

Good morning, everyone. Are you feeling generous? Sure. You know what? God can do a lot with one person.

So right now, Renee, this all hinges on you and your generosity. We are in week two of a series we're calling the impact of generosity or the joy of generosity. So if you're here for the very first time, lucky you. We're going to talk about money. And I know everyone loves it when the preacher talks about money.

I say, we're talking about money. We're really not. One of the values we have here at Sherwood Oaks is that we live like God owns everything. And we say live instead of give, because too often when we talk about stewarding the resources God gives us, we think it's about money primarily, and it's not. Last week, we looked at this beautiful story where Jesus points out someone who was extremely generous.

She gave two coins. All around her were people giving lots, lots more. And Jesus pointed her out as the one who truly exhibited God's heart for generosity. So it's not about money. It's about living with this attitude that we have been entrusted with some great resources.

So today we're going to be talking a little bit more about that. So we're glad you're here. When I was a kid, we used to play a game with my cousins called if I won a million dollars, anyone ever play the if I won a million dollars, I would. So what would you do with a million dollars? So imagine my surprise.

I was talking to Robert earlier this week, and he says, if you had a million dollars, what car would you buy? And I'm like, well, I would probably buy the car I'm driving right now and suck the rest of it away into other things. He goes, oh, no, here's what I would buy. He would buy the Ford GT 40 Golf edition. Do we have a picture of it right there?

Yeah, it's a pretty sweet car, isn't it? Anyone else think, okay, I would spend a million dollars on something like that. Car buffs in the room today we're looking at a scenario where Jesus describes a master who entrusts to his servants a great treasure, a lot of money. What will they do with that? And in the story, I think we're going to be challenged ourselves to think about the resources God has entrusted to us.

So if you got your Bibles and you want to turn there, you can turn to Matthew 25. I'll pray and we'll get started. Heavenly Father, we want to be faithful. We want to be faithful in our thoughts and our words and our actions. We want to be faithful with the resources that you've entrusted to us.

We want every aspect of our lives to honor you. Every aspect and all of every aspect to honor you. You have entrusted to us so many resources, mostly non monetary. God, today we want you to awaken in us an awareness of how vitally important it is to steward those resources well and steward that responsibility well. So speak to us from your word.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

This account that Jesus gives falls between two other. If you've got your Bible open, you can see it in Matthew 25. It falls between three stories, three parables. Both the one above it and the one below it point to the reality that Jesus is coming again. The middle one that we're going to be focusing on really talks about how we live in between now and the reality of when Jesus will return for us, how the space that we inhabit now can bring honor to Jesus.

So if you're in Matthew 25, we're going to look at verse 14 through 30, and I'm just going to walk through the parable or the story with us. And Jesus says this again, it will be like meaning in the future when the end comes and the Son of man is preparing to return, 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. I love that word, entrusted.

The Master says, here is my wealth. Here is my life. I am giving it to you. I am leaving it in your care. I am releasing control of it for the foreseeable future, and I'm giving it to you to manage and care for as if it were your own.

And if you've ever handed the keys to your car to a 15 year old to drive around the church parking lot, you know what this moment is like now. These are not servants who wash the dishes and fold laundry. These are servants who are Trusted advisors. These are men and women of intellect and ability who have, through working association, received varying degrees of trust from the master. He feels like he can confidently entrust his wealth to them, and they receive a significant amount.

So some of your translations might use the word talents in this. I like the word talent because it speaks to sort of a historical terminology, but too often in our lives, talent now means to us an ability, a skill. And this is not necessarily what Jesus is referring to. And so the translation that I've used calls it a bag of gold, because in our minds. We may need to keep this money in mind, because here's why.

This is a significant amount of wealth he's entrusting to them. A single bag would be roughly equivalent to 20 years wages for the average worker. So I did a little calculation, and I said, the average worker makes \$40,000 a year. That's what I make. So, no, maybe I do.

You never know. \$40,000 a year, I think it's on the low end of what people generally make. But five bags over 20 years would be \$4 million. So the first guy gets \$4 million. Master says, this is yours.

I'm entrusting it to you. The second guy gets two bags. 1.6 million is what he receives. I'm entrusting \$1.6 million. You can buy a car or you can do something else with it, but it's yours.

Manage it well. And the Third guy, the third servant, gets one baG, and it's \$800,000. Not an insignificant amount of Money, by the Way, is it? Lots of Potential There in that \$800,000. But he awards them and He Gives them and entrusts this Money to them according to their expertise, their experience, and their ability.

The master knows what he's doing when he places it in their hands. He knew that they could handle this amount of Money. It might stretch them, but he trusts them to it, and then he goes away. The first servant takes the money and trusts it to him, and he does what a good money manager will do. He puts it to work in places that he know it will do some good and see a return.

And so the scriptures doesn't say exactly what he did with it. But I was thinking through it, and I thought, okay, if I'm going to add some color to this parable, here's what I would say. I think maybe one bag went to a woodworker in the community, and it went as a loan for him to start his own carpentry business. One bag went to a woman who wove carpets out of rags, and it gave her resources so that she could actually make carpets out of finer materials. One bag went to a doctor who needed some educational medical training.

Maybe one went to help a young girl go to school and learn. One went to support a local charity who fed the poor. Now I'm making this up, but we can see how those are great options. They mirror what Jesus would do. I believe the second servant did the same.

I think maybe the second servant said 1.6 million. What can I do with this? I'll buy some land and hire someone to begin to manage the property and maybe subdivide it, put some houses in the area and let's see what we can do. See if we can put this money to good work. Any financial investment is risky.

We know this. Over the last couple of years, if you're financial investments, I've taken a nosedive. You just know that when you put your money in places where it's not under your mattress, it may make money, it may lose money. It's risky. And the third servant knew this, and he was terrified of risk.

It seems like he was afraid of the responsibility. The bag of gold just seemed like too much for him to be trusted with. And so instead of following his master's orders and doing something good with it, he dug a hole and put that bag in the hole and covered it over and just prayed that no one would ask him about it. And he went on his merry way. Now, after a long time, verse 19 says, the master of those servants returned and settled Accounts with them.

And he asked them, what did you accomplish with what I entrusted to you? And the man who received five bags of gold at the beginning brought in another five. He says, master, you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I've gained five more. I prayed about where to invest it and who to invest it in.

So I gave it to a carpenter who expanded his business and now is selling custom furniture as far away as Syria. He's returned the loan now with interest. The carpenter, the carpet beneath your feet was made by a woman who hired all the older women in the village to help her. Your investment transformed the economic reality for all the widow women in this village. Maybe you passed the clinic on the way here.

Every village in the surrounding territory has a clinic just like that one. Your money transformed the face of healthcare in the Galilee Valley. That one teacher you trained well, she trained others. And now children all over the area are going to school and getting education. Notice that there were no homeless people lining the streets when you drove into town, because your money helped provide food and shelter for those who could not provide it themselves and training for jobs.

Good stuff happened. Now, some investments proved more financially profitable than others, but it all did good and it brought honor to your name. And so here's the monetary results of your trust. See, I have gained five more. Your 4 million has turned into \$8 million.

His master replied, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness. The Lord delights in us when we delight in him.

When we delight in him, he delights in us. The man with two bags came up, says, master, you entrusted me with two bags of gold. See, I've gained two more. I took a big risk. I threw it into one enterprise.

And I know that all good financial advisors would advise against that. But, man, the opportunity came up. And I said, you know what? Let's just do it. I feel like it's a good opportunity.

So not only do you now own property around the Lake of Sea of Galilee. But we subdivided that and we built some housing there. Some of it was very affordable housing for low income people to live in. And others of it was very nice housing. And together, over 500 families now live in their own homes, increasing the tax base for our region.

Those taxes now help support the school that your other money went to help create. And the shelter and the other charitable agencies in the region. Your 1.6 million has turned into 3.2 million. His master replied, that's fantastic. Well done, good and faithful servant.

You've been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness. We know what's coming next, don't we? The man who had received one bag of gold came.

Master. He said, I knew that you're a hard man. Harvesting where you've not sown. And gathering where you've not scattered seed. So I was afraid, and I went out and hid your gold in the ground.

See, here is what belongs to you. I know that you are exacting. And I didn't really feel like I had anything to really offer to this. I'm not really smart enough. Maybe I'm not good enough.

My talents aren't nearly as developed as those other people's were. I just felt like I was going to screw it all up. So I didn't want to disappoint you or anger you. And he holds out in his hand a dirt crusted, old, rotting burlap bag filled with \$800,000. And the master looks at that college educated financial advisor.

With absolute disbelief. He said, buddy, that sounds all very humble and very pretty. But you've really done nothing more than slap me across my face. Because I knew what you were capable of. And I gave you enough to stretch yourself and earn the right to be entrusted with more.

But you did nothing. The day you left my office, you could have driven down to Bedford Federal. And handed it over to Susan Gales. And she would have put that money to work in a money market account, you would have at least made some interest on this. But you did nothing with what I entrusted to you.

He said, you're wicked and you're lazy. Verse 26. So you knew that I harvest where I've not sown and gather where I've not scattered seed. Well, then you should have put the money on deposit with a banker, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest and watch what happens here. 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.

And 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 and wow, what a sobering story. Does anyone else read that and go, Yikes.

Here's the deal. This is not ultimately about making money. It's not ultimately about growing wealth. It is about using the resources God has entrusted to us. Well, we live like God owns everything, and that means that we hold on to our possessions with open hands instead of closed fist.

That's the first part. Open hands, ready and eager to use them for the advancement of God's kingdom. Ready and eager to use them as God would prompt us. He is the one who owns everything.

At Sherwood Oaks, we believe that God has entrusted us with time. That's a very valuable resource, guys. Time is a very valuable resource, but he's entrusted to us talent, our abilities, the skills that we were born with and the skills that we learn over time. Those are opportunities for God to work. Those are resources.

He's trusted us with treasures, things that actually are valuable in the world's eyes. Those are treasures that God has given to us. Not so we can hoard and hide, but that we can open and

bless. All of it is about being stewards. He expects us to multiply his investment in us into the lives of others.

And we hold our stuff lightly and not tightly, when we're willing to invest in others, when we're willing to take a few calculated risks as we care and invest in the world around us, there's no telling the kind of impact we can have. And it's not good. It's no good. In fact, Jesus says to say, well, I don't know. I don't really feel like I got much.

We're struggling financially. I just feel like I'm just swamped with other responsibilities. And I don't know my theology real mean. What if someone asked me something or asked me to do something, I don't really know what to do. What if I get it wrong and the master would say to you, that's not your problem, that's on me.

You open your life up, you go, you give, you serve.

Just don't be stupid and don't be lazy.

None of you are stupid. But I suspect all of us can be a little bit lazy at times, can't we?

God doesn't entrust the same thing to everyone. I have skills and abilities that God uses. I love that. I love the fact that there's things I can do that God uses to bless other people. But I'm telling you, there are a trillion things that I cannot do.

And I'm so thankful that within the body of Christ, there are people who can do that. That's an amazing thing. God's given you things to do that I can't do, and he's given me things to that you can't do. And together we accomplish his greater purpose. We all have different skills, we all have different abilities.

We all come from different family backgrounds and different family connections. Those can be used by God to benefit and bless others. We all live in different, perhaps, social realms and positions. Have you ever thought about that? That the place that you inhabit, the social bubble that you live in, is potential for God to work there in that spot and rather be envious, or rather be angry or resentful to say, God, thank you.

That you're giving me an opportunity to work with these people. My family, my neighbors, my community, we all have different educations for a purpose. God says, use what you've been given. He expects us to use all of these resources to build what he calls his kingdom. We get to be part of it when we do, I'M going to give you guys a chance to do it.

We're going to take up an offering in just a little bit that will cover sort of the needs of the world around us, this church. But I'm going to do something right now that's a little bit different than that. So our normal offering goes to provide a place to meet, goes towards taking care of those who serve in the ministry of the church in specific ways. It goes towards local community outreach and ministries. It supports them.

It supports ministry globally around the world. Our weekly offering is very important. This is the way God gets resources to places where he needs them. And we want to do our very best to be faithful stewards of those resources. But today I'm going to ask for three volunteers to do something very unique over the next two months.

All I'm asking is they be willing. They be willing, and they'd be over 18. So here's what we're going to do. Can I just get three volunteers right now?

Come on up. Come on up. Come on up.

So here's what's going to happen today. I'm going to give each of you \$100. A nice crisp one right there.

A nice crisp one right there. Show them up. Show them they're real. They're absolutely real. \$100 bills.

Now, this is not your money I'm giving you, by the way. You understand that? It's not the church's money. It's God's money. In fact, it came from your contributions to the dollar club out here.

We're going to do some good with it. I'm going to give you a challenge, and here it is. Your challenge is to take that money that has been entrusted to you and invest it in God's kingdom for God's purposes, to make an impact in this community. God's purpose is people. So I'm going to tell you, don't go down to French lick and play it on the slots.

It's tempting. And if you did and won a million dollars, I would not say no to that, because I like money. But God's not about that. God's about making a difference in people's lives. So I want you to use this money to make an impact in people's lives, and you don't have to do it alone.

In fact, I'm going to encourage you not to. I'm going to encourage you to bring in other people to talk about what this money can do, where it can go, whose life it can bless. Maybe you want to do it all in one place. Like that second guy, I take the 1.8 million. I'm going to throw it right here in this.

Maybe you want to do it like the first guy. He says, I'm going to split this up into five twenty s, and I'm going to distribute it in different places just to bless wherever I see an opportunity. We don't want the \$100 back, but here's the kicker. We do want to know what you did with it. So we're going to track your journey, and in a couple of months, we're going to sit down with you and hear back from you about how this worked and what happened with that \$100 bill.

We're going to celebrate as a congregation what \$300 did in the life of our community. So if you don't know where to begin. I'm just going to throw some ideas out here. Jesus did good. He fed the hungry, he cared for the sick.

He blessed the meek. He served the least. And that's a great place to start. How long do it until Jesus comes back, first of all. But yeah, in a couple of months, we're going to check back in.

Do you feel good about it? Have any questions about it? Any questions? A little anxious, a little nervous? Anyone thinking of a hole right now that they can pop this in, if nothing else, swing by bed, Fed.

That is an option, of course. But what I want to hear at the end of three months is you guys tell some amazing stories about how people's lives were impacted. \$10 at a time or \$100, I don't know. But I'm excited to hear those stories because this is what Jesus told the guys, those who will obey him, those who will faithfully use what God entrusts to them. He says he will call us good and faithful servants.

That's what we want. We want to use our resources of time and talent and treasure to bless the kingdom. Now, here's the deal. You guys can be seated. Thank you very much.

Don't leave, by the way, before we talk, because I think Carly wants to get some information from you so we know how to track you. Not in a creepy way, but just so that we can just get some updates periodically about how things are going, here's the challenge I'm going to put out. We were talking about this, I was talking about this with Sean Green, our lead pastor up at the Bloomington campus. And I said, well, what about people who think, oh, that sounds fun. I want to do that, too?

He goes, yeah, absolutely. So maybe in your family today, you're like, you know what? We could probably scrounge up \$100 between the sofa cushions and the middle of, underneath the car seats and raiding the kids piggy bank. We can probably come up with \$100. We want to do it as well.

I'm going to encourage you guys to do it as well. And as you do this, we want to hear what happens, not so that you get a brag about how generous you are, because remember, it's not your money you're spending. Right? It's not your money. It's God's money.

We live like God owns everything. And over the next couple of months, I want to hear some wonderful stories about how our community is being impacted by your faithful stewardship. Good. There's your challenge right there. We're going to take Communion right now.

And as we take the bread and the cup, we're just reminded that God entrusted to his son an amazing and awesome and fearful responsibility to bring those of us who were living in darkness into the light. And that required amazing, gracious generosity. Sacrificial generosity. He gave his entire life to that responsibility. He didn't give some of his life.

He gave all of his life. A life given for us. A life given to us. And when we take communion this morning, as we take the bread and the cup, I want this to be an opportunity where we offer

ourselves back as well. Not just our time, not just our talent, not just our treasure, but all of it, all of who we are.

Gracious and radical generosity. Freely you have received, now freely give. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love for us. This bread is your life, sacrificially offered in exchange for our lives. This cup is that commitment that you made to us, that though you go away, you will come again.

When you come again, we want to hear, well done, good and faithful servant.

Lord, we want to be where you are. We're thankful that you have not left us. You have not abandoned us. But until that day, we pray that we'd be faithful stewards of what you've entrusted to us. Lord, meet us here in this place of communion, where we are fearful, where we are anxious, where we are afraid to trust.

Lord, we pray that we would be reminded again of your deep and abiding love for us. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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