

“Let’s Get After It!”

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 " 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The date was September 22, 1776. A 21 year-old American soldier had been discovered and arrested as a spy, and he was due to be hanged on a British gallows. That was when Captain Nathan Hale rather famously stated, **“I only regret, that I have but one life to lose for**

my country.” Is it possible that you would have such a feeling and make a similar statement as a believer in Jesus? —It’s too bad that I have only this one life that I can live for God!

This story Jesus told obviously turns on the big difference between the two faithful servants and the one unfaithful servant. What was it that made such a difference in how they acted? It’s not really even suggested that the wicked servant was put off because the other two servants received more from their master. All three of them got a lot. Even conservative estimates would say that the value of the single bag of money was up around one million dollars.

But look what it says about those bags of money. **“A man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them”** (Matthew 25:14). The master **“entrusted them”** to his servants. If we’re going to let the Word of God have its way with us, we have to do some accounting—what gifts has God given to us? Your house is God’s. Your phone is God’s. Your car is God’s. Your kids are God’s. Your abilities are God’s. Your time is God’s. Your financial assets are God’s. If you can be the least bit kind and helpful to others, that gift came to you from God. If you can be compassionate when people are hurting, that gift came to you from God. The God who’s given you all you have wants to know—are you using all of it, every bit of it, to honor him? If you’re not, there’s hell to pay. It’s not just churches that get serious about stewardship when the leaves start falling off the trees. The Lord is always serious about how we manage what he entrusts to us. Seven times in the New Testament Jesus repeated that hell is a place of eternal darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth for those who rebel and turn away from God. The wicked servant’s rebellion was not dealing opioids that people overdosed on, not murder, not addiction to porn or booze—you know what his rebellion was? Doing nothing—not using God’s gifts for God’s glory. His rebellion was... “Leave me alone so I can do what I want!”

If you have a nice place to live, a nice car to drive, a nice TV to watch, that’s not necessarily wrong or sinful. If you enjoy taking trips or spending time enjoying your hobbies, that’s not necessarily wrong or sinful. All those things are gifts from God. Thank God for them and take good care of what God has given you. But also take inventory of every good thing he’s given you and figure out the answer to this question: How much of what God has given you have you buried in the ground of self-advancement or self-enjoyment rather than directing every gift you’ve been given toward the glory of God and the good of others? The first commandment that requires perfect love for God buries us in guilt that goes way over our heads. Here’s the thing about those two faithful servants. They weren’t perfect. They were

sinners, too. But their story started long before their master went on a journey and entrusted them with bags of money. There was something that was already firmly in place, something that had been created inside them, so that when they were entrusted with the master's property and the master traveled abroad, the first and only thing they could think to do was to devote themselves to activities and projects that would be pleasing to him when he returned. What do you think that something was?

In the news we see all kinds of disasters involving loss of life. You regularly see a close relative or family member still very much in the grieving process, trying to talk on camera about how much they loved the person(s) who died. When those tightest of family ties are severed by death, there's the worst kind of heartache. But even that example doesn't really hold a candle to the tightest of ties there has ever been, the eternal bond of love between God the Father and God the Son, love that is worlds stronger than a hurricane, love that words can't describe. When it came to the matter of having someone pay the eternal price for your sins, there were only two ways that it could go: either it would be you going to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, or it would be a pure and perfect substitute who would go to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth for you. Before you were born and before he created all things, God the Father had already made that choice. On Good Friday he acted on that choice. The thick, unbreakable cords of perfect and eternal love that bound the Father to the Son—God the Father sliced through those cords, severed them, and dropped his beloved Son into the torturous, darkness of Hell. Even in that hell of hells, with the guilt of everyone counted against him, Jesus did not gnash his teeth in anger against God. In silent suffering he was damned, and he died for you. Your Father in heaven kept you and cursed his Son.

That's the something those two faithful servants had inside of them, the knowledge of just how deep the Father's love was for them through Jesus. That's what they knew about him before he so generously entrusted his property to them. That's what drove them to devote themselves so completely to working for him while he was gone. Of all the things they could ever have had for themselves, hearing "well done" from him was better than anything. The master's great love was also what the wicked servant dismissed as irrelevant and meaningless. Tragically, he thought he had more important things to do rather than fulfill the purpose God gave to him – to use his time, talents, and money to glorify God and serve others.

In the vast array of gifts that God gives, he has distributed them in various kinds and in various amounts to all of you, because he knows just what you need to be able to serve him well. The only key that will ever turn over the engine and take you down the road of devoting

yourself to serving him with those gifts is how much the Father loves you through his Son Jesus. In this all-encompassing arena of making faithful use of God's gifts, love is what's in God's heart for you. Let it be love that is in your heart for him that motivates you to get after it when it comes to using your master's gifts. There need be no regrets that you've been given but one life to live for your Savior, because it's an eternal life that you've been given to live for your Savior. Remembering that, let's get after it! And let's embrace the 10 for 10 challenge that the Stewardship Ministry Action Team has laid before us and see how the Lord might bless it. Amen.