

Entrepreneurial Christians

Matthew 25:31-46

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Let's talk about fear. It is all around us. These are fearful times for almost everyone but for us especially. Because we are acutely aware of the past and have seen continual versions of the same story. This time while it has reached a new level of evil we can only press forward if for no other reason that our children are looking to us to protect them, to embolden them and to give them the tools to fight the evil around us. Fighting evil with the tools of the evil cannot be the answer but fighting evil with the tools of the Lord cannot miss. So we come back again and again to the Bible to discover what success looks like and what we need to do to get to that place. And again we are not let down.

Our parable this lesson, the one on the use of Talents (which is a term for money and not our ability to sing or dance or anything like that).

The parable we heard from the gospel of Matthew is one of those lessons that may not be saying what we think it might be saying. This lessons appears to be about stewardship, doesn't it? Each of the servants were given a number of talents (money) by their master. One person received 5 talents, another 2 and the last one received 1. Jesus, in explaining this parable, said that each servant received talents according to their ability. So the owner must have known what each servant was capable of producing. The owner did not specifically tell the servants what to do with the money but they must have known. They knew the owner placed great value on money and they each wanted to do something that would place them in good standing. They wanted to do good.

The text tells us that two of the servants invested their money and earned an 100% profit. The one turned the 5 talents into 10 and the other servant who received 2 talents turned the 2 into 4. Wise investors. The owner must have known they would produce because he entrusted such large sums of money to these workers. We're not talking about \$5. Five talents did not equal 5 dollars but perhaps equaled something more like \$50,000.

We know from this parable that that one servant, the one who received 1 talent did not invest the money, rather he buried it for safekeeping.

Okay, here's another test to see if we watch the same TV shows. Who, other than myself, watches a show on the History Channel called *American Pickers*?

American Pickers is a show about 2 men who buy and trade salvage. They go into basements and barns looking for hidden treasures like old cars, bikes and toys things that many of us see as junk but they see beauty and value. They buy these items and they re-sell them, for profit, in one of their stores. There is one episode

where they were told a rare Indian motorcycle was buried in the backyard. The thing was that the property was no longer owned by a member of the family but that didn't stop Mike and Frank, that's their names, from asking the present homeowner if they could dig up her backyard to find the bike. She gave them permission after they promised to restore her yard and give her some money for allowing them on the premises. She agreed and we see Mike digging deep holes in the ground in an attempt to find this treasure. Darkness sets in but that didn't make a difference. They pulled their vehicles as close as possible and dug by the beam of the headlights.

Eventually, after more than a few hours of digging they found the motorcycle that had been taken apart and buried. Why was it even buried? It was buried because the owner of the motorcycle valued it so much he buried it to keep it safe; he buried it as a way of holding on to his investment. The owner was fearful that something would happen to this bike so he buried it to keep it safe.

Sounds like the 3rd servant in this parable, doesn't it? The servant buried the talents because he was afraid of disappointing the master whom he called a harsh man. Rather than take any chance of losing the money he opted to not gain any money and simply returned the talent back to the master.

Fear. It seems like this parable might be about being wise about using your gifts and repaying the Lord for the goodness we have received. But not this time. This parable is about people who live in fear. Fear that they might fail. Fear that they may look foolish. Fear that they might not be good enough. This parable is about people who fear of using the gifts they have received from God.

We all have received at least one gift but not all of us put that gift to use because we're not certain, we don't want to acknowledge or we are afraid to face our power and cleverness. Fear stops us from moving forward; fear stops us from bearing fruit.

How many people do you know who has a gift and do not use the gift for good? for either themselves, their family, their God or this planet? Some have natural gifts from God and can't seem to use them for good. Some have gifts they've had to work for either by training or education. But something seems to hold them back from using the gifts in a positive way. How many drug dealers do you think have excellent management and business skills that could be put to use in developing our community? How many people do you know have decent jobs but just can't manage to get to work on time or work hard or show initiative? How many people do you know who are underachievers; someone who should be able to do much better but for some reason seems to be stuck; not pushing themselves to do better or to do more?

That's this 3rd servant with the 1 talent. He could have done better but he didn't try; he gave back to the master exactly what was given to him and not one drop, not one penny was added. I don't know about you but I know people like that and at

some points in my life I have been that person. Sometimes these lessons can hit close to home.

This parable is about overcoming fear. This parable is about our finding a way to capitalize on what God has given us so we can give back to God more than what we have been given. This parable is about Entrepreneurial Christians.

You know what entrepreneur is. An entrepreneur is someone who takes risks so they can gain something greater. We are surrounded by entrepreneurs, people who are not afraid to take a chance that they might be successful. When I think of an entrepreneurial I think of someone like Loretta McMullen. A few years ago Loretta announced that she was starting a cleaning business. She has the gift; she enjoys the work and she can make an honest wage for doing an honest job. We've watched Loretta develop and grow her business. I doubt that she had a guarantee when she started that the business would be successful. I don't think she had any guarantees about this business except the guarantee of knowing that it would not work if she didn't try. But fear of the unknown, fear of trying, fear of failing has not stood in her way. Fear becomes secondary to opportunity. That's being an entrepreneur.

God is calling each of us to become this for our benefit and for God's blessing. You have your gift and you are called to being an entrepreneurs. You have gifts to advance the kingdom. On the day of judgment when your name is called you can say to God, look at what I have done with what you entrusted to me. You gave me a gift of a mustard seed and I watered it and pruned it and loved it; it grew into an 8 foot tall tree. It grew from a mustard seed to a majestic home for birds and a shelter from the sun for people. God has given you something modest and you can explode it into something large and beautiful and necessary. We don't have to squander our gifts. We can create something spectacular, something of value to God, and something of value to God's people and to God's church.

An entrepreneurial Christian is one who dreams and one who works and one who is not afraid to try or to fail. An entrepreneurial Christians believes that tomorrow can be different from today and work to make that happen. An entrepreneurial Christian will take the risk of stepping out on faith to do a good work. An entrepreneurial Christian knows that failure might be a possibility but see joy of the Lord as a promise. An entrepreneurial Christian looks like they're traveling alone but are traveling with the spirit of God and believe the promise that God will never leave nor forsake them. An entrepreneurial Christian gives their fear to Lord while placing their hands on the wheel to move this baby forward. They are not afraid to take action. They are resourceful and creative; making a way out of no way. They welcome change. They look forward to a challenge. And they recover quickly once knocked down. An entrepreneurial Christian focuses on what matters. Serving others and pleasing God. Creating a place a welcome. Being a port in the storm for the lost, the hopeless and the needy. Singing the Lord's song in and out of season. Praying the Lord's prayer while there is time to pray. Praising when it hopeless, shouting when joyful and singing when afraid.

This parable may not be directly about stewardship but it does speak about our being good stewards. This parable is about overcoming fear because the consequences of letting fear stop us from being our best selves means that we will face God empty handed. So when we hear the question-What have you done with the gifts I've entrusted to you? Anything other than showing a return on God's investment according to this parable, will not be sufficient; it cannot be enough.

Scripture puts it this way: 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.

If you don't produce you can't receive. We got the call; we got the gifts; we have the time. The time is now. To maximize the gifts God has given us; time to turn the gifts into profit for the Kingdom of God.

Time to step from fear to faith.