

Investing For Eternity

Matthew 25:14-30, Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 10:42

Slide 1

Before going to Europe on business, a man drove his Rolls-Royce to a downtown New York City bank, went in, and asked for a \$5,000 loan.

The loan officer asked for collateral which the man replied, *“Here are the keys to my Rolls-Royce.”*

The loan officer promptly asked a clerk to drive the car into the bank's underground parking for safe-keeping and gave the man \$5,000.

Two weeks later, the man returned to the bank and asked to pay off his loan to get his car back.

The loan officer said, *“That will be \$5,000 in principle and \$15.40 in interest.”* The man wrote out a check, got up, and started to walk away.

“Wait sir,” the loan officer called after him. *“While you were gone, I learned you're a millionaire. Why in the world would you need to borrow \$5,000?”*

The man smiled. *“Where else could I safely park my Rolls-Royce in Manhattan for two weeks and only pay \$15.40?”* That businessman used his resources wisely.

As we approach the return of Christ, believers must use the resources God has entrusted to us just as wisely. This isn't a time to squander our resources.

It's a time to invest those resources in such a way that Jesus gets a good return on His investment in us when He returns. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us how He wants us to handle His money.

Matthew 25:14-15, *“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.”*

Jesus, of course, is talking about Himself. He has entrusted His property to His servants; that’s you and me who profess faith in Him. He gave His servants *“talents”* of gold.

The NIV translation uses the word “bags,” but in a lot of translations you will read *“talents.”*

Now, these *“talents”* are not special abilities or gifts of the Spirit, as we think about talents today, they were weight measurements for large sums of money. A talent of money weighed about 33 kilograms.

Today, one gram of gold costs about \$65. At that price, a talent (33 kg) of gold would be worth about \$2,145,000.

Jesus gave one servant roughly 11 million dollars, another servant 4 million dollars, and a third servant 2 million dollars. Think about it!

What would Jesus want you to do with all that money? How would He want you to manage it so He would receive a good return on His investment in you?

Slide 2

First, Jesus wants you to understand that it’s His money, not yours. What He has given us, we’re to manage on His behalf.

You see, everything we have belongs to Jesus! Verse 14 says it is *“HIS wealth.”* Therefore, we mustn’t treat it as our own; we’re to treat it as His!

One commentator put it this way: *“Since we’re only stewards of the possessions God has seen fit to give us, every decision we make relating to our possessions has a spiritual implication. I wonder what difference it would make in our spending if Jesus had to appear in person to co-sign all our checks before they’d be negotiable.”*

When you realize that it’s Jesus’ money you’re spending, you might spend it a little differently. Jesus made an investment in you! Don’t squander that investment.

This reminds me of a scene in the 1986 movie, *Hoosiers*. The movie tells the story of a small-town Indiana high school basketball team that wins the state championship after many losing seasons.

In the movie, an alcoholic named Shooter has failed at most things in life, but he has an extraordinary knowledge of and passion for the game of basketball.

So, the coach works with Shooter to give him a second chance in life. He asks Shooter to be his assistant coach, and soon Shooter is on the bench.

Very quickly, the little-known Hickory High School basketball team starts to win games.

Then, during a pivotal game, the coach asks the referee to take him out of the game. The ref doesn't know what the coach is up to, but he tosses him from the game.

Shooter is terrified. The end of the game is near, and the score is tied. The Hickory players call a time out.

In the team huddle, all eyes are on Shooter, including his son's, who never thought his dad should be in this position in the first place.

Shooter is paralyzed by fear. He can't speak. Finally, his son says, "You reckon number four will put up their last shot, Dad?"

That seems to jump-start Shooter, and he haltingly calls a play. The team goes back on the floor and begins to execute it when Shooter calls another time out.

Now he's completely engaged in the game, and his knowledge and passion for basketball have overtaken his fear.

He lays out the strategy for the next play with confidence. He tells them what to do and the players are with him. They walk back onto the floor, run the play to perfection, and sink the game-winning basket.

Then Shooter and his players jump up and down, hugging and high-fiving each other, all over the court.

During the celebration, Shooter's son looks into his father's eyes and says, *"You did good, Pop. You did real good."*

A weak, shame-filled alcoholic did *"real good"* because the coach valued him enough to take a risk on him.

In the same way, Jesus values you enough to take a risk on you. He died for you on the cross. Then He rose again and ascended into heaven, entrusting you with His property.

So, if you want to do *"real good"* with His property, remember that He has trusted you to take care of that property. So, not only receive His investment in you, but increase His investment in you.

Slide 3

In other words, multiply the trust Jesus placed in you. Grow His money for His benefit. That's what two of the servants did. They doubled their Lord's money.

Matthew 25:16-18, *“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.”*

One servant just buried the Lord’s money. In verse 26, Jesus calls him lazy. Don’t be lazy with the Lord’s money. Instead, like a good servant, put it to work for Him.

In 2006, Rev. Rich Kannwischer was Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in San Antonio. One Sunday he issued a challenge to his congregation.

He invited people to come down the aisle and receive a \$100. But there was a condition attached to that \$100. They were to take that \$100 and do something good to help someone.

10-year-old Jackson Rogers accepted the challenge. Even though his father tried to discourage him, he ran down the aisle and accepted the \$100.

Jackson said he knew exactly what he wanted to do with the money: *“Help a homeless family,”* but he wasn't sure how to go about it. He talked with his dad, and they discussed it for a couple of months.

Then they came up with the idea of a letter-writing campaign seeking donations and explaining that it would cost \$50,000 to build a house through Habitat for Humanity.

Jackson then wrote a letter in his own handwriting on notebook paper. He used the \$100 to buy stamps and paper and sent out 200 letters, mostly to friends and family.

One woman who received that letter was so touched that she passed it on to several of her friends and colleagues.

Soon, people from Tennessee, Virginia, and Idaho were sending in checks. The 170 people who responded to Jackson's request ended up contributing \$43,000.

When the people at First Presbyterian learned that little Jackson was just \$7,000 short of his goal, they chipped in the rest.

So, what are you doing with the money Jesus is giving you – not just \$100, but hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of your lifetime?

Now, don't misunderstand me, Jesus wants you to take care of your family, but what other good things does He want you to do with His money?

If a 10-year-old boy could do so much with just \$100, just think what a church full of adults could do with a little thought and ingenuity?

If you want to manage Jesus' money well, receive His investment in you, increase His investment in you, and then believe that He will reward you.

Slide 4

I am not pushing a prosperity theology here, but I believe that Jesus will repay even our smallest effort. We can rely on His gracious generosity to more than compensate our faithfulness to Him.

Matthew 25:19-23, *“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.’ ‘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! “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.’ “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!’”

Jesus richly rewards His faithful servants. He puts them in charge of “much” and welcomes them into His Kingdom.

I find it amazing that Jesus calls 5 talents or bags, \$11 million dollars, “*a little*” or “*a few things*.” But it’s pocket change compared to the real wealth you’ll see in His Kingdom.

If you handle the “pocket change” well now, Jesus will let you manage huge fortunes in His Kingdom.

A story’s told of a man who had built a prosperous business through a lot of hard and honest work.

As he advanced in age, he was concerned about the future of his enterprise, because he had no close relatives except three nephews.

One day, he summoned the young men and said, “*I have a problem, and whoever comes up with the best solution will inherit all that I possess.*”

He gave each nephew an equal sum of money and instructed them to buy something that would fill his large office. “*Spend no more than I have given you,*” he directed, “*and be sure you’re back by sunset.*”

All day long, they worked to fulfill their mission, and when the shadows lengthened, they obediently returned to make their report. Their uncle asked to see their purchases.

The first nephew dragged a huge bale of straw into the room. When he untied it, he made a pile that hid nearly two of the walls.

After he cleaned the straw away, the second nephew brought in two large bags of thistledown. He released the down, and it filled 3/4ths of the room, much more than the straw had done.

The third nephew stood in quiet desperation. His uncle asked him, *“And what do you have to offer?”*

The third nephew replied, *“Uncle, I spent half of my money to feed a hungry child and gave almost all the rest to the church. With the little I had left, I bought these matches and a small candle.”*

Then he struck a match, touched it to the wick of the candle, and its light filled every corner of the room!

The old man knew he had found a worthy successor. He blessed the third nephew for making the best use of his gift, and he gave that nephew everything he owned.

At the end of the age, what will Jesus find that you have done with His money? If you are *“faithful over a little,”* He said, *“I will set you over much.”*

If you do well with His money, Jesus will reward you, but Jesus will punish the unfaithful servants. He will take away even what little they have.

Matthew 25:24-30, *“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. 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.”

The wicked, lazy servant is thrown out of the Kingdom into a place of eternal darkness, weeping, and pain.

Will Jesus really do that with those who mishandle His money? If that's the case, then there's going to be a lot of poor people in hell, and we know that's not true. People don't go to hell because they are poor.

What's the real problem here? Well, let me tell you. It's NOT financial mismanagement. That is only a symptom of a deeper, spiritual problem.

The real problem with this servant was his view of Christ. He saw his Master as a *“hard man.”*

That is, he believed his Master was harsh and demanding, exploiting the labor of others, by *“harvesting where you have not sown.”*

No wonder, he hid his one bag of gold. He didn't expect any reward, only his master's wrath, no matter what He did.

Scott Larson, a youth speaker, was approached by a 16-year-old boy named Ricky after wrapping up his first speaking session at a weekend retreat for high schoolers.

“I just hope you're not heading down a path where at the end of the weekend you're going to ask us to make some kind of commitment to follow God with our whole lives,” he said. “Cause if you are, I want to go home right now.”

Without pausing for breath, Ricky continued: *“I've been coming here for a long time, and I've made these promises year after year—promises I can never keep—and ended up worse off than before I started, with God even more mad at me. 'Cause now, not only am I sinning, but I'm breaking another promise I made to him. And so, I just want to make sure that's not where you're headed this weekend. Is it?”*

Feeling sad for Ricky and not knowing exactly how to respond to him, Scott took a shot in the dark and asked: *“What can you tell me about your father, Ricky?”*

Ricky proceeded to tell Scott a story from when he was in fifth grade. *“Every day when my dad came home from work, the first thing he would always ask me was, ‘Have you done your homework yet?’ It was a pretty safe bet that I hadn't. Then one day I decided to surprise him. When he got home, I met him at the door saying, ‘Guess what, Dad. I did all my homework!’ His response was, ‘Then why aren't you working on tomorrow's?’”*

Suddenly it was no surprise that Ricky felt the way he did about himself and about God.

He had learned that no matter how close he came, the mark of approval would always move a few notches higher. He would always come up short.

Jesus is NOT like that. On the contrary, He rewards even the smallest effort. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus said he would reward those who give even just *“a cup of cold water”* in His name.

Here, Jesus offers His “*well done*” to those who just put His money in the bank to earn a little interest. You don’t have to do great things, just little things, to receive His reward.

Hebrews 11:6 says, “*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*”

Slide 5

Conclusion

God wants you to seek Him, but He understands the fun part really is in the finding, not seeking.

God wants you to find Him, so He hides in plain sight. All you have to do is take one step to a welcoming God that requires only child-like faith.

In fact, He didn’t even wait for you to come to Him. He came to you. Jesus left the wealth of heaven for the poverty of this earth to seek you out.

Then He died on a cross for your sins and rose again, so you could spend eternity with Him. All you have to do is believe. All you have to do is trust Him with your life, and He takes care of the rest.

Faith is not only the key to Christ’s coming Kingdom. FAITH is the key to FAITH-fulness here and now before Jesus comes.

TRUST is the key to TRUST-worthiness. If you believe that God will reward you generously, you can’t help but serve Him faithfully.

Therefore, if you want to manage Jesus’ money well, receive His investment in you. Increase His investment in you. But most importantly, believe that He will reward you.

In other words, don't live for yourself; live for Him! Don't live to accumulate wealth; live to capitalize whatever Jesus gives you for Him.

Pastor Rico Tice put it this way: *“Failure is being successful at the things that don't matter. Success is hearing, “Well done” from the only lips that do matter.”*

If you want to succeed in life, live for Jesus' *“well done!”*