

Sunday, November 15, 2020
Stewardship Campaign Continues (Week 2)
“I know we can” –The Little Engine that Could

“What is Worth Saving?”

Matt: 25:14-29 The Parable of the Talents¹⁴ “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents,^[a] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸ But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹ For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading and hearing of his word”. Amen

Many of you know that I have three adult daughters, one lives in Phoenix and recently was able to save enough money for a down payment and she purchased her first home.

She is living in a great neighborhood in Glendale Arizona, and back in September Jim and I spent our 33rd wedding anniversary in Phoenix helping her and her boyfriend move in. We spent a great 4 days with them helping them pack up their little one bedroom apartment and unpack, into their new 4 bedroom house. It was a busy few days, but we really enjoyed this special time with them and giving them our wisdom and support.

Jim was busy helping her boyfriend Chris hang lights and build chairs and tables; and I got the very "mom job" of putting shelf paper in every cupboard, drawer and closet.

One of the evenings we did take a night off to go into Scottsdale and have a nice dinner, as we were talking my daughter mentioned that she was aware that the new house seemed empty as it was 4x's bigger than their apartment. I thought back to that very same event in my younger life when Jim and I had gotten married and lived in Uptown Whitter and we moved from that same size little apartment into our first home. I remember arriving in our new home and thinking the same thing, wow this house is so big compared to our apartment.

Well time has done for us what it has likely done in your homes, and somehow I have more than filled up that big house with stuff.

I imagine many of you look around your homes and think, where did all of this stuff come from?

I mentioned to my daughter that for the first 30 years of our marriage we were all about acquiring things, homes, cars, bank accounts and building a life, raising children. Now though as I Lookout into the vista of my "retirement" years I'm aware that I need to spend the next 20 -30 years if I'm blessed- with time getting rid of all of my stuff.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is:

What is worth keeping? What is worth saving? Which of our possessions is really important? What are the precious things in our lives that we treasure and we would save forever? Which things can we give up and what are the things that are just stuff?

Sometimes there is a logical analysis of the true value of something, and quite often it's more of an emotional perception of value.

If you're a business person you'll understand the concept of depreciation, it's a business, really an accounting term, it's a method of bookkeeping.

Depreciation expense allows a company to (over time) discount the value of their assets, desks, cars, equipment.

At the end of the depreciation period the asset, (car, copier, desks etc.) is basically worth nothing (at least from a bookkeeping basis). A company's net income is adjusted by the age of your physical assets. The lower your net income the less you will pay in income taxes.

In simple terms, all of our stuff, yes even that \$1000.00 refrigerator that we bought in 2009 is not really worth anything after 10 years or so. All our our possessions given enough time really have no value.

Yes, I know we have watched the Antique Road Show and we know that weirdly some small object a vase, or a toy or an old photo or book given the right amount of time can be worth a lot, or nothing.

Value is also in the EYE of the beholder is a very important point, it's not worth much on paper, but It's worth a lot to us in real life because it keeps our memories and they sometime remind us of wonderful experiences or seasons in our life.

I have kept a box of stuff for each of my children. It has their school photos, report cards, art work, reports all of the things from their childhood that I wanted to keep. Most moms have some form of a box for our children. A couple of years ago Jim was cleaning out the garage and he came into the house and said, 'hey do you want to keep all of this junk?'. Now we do have some real legitimate junk in the garage but I've learned that before I give permission to throw anything away I must review his plan, since Jim's definition and my definition of junk are very different.

You now where I'm going with this right, He wanted to throw away my "kid's boxes". You can imagine my response. Of course you cannot throw that away, those are my precious memories, they are not worth any money at all, but I would never throw that away. I'll give them to the girls and they can throw all of it away if they want to.

The Parable that Jesus teaches gives us a great deal of perspective on how Jesus perceives value, that is it that we should be doing, how should we think about our lives?

I think conventional wisdom teaches us that this parable is about investing, or making a profit, but that is not what Jesus is talking about at all.

With all of the things Jesus says about the love of money it would be out of character for him to use a parable to lecture the Disciples about money and the value of investments and how these men didn't invest wisely.

No, Jesus is talking about what is really important, what is it that we should be doing with our precious time, our resources, our days and weeks? What is worth saving, or better what is worth doing?

The story talks about a boss and three of his workers. The boss is going on a trip and he calls them in for a meeting. He wants them to take care of his assets while he is gone. He gives them very little advice but it's clear that he is entrusting them with a great deal of money.

To one of the men he gives 5 Talents (some scholars have estimated that a Talent is about 6000 Denarii. (A Denarii was about a day's wage then). The word here in the Greek (*talenta*) implies a great deal to be responsible for. The second man he gives 2 Talents, and to the third man he gives one.

The text tells us something interesting here: it says that the man gave to each according to his ability verse 15.

That tells me that the boss did have an idea of who his "best" workers were, and what their gifts and talents might be, what they could use creatively.

I'd like to move us away from the "money" discussion and let's give the story a twist, let's assume that when Jesus uses the word Talents he is referring to our (God given Talent's) like singing, or writing or being an artist, or being a great seamstress etc.

When the rich man tells the workers to care for his possessions I think the parable takes on new meaning.

This story comes toward the end of Jesus's earthly ministry. He is teaching and preparing the Disciples to carry on without him.

I think we can look at this as Jesus telling them, look I'm going to be gone now, and it's up to you. You're going to have to advance the mission of the Good News to the World. I want you to think about what's important? Think about what I have taught you, and what will you do with those lessons?

He's asking them how will your work (your Talents) magnify and GROW the message of Hope and Love that I have taught you? It is as if Jesus is saying, please be creative, don't just "bury" your resources, find creative ways to spread this message of love to the world.

Jesus is telling them, I want you to be "profitable", I'm hoping that you'll grow and multiply the gifts that I have given you.

So just like the Disciples we must use our God given gifts, you must save and nurture those gifts that are valuable, but maybe you don't need to keep the ones that are not so helpful.

What gifts and TALENTS do you have? What gifts and graces can we use for the kingdom?

So the things we save, the things we treasure take on a new meaning here. It's not about saving just to keep stuff" It's about doing an inventory (cleaning out the closet) of our lives to determine, what possessions, what items, what gifts do I have than can further the message of Jesus in the world?

Jesus is scolding of the third man here because he was afraid, he does not take the risk of growing the kingdom of God.
What are we afraid of, what fears are holding us back.

If we exercised our gifts, our TALENTS what could we do for the Kingdom of God, what outcomes would we be proud of?

The one thing that is positive that is coming from the COVID19 changes is we all have a bit more time on our hands.

What talent for GOD would you like to improve? What talent or gift can you do for GOD? Maybe you have a craft, maybe you are a good cook, maybe you are a great friend, maybe you like to write stories.
Each and every one of those talents is a gift to God, but more importantly they are gifts to us. I'd love to hear from you in the next few days about how you might stretch, or a talent that you might Invest in and grow for the kingdom.

I think about a simple rubber band, it's a useful tool when you need to hold something together. When a rubber band is not stretched and just lying in your drawer it's not very useful; but when it's stretched it can do great things.

I encourage you to think about being more flexible, allow your abilities and talents to stretch, you'll be so surprised at how much more you can do and how much more talents you really do have.
God wants to use them all, He wants us to stretch.

May the church say, Amen?