

The Audit
Matthew 25:14-30

In our last business meeting it was noted that our church is behind in our budget giving by \$18,700. I began to wonder how does this translate to lost ministry? You see, our budget is not just about utilities, maintenance and salaries, it is about people. It is about our mission to **Reach out** to all people especially those in this community, **welcome in** people of all walks and love them, **build up** each other so that we might grow in God's grace, **and send forth** all of us to proclaim Christ **for the Glory of God.**

Of each dollar you and I give to this church, 15% goes to missions:

- **\$45,000 is committed to the Cooperative Program**, the Southern Baptist program which supports mission work around the world. Southern Baptists are the largest missions-sending organization in the entire world, sending nearly 5,000 international missionaries to 153 countries (**one of them our very own Amanda Neibel**) and 5,000 missionaries in North America, nearly 100 of which are here in IL. In addition, behind the Red Cross and the Salvation Army we are the third largest disaster relief organization in the world. Our denomination consistently plants more churches across North America than any other. Through our support of the cooperative program we are helping to train approximately 16,000 future pastors, missionaries and church leaders in our six theological seminaries. (Luke and Chris)
- **\$8,600 is committed to Association missions-GWBA**
- **\$10,000 is committed to Direct Missions:** Lottie Moon offering-International missions, Annie Armstrong offering-committed to home missions here in the US and the State Mission offering committed to mission work here in IL.
- **\$13,200** which is committed to the ministry of **Baptist Children's Home and Family Services**, which last year provided care to 1,148 adults and children here in IL and in Uganda. (RC, Maternity Care, Adopt and FC, Counseling, Safe families for Children and Babies' Home)

Additional resources are committed to children's ministry, youth ministry, men's and women's ministry.

For every dollar you give to this church, someone, somewhere in the world is touched by the Gospel.

It's no secret. God is using Southern Baptists and FBC of Carmi to impact eternity more effectively today than anytime in its history!

With that in mind, there are few things that impact a Christian's life as much as proper stewardship. Matthew 25 could be subtitled "*Things that will keep you out of the Kingdom.*"

First- (verses 1-13) not being prepared for the return of Christ; **second-(verses 14-30)** poor stewardship; and **third-verses (31-46)** failing to minister to others in need.

Mat 25:14-30:The text we're concerned with here focuses on stewardship. This is a parable that most of us have heard many times before.

A wealthy man, possibly a landowner, has to leave town. While he is away, he needs someone to manage his resources and he elects three of his servants to be his trustees.

He divvies up the responsibilities giving **5 talents (62.5%)** of the whole to one particularly gifted servant, **two talents (25%)** to a second servant, and **1 talent (12.5%)** of the total amount to a third trustee. **One talent worth 6000 drachmas (drachma is a day's wage) 20 years of wages. A lot of money!** After the master leaves, the three servants now made stewards employ widely varying investment styles. The one who has been given five talents was not adverse to risk. He traded with his resources and doubled his assets! No balanced fund for this trustee, he went straight for growth equity. The second servant had a similar investment strategy and aggressively invested his master's money. The third servant, the one who had received only 1 talent, placed his money in the mattress market. So paralyzed by the fear of loss, he hid the money and squandered its earning potential. I think he saw this as a burden not an opportunity.

When the master came back home he demanded an accounting. The two servants who effectively doubled their master's money received high praise. **(faithful with a little, put in charge of a lot).** But then he turned his attention to the third servant who was sheepishly wiping the dirt off of the money. He tried to say that he had protected his master's money from loss because he knew his master was a hard man **(reaping where you did not sow).** But the master realized the true story. He was able to strip away the thin veneer of his pretended respect of his master's abilities. The master knew that the servant had been foiled by fear and influenced into inaction. It was clear to him that not only had the servant behaved

cowardly, but he had also behaved sinfully. He had not used it to benefit his master.

As a result the sinful servant was thrown out of the Master's presence and his talent was given to the one who originally had five. He was excluded from his master's kingdom. Now before we begin to more fully unpack this, before we begin to look for application, **let us agree on two principles:**

1. **God owns it all:** Money, time, giftedness, and resources-both tangible and intangible. We cannot call God "creator" and not affirm that He owns it all. We cannot leave the book of Genesis in a God inspired Bible if we do not believe that God owns it all. If this is true, we have no rights of ownership over anything. Only tenancy.
2. **The definition of stewardship, then, is managing God's stuff.** From God's council in the garden to care and tend to the land, to this master's exhortation to invest his money wisely, to Paul's assertion that we are entrusted with the great mystery of salvation, stewardship is our condition as manager of the things of God.

The question of "what is good stewardship" then is, are we managing in a way that pleases God?

Most of us here are familiar with the idea of an audit. Basically, the idea means "an evaluation". In practical terms it means **to test the soundness of financial practices.**

Each year Baptist Children's Home and Family Services undergoes a financial audit to verify the integrity of our accounting. This is a relatively painless process if everything has been done correctly but can be a very painful process if things have been done incorrectly.

What I want to challenge us to do is to **undergo an internal, personal audit.** Over the next few minutes and continuing into the weeks ahead let's undergo a process by which we determine how well we're managing God's stuff.

The question we must ask is "**How and where are we invested?**" As we audit the investment portfolio of our lives, the first thing we must determine is what are the assets that God owns, over which we have influence?

1. **Our physical resources** (money, stocks, bonds, CD's, insurance policies, home, land, cars, campers, boats, motorcycles, etc.) The word of God says that our father owns the cattle on a thousand hills. We get to manage a small portion of the herd.
2. **Our passions, our desires, gifts, talents.** It has been said that you can compensate a man for his time or his property but you can't pay for his heart. This is a very valuable asset.
3. **Our time-** perhaps this is the most valuable asset of all because it impacts all other assets. This asset is increasing in value every day and is directly proportional to the pace of our lives.

Now that we've defined the holdings within our portfolio, let me suggest the **tools** – the questions that are needed to actually do the audit or ***“test the soundness.”***

1. Does my management of these assets – my physical resources, my gifts, talents, heart/passion, and my time, reflect Christ and His priorities?

You've heard someone say of a child, “you sure do look like you parents”. And in response you may have thought, what do you expect, they conceived the child. It is natural for a child to look and act like its father or mother. It is also natural for the ac those of Christ. Could you expect anything less? **2 Cor. 5:17** says ***“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*** We won't reach the unsaved until the saved replicate the life of Christ. Jesus spent His ministry proving that God loves people (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, befriending the friendless). It seems today that too often we have committed the great omission instead of the great commission. People don't come to us about Jesus because they don't see the family resemblance. Live like Jesus and people will want to know Him.

- **Are my assets Kingdom seeking?**-are they being used to build God's Kingdom or they being used to build my kingdom?
- **Are they invested in the eternal?**–Are my assets invested in the things that I cannot see, i.e. Other people's lives, redemption for others, hope for children in crisis? Remember the issue of God's priority must be applied to all the assets in the portfolio-physical, heart/passion, and time!

Mat, 6:19-21 states, ***“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

2. Is it the best I can do?

- **Am I getting the best return possible for my master's resources?** (my time, my stuff, my talents, my gifts, my passions)

This is precisely the questions posed by the parable of the wise and foolish stewards.

3. Does it represent long term investment?

- **Does our management of these assets reflect our belief that heaven is truly our home?**

Remember that the only successful strategy in the stock market is to buy and hold. In the kingdom it is to put your hand to the plow and not look back.

After the results of the audit are in, what now?

We may well have discovered that our management of our resources, our passion, our time does not reflect God's priorities. It's not too late! God's spirit within us can help us come into compliance. We can begin to invest our money, our heart, and our time into the kingdom. We can ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?"

We may well have discovered that no, we are not doing our best. We can begin to compare ourselves to the excellence of Christ's example.

1 John 3:16-18 **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with action and in truth."** Here and in John 15:13 Jesus taught us and his disciples **that "no one has greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends.**

Based on Jesus' example, love is a verb not an emotion. Love is choosing to give up something important in your life to make the lives of other people better. In Jesus' case it was his life. He tells us that we also ought to be willing to lay down our lives for our brother.

Most of us will not be asked to do that, but we should be willing to. Since we ought to be willing to die for others, giving of our money and possessions to support kingdom work is a worthy response, a gracious expectation.

We may well have discovered that no, we are not investing for the long term.

Somewhere along the line we've gotten confused and believed the new age belief that we are born, we live and we fizzle. We can begin to invest like we know heaven is our home and the master will return and He will demand an accounting.

1 Cor. 4:1-2 states: **“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”** This reminds us that we are required to be faithful in our stewardship and there will be an accounting.

My prayer for FBC Carmi and Baptist Children's Home and Family Services is that we would have a problem like Moses had in Ex. 35 and 36. God through Moses commanded the Israelites to bring an offering for constructing the Tabernacle.....”Stop, more than enough to do the work.” Why? **They were thankful, faithful, and committed.**

Christians to reflect