

Kingdom Truths For Today #2

Recognizing God's Ownership

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I. Introductory Remarks & Review.

Matthew 25:14 *"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.*

In this series of messages we are looking at the "Parable of the Talents" and discovering a very important kingdom truth that God is desiring for us to walk in. In the first message we saw how Jesus is using this parable to teach us to be stewards and not owners of what we possess. This is a kingdom truth for believers in today's world to get a grip on.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

The parable begins with the phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man". This is a kingdom truth that illustrates to us how God's kingdom authority, rule and reign comes more fully into our lives. As we began to see in the previous message, God's desire is for His kingdom to be established on earth as it is in heaven. In fact Jesus tells us this is what we should be praying for.

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

We also saw that this parable illustrates to us a basic attitude or characteristic that must be in our lives before God's kingdom rule can be firmly established in our lives -- which is "we are stewards - not owners". We saw that when the kingdom of God came with power and authority in the Book of Acts, this heart attitude was very evident in the lives of the early believers.

Acts 4:32 *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.*

We also saw that this was the heart attitude that went into the foundation for establishing Solomon's Temple with glory and power. His kingdom rule spread over the whole earth in his day.

1 Chron. 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.*

We learned that in order for God's kingdom to be established with power and authority, He must be able to make draws from His earthen and peculiar treasure in the earth. And when we withhold that which belongs to Him we are preventing His kingdom rule from being firmly established in the earth. Therefore we shouldn't be praying, "Thy kingdom come" unless we are willing to give abundantly to the work of the kingdom.

Milo Kauffman develops the thought stewardship when he writes: "Stewardship of possessions is the effect of God's saving grace upon one's self and his property...When God gets a man with a car He gets a car to be used in His service...Some seem to think of stewardship as a whip or as legal action to drive people to give to the expenses of the church. No doubt too often the attempt has been made to wring generous offerings from selfish souls. Christian stewardship most certainly is not church legislation nor a scheme to deprive men of their cash. It is the natural consequence of an experience with God - the natural reaction of the human heart that has been touched by the divine spirit. (Milo Kauffman, "The Challenge of Christian Stewardship," Herald Press, 1955, pp. 3,5)

II. Practicalities Of Recognizing God's Ownership.

In this message today I want to share with you what the Bible says concerning how we can practically make God the owner of all that we have. Is this true in your life? How do we practically walk in the kind of stewardship God desires for our lives 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?

Matthew 25:14-19 *"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. "Then he who had*

received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

This parable is about bringing our finances, our possessions, our gifts and our talents all under the Lordship of Jesus Christ by recognizing we are stewards and not owners. It's about investing all that we have in for the sake of His kingdom. How do we do that?

Matthew 6:19-21 *"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, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

With this in mind, let's look at some of the ways in which we invest the Lord's goods by laying up treasure in heaven and thus making Him the Lord of all that we have.

1. The Giving Of The Tithe Is The Foundation.

The giving of the tithe is the very foundation on which our stewardship of finances rests. It's when we give the 10th to Him before anything else is bought or paid for that we honor Him as Lord of our finances. By giving God the first fruits of our labor, we are investing in a continuous return for our investment.

Proverbs 3:9-10 *Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.*

Romans 11:16 *For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

The giving of the tithe was a part of the kingdom blessing in every major covenant that God has made with mankind.

- **Abraham** - gave a tithe and was extremely blessed in all that he did and was called the Father of our faith.
- **Jacob** - made a commitment to give the tithe even when he had nothing. His covenant with God gave birth to the nation of Israel through his twelve sons.

- **Moses** - Tithing was instituted as part of the Law of Moses under the covenant that God made with him.

Why is the tithe important?

Malachi 3:8-10 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.*

Malachi 3:11 *"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the LORD of hosts...*

- It's our response to God's Covenant and Divine ownership in our lives.
- It is a major part in bringing our lives under Christ's Lordship, which is really not an option.
- If the first fruit is holy, the whole lump will be holy. God will bless the 90%.
- It blesses the heart by making it receptive to God's will.
- It brings forth God's blessing in every area of our lives -- He rebukes the devourer.
- We are stealing from God when we withhold it.
- It blesses the church by enabling it to carry out a greater ministry.

Exodus 19:5-6 *`Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. `And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

2. Stewardship Involves the Giving of Offerings for Various Causes.

There are many things that come up in the life of the church that require special offerings in order to move forward with the vision and purpose for which God has called us. We must be willing to give towards these things as they come up, whether it be time or finances.

Luke 6:38 *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap*

sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.

In order to be a good giver you must, first of all, be a good manager of your budget and finances. If you are living beyond your means and running up bills on credit cards and spending your money lavishly on things you really don't need, you will never be able give beyond the tithe.

3. Stewardship Involves Giving To The Needs of the Poor.

Galatians 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Luke 12:32-34 *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. "Sell what you have and **give alms**; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Alms are kind deeds arising out of compassion, mercy and pity for the unfortunate. In the Old Testament the law prescribed gleanings from the harvest, the vineyards, and the grain in the corners of the field for the poor. Almsgiving in the New Testament was of two kinds: "alms of the dish," food and money received daily for distribution; and "alms of the chest" coins received on the Sabbath for widows, orphans, strangers and the poor. Practice in the New Testament Church is foreshadowed in the admonition of Jesus "give alms of such things as you have."

John strongly exhorts us in his epistle as to the importance of giving to those who have need of food and other kinds of assistance. Stewardship involves giving to these needs when it is in your power to do so.

1 John 3:16-17 *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

4. Stewardship Involves Giving of Your Gifting In God.

1 Peter 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as*

good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

III. Concluding Remarks.

In closing, I want to emphasize that God only expects you to give according to your ability. It is equal sacrifice not equal giving. It is when your total finances are brought under the Lordship of Christ that God is able to bless you in ways that you are able to give more towards the work of the kingdom. As you do this God blessings continue to abound in your life and you find yourself in the position of being a steward and not an owner of what you have.

Deuteronomy 16:17 "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

Charles Swindoll writes, "I have been thinking about why the Scriptures teach 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" "Why is it that giving is preferred to receiving? Here are a few reasons that have come to my mind."

- Giving encourages unselfishness within us.
- Giving brings others needed relief and encouragement.
- Giving forces us out of our own tight-radius world.
- Giving keeps us from becoming too attached to material things.
- Giving models the life Christ lived.
- Giving results in eternal rewards.
- Giving teaches us the value of servanthood.
- Giving makes us more cheerful, caring people.
- Giving prompts greater sensitivity toward others.
- Giving provides an example for others to follow.

No wonder the apostle Paul wrote that *"God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7b).