

Kingdom Truths For Today #1

We Are Stewards - Not Owners

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I. Introductory Remarks.

Matthew 25:14-15 *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.*

In the 25th chapter of Matthew we find three important parables; the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the talents and the parable of the sheep and goats. This chapter is a continuation of Matthew 24, which is one of the clearest portions of scripture in the whole Bible concerning the end time environment and those things that shall take place prior to the second coming of Christ. Jesus then goes on to use these three parables to illustrate to us how we should prepare for His Second coming. In these parables we find kingdom truths for the end of the age.

I believe it is God's ultimate desire to see His kingdom come with power and glory into the hearts of mankind everywhere, before His return, that the earth would be filled with His glory and power. In fact, He told us to pray in this manner.

Matthew 6:9-10 *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

In this message today, I would like to share with you from "The Parable of the Talents" the kingdom truth, "We are Stewards - Not Owners". I believe that this parable will show us that when we come to the full understanding and commitment of what this implies in our lives, we will see a greater measure of God's kingdom authority and power in our lives singularly and corporately.

My desire is for us to see and welcome this truth, that none of us are owners of anything. All that we have belongs to the Lord. We are stewards - not owners. If Jesus is truly the Lord of our lives, we will see ourselves as His stewards

rather than being owners of our possessions.

1. The Reading of the Parable - Matthew 25:14-30.

This parable teaches us that bringing our finances under Christ's Lordship is one of the most basic ingredients for having His Kingdom rule and authority established in our lives. In this parable, we must ask ourselves the question, "What is Jesus Talking About?" Is it how well we make financial investments or is it how well we manage and use what He has given to us for the glory of His Kingdom? Throughout this message we shall see the answer emerge.

Matthew 6:21 *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

We must see ourselves as being caught between the struggle between God and Satan in the area of whose authority is being established. Satan is using the love of money to establish his rule and authority in the hearts of mankind and God is using the kingdom truth of stewardship to instill His rule and authority in the hearts of mankind. The Bible tells us in the last days men shall be lovers of money. Jesus says, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."*

I want to share with you two Biblical illustrations that illustrate this truth very clearly -- one from the New Testament and one from the Old Testament.

II. Biblical Illustrations of How Financial Stewardship Equals Kingdom Authority and Power.

Let's keep in mind that God's ultimate goal in the earth is to bring the fullness of His Kingdom expression in power and authority, so that millions and millions of people will be ushered into His kingdom before His second coming and the judgment upon the earth.

1. New Testament Illustration - The Early Church.

The Book of Acts begins with a powerful display of God's power and authority being displayed not only in the hearts of these early followers, but also in the communities in which they lived. Whole cities were affected by the kingdom's rule and reign. 3000 men and their families were saved and brought into the kingdom on the Day of Pentecost and another 5000 men and their families a few days later.

Acts 5:15 ...so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

Acts 5:28 ...you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Acts 8:5-8 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

- **What was one of the major attitudes of these early disciples that caused God to work so powerfully in their lives?**
- **They gave up complete ownership of their lives**, knowing that God's complete rule and reign in their lives would bring them into a much richer blessing.

Acts 2:43-45 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:32-33 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

This is a heart attitude that God is looking for in His church in these last days. If we want to see Him work in us like He did in this early church, we must empty ourselves of the ownership that we put upon ourselves and all that we own. We must also see ourselves as stewards and not owners.

Our selfishness and refusal to bring our finances under His lordship is withholding His Divine power and reign upon the land and our communities. God's total kingdom rule cannot be established in our hearts until we empty ourselves of personal ownership and accept the fact that we are simply stewards of His goods. The choice is ours as the parable of the talents illustrates so clearly -- we can either be judged as worthy stewards, who receive a blessing or as unjust stewards who are cast into the place of outer darkness.

2. Old Testament Illustration - David's Preparation For The Temple.

One of the most beautiful illustrations that we have of this truth is the temple that Solomon built and the glory of his kingdom that overshadowed all of the other countries of his day. But we must see that the foundation of this temple was established by David with this same attitude of stewardship that Jesus spoke of in the parable and was lived out by the early disciples.

In 1 Chronicles 28 we find David's instructions to his son, Solomon to build the temple of God with its plans as well. In chapter 29 we find the heart attitude that was the foundation for the glory that came upon this temple when it was finished.

1 Chronicles 29:3 *"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver:*

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*

1 Chronicles 29:14 *But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.*

David was able not only to confess that he was a steward and not an owner, but he proved it through his obedience and grateful heart. He understood that this issue was one of the crucial tests that God uses to test the heart of man.

1 Chronicles 29:17 *"I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You.*

The end result of David's obedience through the emptying of himself and his possessions was a kingdom that was established under Solomon's reign that ruled with glory and power throughout the land.

2 Chronicles 5:13-14 *...indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking*

the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

2 Chronicles 9:22-23 *So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.*

III. Concluding Remarks - Haggai 1:4-10.

We may be the generation that shall witness the return of Jesus Christ and that Jesus wants and desires for each one of us to receive and welcome the truth from the parable of the talents so that His glory can be manifested throughout the earth so that millions and millions can be ushered into His kingdom before His Second Coming. We see this illustrated in the Book of Haggai.

Haggai 2:6-9 *"For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; {7} 'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. {8} 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. {9} 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."*

This kingdom truth is driven home one more time concerning what God desires to do in these last days. This passage is a prophetic passage of scripture of God's desire for the church at the end of the age, prior to the return of Christ. The foundation of this glory lies in the fact that God says, "the silver is mine, and the gold is mine". It's the same foundation that was in Solomon's temple and it's the same foundation that was part of the early church -- "We are Stewards - Not Owners".

Is this true in your life? In the next message I will be talking about how this practically works for God's people in today's world. How do we practically give up ownership of all that we have and become stewards without being an extremist or getting out of balance?

We will see that it is done through tithing, giving of offerings, giving of alms, helping the poor and managing our lives in such a way that we are not squandering the Lord's goods.