

INTRODUCTION

According to Luke 12:40-48, Jesus is telling us we are all to be managers of important resources. Some people do a good job, and others are poor spiritual managers. Which kind are you?

Beginning in verse 35, Jesus warns His disciples to be ready for His return. Then in verse 40, He says,

"You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?" The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. For everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

In this parable, Jesus is the Master who has returned to heaven, but one day He is coming again. We are the servants who have been entrusted by Him to do His work. Jesus *is* coming back, and He if came today, what kind of servant would you be? First, let's look at

I. THE MARKS OF A GOOD SERVANT

In verse 42 Jesus asks the question, "Who is the faithful and wise manager?" Then He proceeds to answer His own question. Look at the two qualities of a faithful and wise servant:

1. A good manager of God's resources

The Master has left each servant with some resources and has left Him in charge of a certain job. If you are a believer, Jesus has done the same for you. Everything good in your life has come as a gift from God. But it's not yours to *own* it's only yours to manage. You may disagree, and say, "That's not so! I own a piece of property, my name is on the deed, I paid for it. That's why they call it REAL estate—and it's mine to do with as I please!" Okay, if you think you own it, then I want to see you come back in a thousand years and claim it. You don't own it; you are only allowed to "manage" it for a few years, like the previous "owner" and the "owner" before that! The question the Master will ask you when He returns is "Have you been a good manager of the resources I gave you?"

(a) Time

Let me give you three areas for you to consider if you are being a good manager. First, are you being a good manager of your time? God is going to give you around 70 or 80 years of time in this world. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:16 we should be "redeeming the time because the days are evil." When the Lord asks you how well you managed the time He gave you, how will you reply?

What if every morning when you woke up, you found \$1,440 cash in your pocket or purse? The only condition is, you lose all the money you don't spend that day. Do you think you would have any trouble spending \$1,440 that day? I imagine you would be careful to spend almost all of it every day! For some of you, it would only last a couple of hours in a nice store. Wouldn't it be fun to try?

In reality, God does that for you every single day of your life. Oh, He doesn't give you dollars; He gives you something more valuable than that: Time. Every day, God gives you 1,440 minutes. Are you spending them wisely? Are you being faithful to the Master in how you invest your time?

Are you wasting your time on things that don't really matter in light of eternity? In this life, there are only two things we deal with that are eternal: The Word of God, and the souls of men and women. Think about it, the best way to spend your God-given time is by investing it in the Word of God or the souls of men and women. Are you a good time manager or are you involved in so many frivolous sideshows you can't focus on the main thing?

(b) Talents

Second are you being a good manager of your talents? God gave you some natural abilities at your physical birth, and He gave you some spiritual gifts, or supernatural abilities at your spiritual birth. Are you using your abilities to serve the Lord, or to serve your own interests?

Some of you think there's nothing you can do for the Lord. You are so shy you'd be afraid to lead in silent prayer in the nursery! But God *has* given you some special abilities. One of the things I'm teaching in our new member training each quarter is that each Christian is totally unique within the Body of Christ. You have a special SHAPE nobody else has, that's why you are needed. Your "SHAPE" comes from a combination of five factors that spell the word "SHAPE." Your shape is determined by your Spiritual Gifts; your Heart (or your passion); your Abilities (natural); your Personality type; and your Experiences. When you consider those five variables, there is nobody else like you in our church. That's why God is going to hold you accountable. God may not have called you to preach, but He *has* put you in charge of *something*—are you being a faithful, wise, manager?

(c) Treasure

Third, are you being a good manager of your treasure? God has given everyone of us some financial or material resources. Remember, it *all* belongs to God, but He has allowed us to

manage some of it for a while. The Master is coming back, will He find you've been a wise manager or will you be a mis-manager?

I recently talked about trusting God enough to give Him a tithe. It wasn't a message on tithing; it was a message on trusting. Every year I get four or five letters exactly like the one I'm going to read. I'm not going to use the names, but I have gotten their permission to share the highlights of their letter:

"Dear Pastor, Tithing is one of the subjects that my wife and I have been struggling with for a couple of years. Our biggest question was always, 'How can we afford to give 10% to the Lord, when our finances are so tight, and we don't have the money to give?' We began to see that one reason our finances were in the state they are because we were not honoring God in that area. Through your message, we decided to trust God and to give our tithe FIRST instead of giving the leftovers.

It was so hard to give up control and to trust God. But I read a statement the very day I wrote the tithe check that said, "Trust involves letting go and knowing that God will catch you." It's hard for me to write this without crying, but about 10 days after we tithed, my wife learned that she had gotten a raise at work—and that it was retroactive for the previous year! I guess it was God's way of telling us we COULD trust Him! Thanks for being obedient to God and preaching the truth even if it is not popular."

Somebody else wrote me and reminded me of the "big shovel" principle in Luke 6:38. Jesus said, "Give and it will be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together, running over—for the same measure you use it will be given to you." This person wrote, "I keep shoveling it out to God, and He keeps shoveling it back to me—and His shovel is a lot bigger than mine!"

Look again at verse 43. Jesus said that when the Master returns it will be *good* for that servant. But verse 44 also gives another mark of a good servant. If you are a faithful and wise manager, you will be

2. Given greater responsibilities

Jesus said the Master will give that good servant a greater responsibility. There is a very important managerial principle at stake here. Jesus expressed it in Luke 16:10: "Whoever can be trusted with very little, can be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

This is true in business just like it's true in spiritual life. I read once about a group of executives who were discussing promoting a certain worker to a place of much greater responsibility and much greater salary. They took a break for lunch and one of the executives just happened to be eating lunch at the same cafeteria where the worker was in line. The worker didn't know his boss was in line behind him, and he didn't know he was being considered for a promotion. This was one of those cafeterias where you had to pay a few cents extra if you wanted small pats of butter for your bread. This particular worker took two or three pats of butter and slid them under the edge of his plate, obviously trying to hide them so he wouldn't have to pay for them. The

executive watched as he reached the cashier, and the cashier never saw the butter and the worker never volunteered the information.

After lunch the executive informed the rest of the group the man wasn't their choice for a promotion. He said, "If he will steal a few cents from a cafeteria, he'll steal more than that from our company."

Jesus said if you are faithful in the small things, He'll give you greater responsibility. There have been plenty of times when I've failed the Lord, but I've tried to always be faithful to my calling to preach. I started preaching when I was 17 years old. My first sermon was on a Wednesday night at Pea Ridge Baptist Church in South Alabama. There were seven people present, but I preached the message as if there were thousands there. In fact, I had memorized parts of a Billy Graham sermon he had preached in a stadium. At the end of message I got so carried away I said, "In just a moment I'm gong to give the invitation. Hundreds are going to come forward in this holy moment!"

My first church was Carolina Baptist Church in South Alabama, where they would have about a 100 folks on a really good Sunday. But I served there as if it was the greatest privilege on earth—and I thought it was. This is the fourth church I've served as pastor, and in every church, I've been as happy as a puppy in a room full of slippers. I could be content to have stayed in each of those three previous churches until Jesus returns or until I died. I've just tried to be faithful to preach the Word and love the people. I stand in awe when I pause to think God has brought me from that little church in South Alabama, to preaching to several thousand folks in person every Sunday, and several million by way of television.

You may not be called to preach like me, but if you are faithful to manage the gifts and resources God has given you, He will open up greater opportunities for you. I wish I could end this message here. But in the text, Jesus also points out that some servants are irresponsible managers. They are bad servants. Let's look at the

II. THE MISTAKES OF A BAD SERVANT

In the parable, there was another servant who was left in charge to manage some of the Master's resources as well. But he makes a terrible miscalculation in verse 45. He says, "My master is taking a long time in coming." Sometimes Christian servants make the same mistake as well. A bad servant

1. Acts as if Jesus isn't returning soon

Some who claim to be Christians, aren't living lives that are pleasing to the Lord. They act as if this life is all there is. When you tell them Jesus is going to return and they'd better get ready, they just laugh it off. They know Christians have been saying, "Jesus is coming soon" for many centuries!

I love the story of the woman driving through the mountains west of Denver when she ran into a snowstorm. Then she peered ahead and saw a snowplow. What luck! She kept as close to the

machine as she could while it removed snow from the road. At times the heavy snowfall almost cut off her view, but for over an hour she kept following her faithful guide. After some time, the plow stopped, and its driver got out and walked over to her car. “Lady, where are you going?” he asked. “I’m on my way to Denver,” she replied. “Well, you’ll never get there following me! I’m plowing this parking lot! Too many people are following the wrong directions. Some people say, “Live it up! Just have fun, this life is all there is!” That’s bad advice to follow!

(a) Hurts others

There are a couple of things that give a bad servant away in this text: A bad servant is someone who hurts others. This servant began to beat and mistreat the other servants. There’s always someone out there waiting to beat up on you. Two boys were arguing in the school playground. One of them said, “My dad can beat up your dad!” The other kid said, “Big deal. My MOM can beat up my dad!”

A true servant cares about the needs and feelings of others, but a bad servant thinks only about himself. There are some people who go through life leaving a trail of bloody relationships behind them. They make bad decisions and it ends up hurting many other folks. If you believe Jesus could return at any moment, you will treat others with kindness. But if you think He’s not coming back, you won’t have the same regard and care for others.

(b) Hurts self

A poor servant is also someone who hurts self. Verse 45 also says that this bad servant ate and drank and even got drunk. There’s nothing wrong with eating, but the word here infers that he overate. He had no personal discipline, no self-control. He abused his body by overeating and by getting drunk. It’s a sad picture of a lazy, undisciplined servant who does things harmful to his own body.

One of the things God has given you is your body. In order to be a good manager of your physical body, you should not subject it to anything that harms it. That includes overeating, ingesting harmful toxins, or even over working until you harm your body from a lack of rest.

Sometimes you’ll hear someone say something brilliant like, “Well, it’s my body. I can do with it what I desire! If I want to do drugs, or get drunk, that’s MY choice, because it’s MY body!” Wrong. If you claim to be a Christian, your body belongs to God. Paul writes, “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you? ... you are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (I Corinthians 6:19-20) Next, a bad servant:

2. Forgets that there will be a payday–someday

Just picture that lazy, abusive servant sitting around drunk, having a great time. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the Master returns. What a shock! Look at verse 46. Jesus said the Master would take immediate action. He would cut him to pieces (probably a reference to using a whip), and assign him a place (don’t you expect him to say “unemployed?”)—with the *unbelievers*. A lot of

people who claim to know Jesus and claim to be His servant are really deceiving themselves. Even though they have a job within the Master's house, their behavior gives them away. They aren't true servants or true believers. They think everything is fine, until it's time for a true accounting. There will be a payday—someday.

You may be cruising along in your life thinking everything is fine. But one day, the expert accountant will judge every one of us: the Lord God Almighty. You can't hide behind your shell corporations or your funny numbers. You can fool some of the people all of the time, and perhaps you can fool all of the people some of the time ... but *you can't fool God any of the time!* You *will* be held accountable before God. Are you incredibly nervous about facing a Holy God who does not tolerate sin, but is full of mercy and forgiveness? There's a couple of quick lessons we can learn from what Jesus said in verses 47 - 48.

(a) Direct disobedience receives the harshest punishment

Jesus said the servant, or person, who had been informed of the Master's will, and refused to obey, would be beaten with many blows. The principle is simple: the more truth you have been exposed to, the greater your responsibility to obey that truth. But then, Jesus introduces another category in verse 48. What about the servant who didn't know what he was supposed to do? Would he be excused? No. He would be punished, too, but with fewer blows.

(b) Ignorance is no excuse!

The principle can be stated this way: Ignorance is no excuse! Suppose you are stopped by a policeman and informed you were going 55 in a 35 mph zone. You could say, "But officer, I didn't *know* this was a 35 mph speed zone, I never saw the sign." Is he going to say, "Oh, then that's okay, no problem, just take it easy?" Don't bet on it. He'll more likely say, "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." God is the same way. By the way, my favorite story like that came from a state trooper friend of mine in Alabama who stopped a little lady and informed her she was going 60 mph. She smiled and said, "That's ridiculous, sonny, I haven't even been driving an hour!" He laughed so hard; he DID let her go with a warning.

In Matthew's gospel, we see the same reaction from the Master who left and gave each one of his servants a certain amount of money. Two of the servants invested the money and put it to work to earn more for the Master. But one of the servants buried the money and gave the original amount back to the Master. He wasn't happy. Notice Matthew 25:26-30: His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! ... You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest ... throw that servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Not only was the servant lazy, according to Jesus, he was wicked as well. Jesus is coming back are you ready to meet Him? Are you a wise, faithful servant? Or are you disobeying the master? Maybe you think you will stand before God and plead ignorance saying, "But God, I didn't *know* I had to turn from my sins and put my faith in Jesus!"

Here's His message to you today: **The more I've been given, the more God expects of me!** That's true of churches and individuals. Since Green Acres has been blessed with so many workers, and so many resources, God expects more of us than 99% of the churches in America. As I've said before, not many churches in America could adopt an entire city in Asia and make a profound difference there, but Green Acres has been blessed, so it's expected of us.

It's true of you personally. You've been given an ability to serve, God expects you to serve. You've been blessed financially, God expects you to give. You've been blessed with the truth of God's Word, He expects you to obey. That's the cycle God expects. He gives, you give, He gives more, you give more—and remember, His shovel is bigger than yours!

On the morning of September 11, Todd Beamer never dreamed he would be called upon to put his life on the line that day. Todd was on board United flight 93 that was hijacked by a group of militant Islamic terrorists. He used the phone in the seat back to talk to a GTE operator and told her what was going on. He informed her they had been hijacked but a group of passengers were preparing to jump the hijackers. He and the operator prayed the Lord's Prayer together and then the operator overheard Todd leading the other passengers in reciting the 23rd Psalm. As they got to the verse that says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me..." I wonder what went through Todd's mind? When they finished the 23rd Psalm, Todd's last words were, "Help me Jesus. Are you guys ready? Let's roll."

From the recently released cockpit voice recordings, we know Todd and a few other passengers stormed the cockpit and in the struggle the jet crashed in a Pennsylvania field rather than being flown into the Capitol Building or the White House. The split second after Todd died, I believe Jesus welcomed him into heaven and perhaps said something like, "Greater love has no man than this that a man will lay down his life for his friends—well done, good and faithful servant."

Todd had no idea his words "let's roll" would become a slogan for America's fight against terrorism, or that his prayer and faith would serve as a testimony to millions of people. Todd's wife, Lisa wrote, "The words of Genesis 50:20 have continually come to my mind since September 11th, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'" Todd's sacrifice has already resulted in the saving of many lives. God is looking for a few more Todd Beamers—will you be one? Are you ready to roll?

Once again, the thing that makes Christianity unique is that Jesus didn't just come to institute a new series of teaching or a new model of ethical behavior. He came to die for you. In an interview with Cal Thomas, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft said: "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends His Son to die for you."

The most valuable thing God has given to us today is His precious son Jesus. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that HE gave his one and only son; that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) God has given you access to Bibles, there are churches on every corner in Tyler and there are Christian radio and television broadcasts. He has

given you many opportunities to follow Him—are you being obedient to the truth you've received? Are you ready for Jesus to return?

OUTLINE

I. THE MARKS OF A GOOD SERVANT

1. A good manager of God's resources

- a. Time?
- b. Talents?
- c. Treasure?

2. Given greater responsibilities

"Whoever can be trusted with very little, can be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." *Luke 16:10*

II. THE MISTAKES OF A BAD SERVANT

1. Acts as if Jesus isn't returning soon

- a. Hurts others
- b. Hurts self

2. Forgets that there will be a payday—someday

- a. Direct disobedience receives the harshest punishment
- b. Ignorance is no excuse!

His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! ... You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest ... throw that servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matthew 25:26-30*

GOD'S MESSAGE TO ME:

THE MORE I'VE BEEN GIVEN —THE MORE GOD EXPECTS OF ME!



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes