to take what God has given me. And I'm just going to hold it. In other words, I'm going to put it in the ground.

And wait until God comes to collect. Now, the challenge with that logic is when we think about the message you are sending to God, if that's your approach.

[16 : 33] You see, boss. I don't kind of like the way you do business.

And this world that you've given me is kind of tough. And rather than risk what you've given me, I'm just going to hold it here.

So the problem is how do we free ourselves from that way of thinking? Because if that's what we're going to tell God, there's a couple of things we need to remember.

The first thing is do we make a false assumption about how this whole program works in the first place? Because you have heard both me and Pastor Jennifer over the past few weeks use a particular word, which is steward.

And the thing about being a steward is a steward knows one thing for sure. That what has been given to them does not belong to them.

[17 : 56] They are simply to care for it until the owner asks for it back. And if we are in fact stewards of what God has given us, then check the sentences we were just using.

So, God, I'm going to take what you have given me. Huh.

Huh. So, in that, are you saying that, well, I'm not stewarding it anymore. It's mine now. Since you gave it to me, I can do with it whatever I want.

Is that where we went with it? Or, even if you realize you're a steward, and you say, nope, everything I have, I have because God gave it to me.

And I know that this belongs to God. So then the challenge becomes, well, it belongs to God, but I'm still not going to really risk it that much.

[19 : 15] You see, because these 24 hours that God has given me in this day, there's a whole bunch of other stuff I got to do with it.

And so, if God says, well, what did you do with the 24 hours I gave you? Well, I went to work, and I did these sorts of things, and I, you know, took care of the house and all that.

And, okay, so God says, well, where am I in that? And that's our struggle.

That is our struggle. So how do we break out of that struggle?

How do we take the step that God may be calling us to take? How do we learn to defy gravity? Because if you caught that, you noticed that those things that I was talking about, well, I did this, and I did that, and I got these bills, and I wanted this, and I did all of that.

[20 : 27] Guys, that is the gravity we're talking about. That's exactly how it works. So how do we break out of that thinking?

The thing we have to remember is this. We love God. Now, it sounds so simple to say. We love God.

Now, we are doing the very best we can, but I'm willing to bet that most people who are sitting here today do not challenge that sentence. We love God.

I would have thought I might get one amen in there, but we love God. Until God apparently wants something, right?

We love God. And so, because we do love God and are doing the best we can to show God that we love God, and that's the two things that are next to each other.

[21 : 36] We're doing the best we can. Our place, our real place of discomfort comes with the thought of kind of, well, really? The best we can?

Because if we're doing the best we can, I'd ask you to think back to what we said during those first couple of weeks. Because that message that we were talking about during the first couple of weeks is the idea that, well, yes, we love God, but are we giving God our very best?

Are we giving best our first? Are we doing the things that show that we love God at least as much as we love all this other stuff? That's what we got to wrestle with.

Because we clearly can show the rest of the other stuff that we love it because we are giving it our time. We're giving it our energy.

We're giving it our money. And we have no problem saying, nope, I got to do this, this, this, this, this, and this. And even if you don't like doing that, you will spend your time, energy, and money to make sure those things get done.

[22 : 59] But when it comes to God, who we profess to love so much, God gets what we have left.

God gets what we feel like giving. God has to compete with other things. And that's what only you and the Holy Spirit have to talk about.

Because that is the chief challenge. Because we will say it. And you mean it when you say it. But when you look at how you love other people in your life.

When you look at how you give and commit to other things in your life. Is there no room to look at your time, your energy, your generosity, and say, maybe I can do a little bit more for this God I profess to love so much.

Because that is where we are. See, the thing is, we'll say, but I only have this much. If you land in that space, that's an understandable space to land in.

[24 : 32] But listen to the story again. Because the point of the story isn't how much you have. I want you to make sure you get that. The point of the story was never about how much each person was given.

The point of the story was what did they do with what they were given. So it was never, well, I need another talent, God.

Then I can do what you want me to do. It was, what did you do with what I gave you? And you can say, well, I don't have this.

And I don't have that. And it would be so much easier if I had this. The key here is not so much what you think you need. The key is, what have you done with what you have?

Not so much, I would do so much more if. But what have you done with what you have? That's the question.

[25 : 54] So, here's the thing. Our challenge right now is to see if we can just do more. To see if we can just do more.

Can we defy gravity? Because not from a guilt place. And see, and that's the tricky part. This should not be about guilt.

This should be about the love that we have all professed. It should not feel like an obligation. It should not feel like, I can't believe I got it.

Remember what we heard. Master, you are a hard one. Is that the message you want to tell Jesus?

Because it's hard to lay those two things down next to each other. If that's what's going on. So, how do we get there? Remember this love.

[27 : 02] See, the thing is when we start to think about it. And we start to get all twisted about it. You got to remember this thing. And this thing is that you have seen generosity in your life.

For example, won't you think to a time when you had no way out of a situation? Where the circumstance you were facing seemed to be awfully big.

The mountain was really high and tall and you didn't have the energy. And you didn't know the way. And who showed up with you with more than enough time? I'm betting his name was Jesus.

And that time you said, well, I can't fix this problem, Lord. I need some help. How am I going to do this? I don't know the answer to these questions.

And you got some answer. A door open for you. And I'm willing to bet the person whose hand was on the knob had a hole in it.

[28 : 03] And when you think about those times, you know you've fallen short of the glory.

When you know what God has asked for and you simply haven't been able to do it. When you let the draw of things, your own pleasure and indulgences, you let them win over and over again.

And yet, we come and we offer, Lord, have mercy. Do you think those are empty words that nobody receives?

Or do you think there is someone who hears that prayer? And not only hears that prayer, but says, I forgive you. Because if you know those things to be true, and you have known generosity in your life, and the God you profess to love has in fact loved you in those ways, will you look at your calendar?

Will you look at your bank app? And then say, well, Master, you're a hard one. And you gave these things to me, so I'm sorry.

[29 : 34] Or are you striving to hear Jesus say something else we heard in the story? Because in the story, there's a line that a lot of us who have professed faith are hanging on to.

That we've actually sung songs about it. And we count on it. And we say it over those people who have made such a difference in our own lives. When we hear the Master look at the servants who have worked so hard and say, well done.

A lot of people want that day. That day we're face to face with Jesus. And Jesus' response to us is, well done.

Good and faithful servant. And how did those servants get to that place? Was it by holding?

Or was it by giving? Was it by not doing? Because they were afraid of risk?

[30 : 49] Or did they do something with what the Master had given? Friends, that's the key.

Put your love into action. And bless God with whatever God has given you.

And let your soul get to that day when God looks you in the eye and says, well done.

Friends, let's defy the gravity of this life together. And be who God knows we are capable of becoming. Amen.

And amen. Loving God, thank you for the gift of all of it. All of it is your gift to us. We came into this world with nothing.

[31 : 46] Literally nothing. And all that we are, all that we have been, all that we will ever know flows from you. So Lord, let us not be people who will clench and hold with both hands.

Let us not be drawn to the simple things, the fun things, the attractive things of this world. Because there are better, more attractive things in you.

Loving God, you have given so freely, so generously, so graciously. And you ask that we do the same. Take what you have given us.

And love you and our neighbors with it. In real ways. Let us be your people. Give us the courage to defy gravity.

And fly with all that we are. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen and amen.

[32 : 51] Indeed, let it start with each and every one of us. Let us be difference makers in this world because our God has made a difference for each and every one of us. So as we think of the ways in which we'd like to put our faith into practice this week, a couple things to share.

First, I want to make sure we announce that we have our CHARGE conference coming up on November 18th. For those of you who don't know what that is, that is a business meeting with our district superintendent.

We're returning the church's reports for part of the year. And he essentially looks it all over and we move forward in our plan for ministry. Everyone is not required to attend.

Let me be clear on that. So this is just something where we give notice. Those who are interested in attending are welcome to do so. Certain people need to be there. They are already aware of that. But others have the option to attend.

So that said, November 18th, 1 to 3 p.m. Other thing we want to remind everybody about is, of course, our drive for turkeys. We have been asking everyone to start thinking about this.

[33 : 55] Remember, the key is getting them in by November 12th. Getting them in by November 12th. So that said, as you are able, if you can donate a turkey, please do so.

We are going for a number we have not had in the past. So if we are able to do that, please let us just give generously to help others in need.

And of course, next Sunday is All Saints Sunday. If there is a person who has left us for the church triumphant in the past year, you'd like to have that person honored during our time of remembrance.

Make sure you take one of the cards in the back and fill out the name. Put it in the offering box, and that way we'll get it in the office in time to add them to our worship service.

There's plenty going on. So please make sure you use your bulletin and the website as a resource to find out more about the ways in which you can learn as well as serve over the coming week.

[34 : 52] So that said, let's receive our benediction. Loving God, you have moved mightily in each of our lives. And you have given us what we need to be able to trust you and to let go of the things of this world.

Lord, let us take a step in faith and defy the gravity of the things that hold us. Now in the name of God, our creator and king. And in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior.

And in the name of the Holy Spirit, our counselor and our sustainer. May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 54] Amen. Amen. Amen.