



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Gifts of God... Gifts for God

by Rev. Rohan Forrester

The parable recorded in Matthew 25: 14-30 is often interpreted as a stewardship lesson of investment, or a reminder to use skills that we have rather than to hide them by serving ourselves and not Christ. While these are reasonable and worthwhile perspectives, they do not capture the larger picture of the context of this parable.

This parable is one in a series of many Jesus tells in Matthew about the end times (eschaton) as He nears Jerusalem and the final events that will lead Him to the cross. The tension of this journey is communicated in the parable with a sense of urgency and importance.

At the heart of this parable is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship – God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators acting on God’s behalf.

Biblical stewardship is expansive. It is where faith, works and economics intersect. **This means: Every faculty you and I have, our power of thinking or of moving our limbs from moment to moment, is given to us by God.**

It’s a little hard to swallow the thought that everything you and I claim to own belong to God. This thought was anticipated by God in Deuteronomy 8:17-18.

“You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is God who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms God’s covenant, which God swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”

In Matthew 25, Jesus expresses what He hopes and expects of His followers after He is gone and while we wait for His coming again. This is a parable about what it means to be a follower of Jesus, faithful to Him, even when He is not there to show you firsthand how it’s done. And so, it is a parable about you and I as well.

We read in the text that before the master left, he entrusted his assets/ talents to three of his servants. They were each given “talents.” The talents that the master gave to his servants in this

story was a form of money. The Greek word ‘talanta’ literally means “weights.” In those days, a talent or weight was valued according to the kind of metal of which the weight consisted. It could be a talent of copper, gold, or silver. The most common talent was silver. Assuming that these were silver talents, then they could have been worth more than \$1,000 each.

1. So one servant was given five talents, or over \$5,000.
2. Another two talents, or more than \$2,000; and
3. The last servant was given one talent, a “measly” \$1,000.

The servants were given TOOLS: God gives to each servant the ability/ FAITH to take risks – to make decisions – and manage God’s resources. Many of us have problems taking risks — or making decisions — or taking steps of faith. And we end up being poor managers of God’s resources

Principles of Biblical Stewardship

Therefore, the parable teaches four principles of Biblical Stewardship using four characters – The master and three servants:

1. The Principle of ownership
2. Principle of responsibility
3. The Principle of accountability

God in Christ is the Master and you and I are His servants.

1. The principle of ownership – God is Sovereign

This is the founding principle upon which stewardship is built. God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators acting on God’s behalf

Our gifts are from God for the service of God. We own nothing; it’s all on loan from God. It’s all a gift that we’ve been given to govern justly and manage for God.

Therefore, if God owns everything, God is "Sovereign". There is absolutely nothing that happens in the universe that is outside of God’s influence and authority. Here are just a few of the claims the Bible makes about God:

1. God is above all things and before all things. God is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. God is immortal, and God is present everywhere so that everyone can know God. (Revelation 21:6).

2. God created all things and holds all things together, both in heaven and on earth, both visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16).

3. God knows all things past, present, and future. There is no limit to God's knowledge, for God knows everything completely before it even happens (Romans 11:33).

4. God can do all things and accomplish all things. Nothing is too difficult for God, and God orchestrates and determines everything that is going to happen in your life, in my life. Whatever God wants to do in the universe, God does, for nothing is impossible with God (Jeremiah 32:17).

5. God is in control of all things and rules over all things. God has power and authority over nature, earthly kings, history, angels, and demons. Even Satan himself has to ask God's permission before he can act (Psalm 103:19).

6. That's what being sovereign means. It means being the ultimate source of all power, authority, and everything that exists. Only God can make those claims; therefore, it's God's sovereignty that makes Him superior to all other gods and makes Him, and Him alone, worthy of worship.

God created each of us with special talents/ gifts and he expects us to use those gifts for the purpose for which God gave them to us.

Notice the parable: The master gives everyone according to his own ability...Not every servant was entrusted with the same number of talents. One was given five talents, another two, and the third servant was given only one.

Therefore, stewardship expresses our obedience regarding the administration of everything God has placed under our control, which is all encompassing. Stewardship is the commitment of one's self and possessions to God's service, recognizing that we do not have the right of control over our property or ourselves.

2. The principle of responsibility

Although God gives us "all things richly to enjoy," nothing is ours. Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we're responsible for how we manage it and what we do with it. While we complain about our rights and needs here on earth, the Bible constantly asks, What about your responsibilities?

We are called as God's stewards to be responsible in our management of what belongs to God. While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything God owns as God's stewards, we are responsible to manage God holdings well and according to God's desires and purposes.

God expects us to use our talent today as if it were your last day. God has entrusted to each of us some kind of important responsibility in the kingdom—though it might not be equal to the responsibility given to someone else. God has entrusted

something to each of us, some of us who have been entrusted with little don't make the most of the little we've got.

Even when the responsibility is smaller than that received by others, many of us fail to make the most of what we have been given.

We're told in verse 18 that upon receiving his talent, The Third Servant "went and dug in the ground, and hid his talent." He buried the talent for safekeeping. In those days, it was common to hide some of your money in case some invading army conquered the land and took over the banking system.

The steward earned this position after many years of proving faithfulness, reliability and honesty. Christ expects us to invest all that he gives us – Unlike the third servant in the parable, we must invest in our communities. The third servant was either paralyzed by a fear of failure, or may be lazy, or both. Let us look at his posture versus ours:

Fear of Failure: He buried his talent because he was afraid—afraid that if he took the talent and invested it, he might risk losing it all and then have nothing to return to his master. For fear of losing everything, he did nothing. When we do not invest our gifts in the Kingdom of God, we miss opportunities to use and develop our talents to their full potential. We leave the treasure lying buried in the dirt.

Cautious: What's so wrong with being cautious? Discretion and deliberateness are virtues, not vices. But with this third servant, virtues become vices. Prudence and wariness easily become self-protectiveness and restraint. Inhibition turns to fear, and the servant ends up refusing the risk of trading in the marketplace.

Laziness: Servant number three had one more flaw. When the master returned to settle accounts, he indicated what he thought of that servant's decision to bury his talent. In verse 26 the master called him a "wicked and lazy servant!" Sometimes we wonder why others seem to succeed and we don't.

Middle ground: There's a middle ground. We see the middle ground of inaction and passivity, of the third servant, of hiding his talent in a hole. This principle is: What Jesus is doing is teaching a simple principle of life: If you don't use it, you will lose it. That's what can easily happen to bury talents.

3. The principle of accountability

As stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account of how we've managed what the Master has given us.

God has entrusted authority over the creation to us and we are not allowed to rule over it as we see fit. We are called to exercise our dominion under the watchful eye of the Creator managing his creation in accord with the principles he has established.

Like the servants in the parable, we will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given, including our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority. We will all give account to the rightful owner as to how well we managed the things he has entrusted to us.

As Christians in the 21st century, we need to embrace this larger biblical view of stewardship, which goes beyond church budgets or building projects, though important; it connects everything we do with what God is doing in the world.

We need to be faithful stewards of all God has given us within the opportunities presented through God's providence to glorify God, serve the common good and further God's Kingdom.

When the master returned, he was very pleased when the first two servants told him that they had doubled his money. "Well done," he said. "Because you had been faithful with what I have given you, I will give you much more." "How about you?" he asked the third servant. "What did you do with the money that I left with you?" The third servant said to the master, "I knew that you were a hard man and I was afraid, so I went out and hid your treasure in the ground so that it would be safe. See, here it is."

The holes we dig for ourselves, for our comfort and for accumulating wealth are all around us. And, even when confronted with it, some of us keep digging.

It seems we think that the holes will somehow protect us, but most of the time they end up burying us instead. Let us be wise and creative and invest in the kingdom of God by using your talents to serve Christ and the church during a time of pandemic.

Stewardship isn't a subcategory of the Christian life. Stewardship is the Christian life. After all, what is stewardship except that God has entrusted to us life, time, talents, money, possessions, family, and his grace? In each case, he evaluates how we regard what he has entrusted to us and what we do with it.

Rudy Alcorn

Published by the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
292 Prospect Point Road
P.O. Box 1700 Grand Cayman KY1-1109 CAYMAN ISLANDS
Tel: 1 345 947 1963 Email: rdgs@cicucjci.com or cirmcinfo@gmail.com
Website: unitedchurch.org.ky



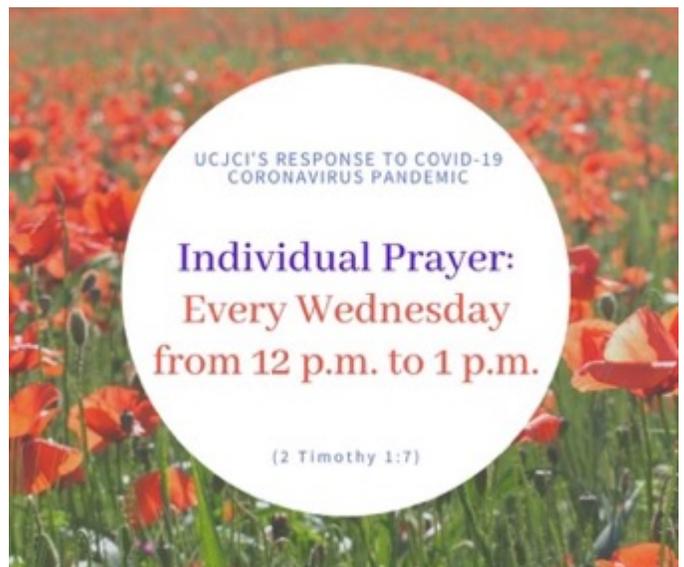
CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

East End United Church
Gun Bay United Church

Service of Appreciation for
Rev. Alice Blair

10:00 am
Sunday, August 30, 2020
EAST END UNITED CHURCH

Due to Social Distancing only 45 persons can be in attendance!



UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Individual Prayer:
Every Wednesday
from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

(2 Timothy 1:7)



WORSHIP THE LORD
Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council
Ministry of 21st Century Radio Cayman

on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

August 23.
Rev. Rohan Forrester

August 23. (Sunday) 12th Sunday after Pentecost
All local United Church congregations are open- Please contact the offices for details.

Worship Services are also available via video links.