

The Joy of Generosity

Week 2: Impact

Matthew 25:14-30

Opening

Dad was changing jobs, spent a Saturday afternoon cleaning out the company car.

- ☐ About half way through, “Dad, why are we spending so much time cleaning out a car that you’re just going to give back to a company you don’t work for anymore?”
- ☐ I could think of SO MANY other things I could be doing with my Saturday afternoon!
- ☐ His response, “They trusted me with this car, so I want to give it back to them in better shape than they gave it to me.”

Later on in life, I learned that’s what it means to be a good steward. A steward is someone who’s been given oversight and responsibility of something that belongs to someone else. My dad was being a good steward of a car that belonged to someone else.

Fast forward *many* years later and I learned what a BAD steward was.

- ☐ Knew some people going through a hard time, let them borrow my car.
- ☐ Returned it saying, “We hit a pot hole last week and your axel broke. It still drives okay, but you might want to get that checked out.” And then left!

That’s an example of BAD stewardship. And we can probably all think of times that we’ve been good stewards of someone else’s stuff and times we’ve been bad stewards. We can think of times we’ve borrowed tools from a neighbor and gave it back to them clean and in good shape and we can probably think of times we borrowed something from a neighbor and found it 5 years later buried in a drawer somewhere!

Today, we’re talking about what it means to be a good steward and the impact it can make. If you have a Bible, or Bible app you like to use, turn with me to Matthew 25.

One of our core values as a church is that We live like God owns everything (*Leave up through next paragraph*). It’s a stewardship value. And, for those of you thinking, “Oh great, I come to church today...or, even worse, I *brought a friend* to church today...and the sermon is about giving?!” You can let your guard down because today’s sermon is **not** about giving...that’s next week. What we’re talking about today involves a lot more than just our money.

Stewardship is not just about giving. Notice, our value doesn’t say, “We **GIVE** like God owns everything,” it’s “We **LIVE** like God owns everything.” This value is not just about what you give, it’s about what you do, and how you manage, and how you hold onto, what you have. And to me, I think that requires a lot more of us than just what we give. That’s part of it, but that’s not all of it.

It comes down to how we use all the resources God has entrusted to us. Our time, our talent, our treasure. Do we hold onto them with closed fists or open hands? Close fists that say, "It belongs to me, so I'll use it the way I want" or open hands that say, "God, it all belongs to you, so use it as you will." That's living like God owns everything. That's stewardship. And it requires a lot more from us than just giving our money.

You see, the first question good stewards ask about the things they have is, "Who *actually* owns it?" My dad knew who owned the car he drove and it informed how he treated it. When we borrow something from a friend, we take extra good care of it because it doesn't belong to us.

So, who actually owns all that we have? Well, Scripture says it ain't us! Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Later, in Psalm 50:10, the Lord says, "For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills." In other words, God owns it all. It all belongs to Him. And that changes everything.

If we own our stuff and it all belongs to us, then we can use it however we want. But if God owns it, and He's just entrusted it to us, then it's not about us and what we want to do with it, it's about Him and what He wants to do with it.

So, what does God want us to do with that He's entrusted to us? How can we live as good stewards of what actually belongs to Him? In our text today, Jesus tells a story that helps answer that question. Look at it with me. Matthew 25, starting in verse 14...**(READ vs. 14-30)**

- **Verse 14** – What is "it?" This story is nestled in with other stories about the culmination of all things. Jesus knows his death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven are near, but that he will return one day. He's giving us some insight into what that day will be like.

Tells the story of a wealthy man going on a journey and leaving all of what he owns in the care of his servants.

- **Verse 15** – Each bag of gold was worth about 20 years of wages for the average person. So, if you take the average household income of someone living in Bloomington, he just entrusted \$4.2 million to the first servant, \$1.7 to the second and the 3rd one was given about \$850,000. Jesus often used hyperbole in his parables, but the point is that these servants were entrusted with a lot.

Here's the point of the story...all three servants knew how the Master would have used his money, but only two of them did it. Two of them handled it the way the actual owner of the resources would have. The other one didn't. He buried it because he was driven by fear instead of faith, and as a result, the Master's resources were not used the way he would have used them.

And, I think what we learn here is this: A good steward asks, “How can I use what’s been entrusted to me in a way the person who actually owns it would?”

Good stewards use the resources entrusted to them the way the owner would use them. And so, if everything we have...our time, our gifts and abilities, even our money...if it all belongs to God, then how does He want us to use what He’s entrusted to us? The Apostle Peter says this...(READ 1 Peter 4:10-11)

Whatever gift we have received...the gift of time, the gift of our abilities, the gift of our money and possessions...whatever gift we have received from the Lord, faithful stewards use that gift for the glory of God through Jesus. In other words, A good steward uses God’s resources to build God’s Kingdom.

A few months ago, Tim Thompson, our Bedford Campus Minister, bought a new home. He’d been living in a one bedroom apartment for the last few years and decided to buy a place near downtown Bedford that had a some character and a lot more space.

Tim is single and he said one day he was looking around at this huge house thinking, “God, what do you want me to do with all of this space?” He was trying to figure out why he had it. Well, not long after that, a social worker for Lawrence Co. called him about a couple of boys that were in foster care. Tim had been really involved in their lives a while back and the social worker was asking him if he knew anyone that could take them in. Tim’s response to her was, “How about me?”

So, for the last couple of weeks, these two boys have been living with Tim all because he was willing to hold onto his house, and his time, and his resources with open hands. He was willing to say, “God, all of this belongs to you, so use it as you will.” That’s stewardship.

We see this value being lived out in people all across Sherwood Oaks and I want to share just one of those ways with you today. Check out this video...(show Piecemakers Video)

Whether it’s looking at the extra beds in your home and asking God if He wants to fill them with a foster child, or using your talents to love and encourage others, stewardship is using what God has entrusted to you to build His Kingdom. To invest in others and bring Heaven just a little closer to earth in their lives.

I think it really does all come down to how we view our stuff. Do we hold onto our stuff, or does our stuff hold onto us? Do we grab it with clinched fists, or do we hold onto it with open hands? Maybe for you today, your next step is to look at what God has entrusted to you and ask, “God, how do you want me to use Your resources to build Your Kingdom?”

Maybe it’s asking, “God, how do you want to use my fishing boat to build your Kingdom?” That question might lead you to inviting a few neighbor kids out fishing with you one day, pouring into them and building a friendship with their families.

Maybe it's asking, "God, how do you want to use that extra bedroom in our house?" Amber and I asked that question several years ago and it led to us becoming Foster Parents, which ultimately led us to adoption. "How do you want to use my time?" "How do you want to use my camper?" "How do you want to use my savings?"

And, you might be thinking, "But Shawn, I haven't been given very much!" Well, okay...then how are you using what you *have* been given? I think that's the point of the three servants. They were each given a different amount, but it wasn't about how much they were given, it was about what they did with what they got. The same is true for us. **What will you do with what you've got?** Will you hold onto it with closed fists and only use it for yourself, or will you say, "God, it all belongs to you, so I'm going to use Your resources to build Your Kingdom."

All of us can do this, and I hope you do. But, as we close out today, I want to do something a little different. Something I've been looking forward to for the last two months I said that today's sermon is not about giving, and that's true. It's not about **you** giving. Instead, today is about **us** giving. Typically, we invite you to give to the church, but today, we're going to give to a few of you.

I have a crisp \$100 bill for the first three people that come up on stage with me this morning. But, listen....before you come up, hear me out. I'm not just looking for people who want \$100. That's all of us! I want three people/couples who are ready to go on an adventure with God. People who maybe feel like God is stirring in them to do something for Him. Are there 3 people in here that want to do something cool for God? Don't be shy. Come on up!

To the three (hand each of the \$100):

- ☐ This is not your money, it's not the Church's money, this is God's money. You are just going to be a steward of it.
- ☐ What's cool about this \$100 bill is that it started as \$1 given to our Dollar Club Ministry. Then it multiplied to \$100, which grew to \$1,500 that is being given out across all of our services and campuses this morning.
- ☐ We don't want this \$100 back. This isn't about making a profit with this money. This is about using God's resources to build God's Kingdom. So, we want you to invest this money into what matters to God...people.
 - And, you can say, "Well, I'm one of God's people" and just keep it. That's up to you! Might kinda be like burying it, though...and that didn't end too well for the guy in the story!
 - You can give this \$100 to a charity or organization, and it'll be put to good use and multiply, but I bet you can get a little more creative than that!

- My challenge to you is to be bold and think big! Pray for how God wants to use this money. It belongs to Him, so pray for ways to use it that builds His Kingdom. Ways that serves the needs of others.
- Again, we don't want this money back, but...in three months, we want you to come back and join me on this stage to share what you did with it. So, there's some accountability!
- We're going to track your journey over the next few months and on February 11th, I'm inviting you to come back up here with me to share and celebrate how this \$100 made an impact in the lives of others. Sound good?!
- Pray over participants.
- Meet us down front after service for some more info about what you just got yourself into!

Good stewards use God's resources to build God's Kingdom. They know it all belongs to Him and they've just been entrusted with it for a little while, so they use their resources the way He would. They use what they've been given for the good of others, not just themselves. Jesus is our perfect example of this.

Jesus used his time, his abilities, his opportunities not to serve himself, but to serve others. He owned it all, created it all, and had every right to use it for himself, but instead, he came in humility. He surrendered it all to God and trusted Him. And, in doing so, he went to the cross to bear the guilt of our sin and give us the gift of salvation.

(Set up response time.)