

## “Abundant Faith, Generous Hearts - Committed to Give”

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

Graphics: heart, harvest

Big Truth: When we have abundant faith in Jesus, because we are convinced of his sacrifice and salvation through the cross, our lives become a sacrifice for Him. Abundant faith leads us to generous hearts - to give our time, talents, gifts, and service. This response requires investment into the life of the faith community, giving more than we get (or so we think), investing in others, and committing to generously give as a response to our abundant faith.

Focus Phrase: I commit to give what God has entrusted to me to invest in the Kingdom.

### 1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY!**
- B. Well, here we are wrapping up our series on stewardship called Abundant Faith, Generous Hearts. And Advent starts next week!
- C. We started this series by receiving the Apostle Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 9:11-12: “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.”
- D. As we prepare this week to spend time in thanks-giving to God, however that will look for you, one thing is certain: **God is pleased when we give thanks for all He has given to us, and we share what He has given with others to supply for their needs.**
- E. We started by proclaiming that God expects us to **INVEST** what we have for the sake of the mission and vision of the church and the Kingdom of God. We’ll circle back around to that today.
- F. In week 2, we asked, “What’s the payoff from my investment?” “What have you done for me lately, God?” And the **ANSWER** to that question is that God has given us **GRACE** - that we don’t deserve but that He wants to give us. In response to that promised payoff of grace, we give our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service to Jesus through the church.
- G. Last week, it was all about giving for the sake of others. Praying, being present, giving of our resources, and serving in Jesus’ powerful name is not about **US**, but about **OTHERS**, especially those in need...anywhere...anytime.
- H. So, now we come to the final message in this series. (Next week, we’ll begin the season that leads to Christmas with a brand new series called Roots...the story, the people, the place from which Jesus came to be born as a baby to save the world from our sins.)

- I. Today, our final message is called **Committed to Giving**. God calls us to be committed in our giving of our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service to the Kingdom work that God is doing amongst us. And this is all SO THAT those who are in need will have those needs met, AND SO THAT those who don't yet know Jesus as Lord and Savior, will continue to be given the opportunity to believe in and follow Him for life.
- J. Your commitment to give - time, money, prayer, serving, loving - is not something that you need to put onto a card to hand in. Your commitment is what God invites you to embark on from this day forward...into the new year...into new seasons of ministry and mission in Jesus' name.
- K. We'll look at one final parable of Jesus this morning, from Matthew 25:14-30. It's better known as either the Parable of the Talents, OR the Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants.
- L. **Here's where we're headed today (take notes): I commit to give what God has entrusted to me to invest in the Kingdom.**
- M. If you're ready, say, "Let's go!"

## 2. Scripture

- A. **READ Matthew 25:14-30**
- B. Jesus began this parable by telling us of a man with some money. Now, remember, this is a parable...it's not real life, BUT it points to some very real truths about the Kingdom of God.
- C. In this parable, the man - we'll call him the client (the master) - turns his money over to three (we'll call them) financial advisors. In the story, they're called slaves. In the Greek, it's doulos, which means servant. Yet, when you hire a financial advisor, they work for you, right? So the three people to whom this man gives money are his doulos, his servants.
- D. The utterly preposterous thing about this parable - and the reason we know it IS a parable - is the the **sum of money** given to these investor-servants. It's astronomical!
  - i. The first was given 5 **talents**. Now, 1 talent was worth about 15 years worth of wages for a laborer. So, if we do the math, 5 talents would be worth 75 years worth of wages...an entire lifetime+ of wages.
  - ii. The second doulos was given 2 talents. Still a huge amount. 30 years worth of wages.
  - iii. Finally, the last servant investor was 1 talent. STILL a big sum.
- E. But it's what they committed to DO with the money they were given that teaches the disciples (and us) the lesson about God and His Kingdom.

- i. The client - the “master” - gave three people an opportunity to make him some money - to get the best possible yield. And, of course, the client was going to be very happy with the one who got him the most money in return.
  - ii. What happened? Well, for perspective, let’s say this businessman had eight “talents” to invest — let’s just say \$800,000. So he turned to his first advisor and gave him \$500,000. The second financial advisor was given \$200,000 and the third was given \$100,000. This distribution, the Bible says, is in line with their **abilities**, in the opinion of the client master.
  - iii. The client diversified his portfolio by taking his \$800,000 and dispersing it to three financial gurus. He had a good feeling about the first guy and gave him the most, and smaller amounts to the remaining two financial experts. He was confident that when he returned from a long trip, one or all of his investment bankers would produce a healthy return for him.
  - iv. And, we find out, it was a great strategy! When he left, his portfolio was worth \$800,000, and when he returned, its value had shot up to \$1.5 million! The first fellow committed “trading” and doubled his client’s investment, and the second did the same with his \$200,000.
  - v. The third banker, apparently being no genius, was so afraid of risk that he simply held his client’s money in escrow (i.e., a hole in the ground) and returned the principal. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. It was a wash.
  - vi. But the client was not happy with the third guy and fired him on the spot. He called him “worthless,” and probably a few other names that don’t translate from the Aramaic. The authorities were called in, and the fellow was thrown “into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. 30). He was unwilling to commit to invest what he had...not even in a bank to get interest.
- F. Now, this parable isn’t that hard for us to translate. JESUS is the master who will take a journey when He ascends to heaven. The SERVANTS are every Christian awaiting the second coming. The TALENTS are all the blessings (money, brains, skills, prayer, service, etc.) God has given to us and is asking us to commit to use for his glory. The MASTER’S RETURN is the Second Coming and the master’s ASSESSMENT is the final judgment.
- G. The master expected each of the servants to commit to give back to him what He gave them to invest. That’s how it works in the Kingdom of God.

### 3. Application

- A. Given all that, let me ask this: what if **YOU** were Jesus’ investment advisor? And what if what he expected was for you to give back to him what God has entrusted to you to invest in the Kingdom? And to multiply what He’s given?

- B. **You are his investor!** As we've been reflecting on throughout this series, you and I are stewards of what the Lord has given us. And, we have a responsibility to use what God has given us in a way that increases the Kingdom principal - to pray...to be present...to give gifts...and to serve.
- C. And, this isn't something that we'll do SOMEDAY. The earliest disciples knew that this was urgent. In fact, in Luke's telling of this parable, the disciples were getting ready for Jesus to return at ANY MOMENT. The Client is coming back...and what will you have to show for the investment you made?
- D. Church, WE live in urgent days. We still wait for Jesus to return like He promised. We see communities, schools, families, nations, and leaders in all levels of society with incredible challenges. Churches that are trying to find their identity in the post-COVID, post-Christian world. People are dying apart from faith in Jesus Christ and His saving grace. In our communities. In our families. We only have so much time to commit to the work of the Kingdom.
- E. Jesus has taken a trip. This is crucial information. Jesus also knew that someday God the Father would send him back and there'd be a settling of accounts. This is why in the story, the first two advisors traded their client's "talents" **immediately**. They didn't want to be caught empty-handed when the master returned - which could be at any time. Their wisdom was richly rewarded.
- F. This is also a reminder that Matthew was writing many years after Jesus was crucified, raised in glory and ascended to God the Father. The Christian community was getting restless while waiting for his return. This parable recalls Jesus' own words: "Watch." "Be ready."
- G. As you get ready to reflect this week on Thanksgiving and giving thanks to God for all His abundant blessings on your life, what is God calling you to DO in response? What is God calling you to commit, when it comes to giving of your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service?
- H. There is a financial aspect to this. Jesus calls us to give generously to the ministries of the church - to invest in the kingdom work happening here...to give with a heart of generosity...and to even ask God, "What else do you want me to give?" Stacy and I are confident that our faithful giving to the church has opened up pathways of blessing we could never have imagined. That's not WHY we give, but that's the outcome of our giving. What's YOUR testimony of giving? What are you willing to commit along with your time and prayers and service? Let's see if we can be more specific:
- I. Start by **committing to give what the Lord has given you to invest**.
- i. The Lord has given you something to invest. Every one of the disciples understood that. Jesus had given them something. As soon as the Holy Spirit came, he said, they would have all they needed to work on increasing the client's investment. Jesus would go on to say to them, "I am sending upon

you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high..." (Luke 24:49).

- ii. It's easy to dismiss the idea that God has given you anything to invest for the sake of the Kingdom. You might be tempted to think, "Not me, really, I don't have anything." But God's not buying it.
- iii. What talents do you have to invest? As a follower of Jesus, you are a vessel of the Holy Spirit, and you have some form of investment currency — given by God — to trade, buy, barter, enhance, use, grow, develop and increase for the glory of God.
- iv. You ARE Jesus' investment banker. You and I have been given some "talents" to play with. And, remember that the master of the story didn't give his financial advisors the same amounts of cash. He distributed his portfolio on his assessment of their abilities. And so it is with you and me. We will not all be given the same amount, the same blessings, the same skills, the same strengths, the same brain power, the same social skills. But, we have something, and that's what matters. Commit to invest what God has given to YOU, as a follower of Jesus.

J. Second, **commit to doing your best to realize a healthy return.**

- i. The master fully expected that upon his return he would discover that his three investors had made him a pile of cash, and, of course, he intended to reward them appropriately.
- ii. You and I cannot fall into the error of thinking that God is not interested in how we're investing the blessings given to us. It's disappointing when prayers, presence, gifts, and service are squandered and under-utilized. God expects a return.
- iii. Commit to doing your best for the One who did EVERYTHING for you on the cross...for the One that will return to assess how you and I have done.

K. Lastly, **commit to giving for God glory alone.**

- i. In the parable, the returns were solely for the benefit of the client. The master entrusted his three financial advisors with cash. They were not to use this money to send their kids to private school, buy a yacht for cruising on the Mediterranean or for memberships at the country club. These funds were to be used for his benefit only.
- ii. You've heard that God expects you to give 10% of your income to him. Actually, He expects us to use 100% of our income for him, since all of it is His in the first place. Whatever you give, use, or invest, do it for the glory of God. And if there are ways you're giving that aren't God-honoring, shift those to be things that are.
- iii. And this isn't just about the ways we spend and give money. Commit to:

- a. Taking time to worship with others (Colossians 3:15; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19)
  - b. Loving your neighbors (in other words, to invest in people) (Matthew 22:36-40)
  - c. Focusing on learning more about your spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12)
  - d. Commit to being kind and helpful, esp on social media (Galatians 6:1-16, et al.)
  - e. Commit to demonstrating hospitality (Hebrews 13:2)
- L. Here's the vow we make today: I commit to give what God has entrusted to me to invest in the Kingdom.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. Church, we've been given one thing to do: increase God's portfolio. We can commit to hone our skills, put our resources to good use, and see every day as an opportunity to serve the Lord.
- B. Or, we can live for ourselves. We can put all the blessings that God has given us on a shelf as being not relevant for our own purposes. We can refuse to risk kindness, hospitality and loving others and instead let it be all about ourselves.
  - i. We can live in a Christ-centered world, or an egocentric one.
  - ii. We can trade or be afraid.
  - iii. We can display God's investment, or we can bury it in a hole.
  - iv. We can risk or we can run.
- C. But someday, God will ask us what we've done with what He gave us.
- D. This week, as you reflect on this whole series, ask God one simple question: "Lord, what do I have that you want me to commit to the church and the Kingdom?" If it's increasing your giving, then respond. If it's an increase in your prayer life for the church, pray. If it's being more present in worship in 2023 or in a small group, get there. If it's serving in a new way, commit to it.
- E. Abundant faith...generous hearts. To invest...because of grace...to meet needs...and increase the Kingdom until Jesus returns.
- F. What do you say? Will you commit to that?
- G. As we sing this final song today, I pray that you stand to make that commitment and then follow through in every way God is inviting you to follow through.
- H. "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God." 2 Corinthians 9:11-12
- I. Let's pray...
- J. PRAY!**