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A Steward's Mindset: Faithful, Loyal, Joyful

Matthew 25:14-30

Prayer: *Father God, we do thank you, we praise you, we bless you, we glorify you. We thank you for the gift of your Son, we thank you for the gift of your word, we thank you for the gift of corporate worship in the body of Christ, and Lord, this morning we are at that part of our worship where we open up your book, we look into it and we seek to learn and to grow from it; and so I pray this morning as we begin that exercise, that your Holy Spirit would guide us, that you would empower us, that you would give us the ability to hear your word, understand it and again, make it a permanent part of our lives. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, last week, I said something that I say actually very frequently. I said that we were in a proxy war. One definition of a proxy war or proxy warfare is a war that results when opposing powers use third parties as substitutes for fighting each other directly. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness have been locked in this battle for eons, and we are the third-party

participants in this war. Jesus Christ, God himself, left heaven and came to earth to lead us and join us in this war. But you know, much of this war is fought on the level of propaganda. The enemy never rests in his battle to undermine everything the kingdom of God declares or stands for, and that includes the series that we are going to revisit this morning. It is a series about a foundational part of our faith, and just like the other parts, this one has seen the enemy's attack on many, many different fronts. It is attacked because it, too, defines our spiritual health. And the subject is stewardship. And the measure of the effectiveness of the enemy's attack is that when most of us hear the term "stewardship," what's the first thing you think of? Uh-oh, this going to be about money. Stewardship Sunday is when the church speaks all about budgets and pledges and fund drives, and that tends to send a very wrong message because stewardship is so much greater than giving money. First and foremost, stewardship is an attitude. It is a sense of kingdom citizenship and responsibility.

Just last week we came back to the United States from Canada and of course we had to go through Customs, they asked us the standard questions, they were wanting to make sure that we were actually citizens of the United States. Understandable. Most folks don't understand that there are spiritual kingdoms as well as physical

kingdoms and that the spiritual citizenship of every person born is either in one kingdom or another. You are either a citizen of the kingdom of light or of the kingdom of darkness. And ever since Satan was thrown out of heaven and cast to earth, he's been establishing his kingdom of darkness against God's kingdom of light. And propaganda is his stock in trade. I mean understand, Satan was called by Jesus himself the father of lies because deception is how he fills up his kingdom. Jesus said in John 8:44: *"When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* Satan successfully deceived Adam and Eve into breaking their covenant with God in the Garden of Eden, so they became the very first inhabitants of this kingdom of darkness, and every subsequent son or daughter of Adam and Eve is born a citizen of that dark kingdom. Adam and Eve gave up their perfection and the perfection of every one of their offspring when they fell, and because of that, every one of us is born with a fallen human nature that spiritually arrives kicking and screaming against our creator. We just don't realize it. We don't know it because we have been successfully propagandized by the enemy. That's why God says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, he says this: *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

You see, instead of there being just two kingdoms, the enemy has successfully promoted the idea that there are three. There's the kingdom of light, there's the kingdom of darkness, and there's this vast other kingdom that consists of the undecided or the uncommitted or maybe even just the uninterested, and that simply isn't true. I will grant you that many folks never give a thought to the idea that they live in a spiritual kingdom, but the fact is that most folks who believe in God think in terms that the enemy has come up with instead of God. They give -- if they give any thought at all to spirituality, they usually break it into three separate categories: They think there are good people, there are bad people, and then there's the average normal person.

First there's this division between good people and bad people. Good people are in this tiny category of established saints, you know, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, people who on the whole have led what they consider to be such exemplary lives that of course they believe those good lives will entitle them to go to heaven. Then there's bad people. Bad people are those who are murderers, rapists, drug dealers and the like who have so many bad and evil deeds in their life that they are likely to go to hell. The vast majority of people, these folks believe, are in a third category, some type of spiritually neutral place. These are folks that hope that when they get to the judgment seat, if there

really is one, that God will see their good deeds and balance them against their bad deeds, and if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, hopefully they will make it into heaven. In the meantime, they simply hope for the best. That's mythology. That's propaganda.

See, the real mythology is that folks believe there are good folks, there are bad folks and there are spiritually neutral folks. The devil, again, the father of lies, he loves that propaganda. Fact is, there is no such thing as a neutral zone. There are only two kingdoms and there are only two choices, and every one of us was born into the kingdom of darkness, and only those who have been ransomed and rescued by Christ have ever left that kingdom. We are either a child of God in the kingdom of light or an enemy of God in the kingdom of darkness. Listen to Paul's description of who we used to be before God rescued us. This is Ephesians 2, he says: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is at work in the sons of disobedience -- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* What God is saying here is that we were all at one point walking, living, dead men spiritually. Dead men and women, zombies to the gospel if you

will -- that's for you, Tom. What is the gospel? The gospel is that Jesus Christ, God himself became a man, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life and then went to the cross and offered up his perfect life in exchange for our sin so that by faith we, too, could be perfect. When Jesus saved us out of the kingdom of darkness and brought us into his kingdom of light, he made us brand new creatures. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* And what makes us new creatures is this presence of God's Holy Spirit who now lives inside us.

You know, in the Old Testament, God lived in a Temple made out of wood and stone. Today in the New Testament, he lives inside human beings. He calls us living stones. He lives inside the redeemed. And when God's Spirit takes up residence in us, he changes our thoughts, our drives, our appetites, and our passions. Our new passion becomes the kingdom of God. Stewardship is simply a measure of that passion. It defines how much you own the kingdom of God and how much the kingdom of God owns you.

Randy Alcorn defines stewardship by saying this, he says:

"Stewardship isn't a subcategory of the Christian life.

Stewardship is the Christian life. For what is stewardship but that God has entrusted to us: Life, time, talents, money,

possessions, family, and his grace. In each case he evaluates how we regard and what we do with what he's entrusted to us." You see, stewardship is not an optional part of salvation any more than breathing is an optional part of living. If you are a child of God, you are first and foremost a steward. Jesus explained this again and again and again in three different parables about stewardship. In Luke 16 and Luke 19 and Matthew 25, he told us stories, and they were stories about the importance of stewardship, and in each of these stories we see a very wealthy man trusting his wealth to various stewards and the consequence of those stewards' responses. Luke 16 features a shrewd steward. Luke 19 has ten stewards, each one given a mina which is about three months' wage, and Matthew 25 is the parable of the talents where one steward receives five talents, one steward receives two, and another one gets only one. These parables are stories designed by God to give us insight into how he sees and perceives stewardship. And over the next few weeks, we'll take a look at these stories and we want to see how God's perception lies on how stewards think, how they plan, and how they act.

This morning I want to consider how stewards think. And to do that, we need to look at Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. Let's do that. This is Matthew 25, verses 14-30. It says this, this is Jesus' words: *"For it will be like a man going on a*

journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reaped where I have not sown and gather where I

scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

That's a tough story. It's really the story of two stewards and one imposter. And most of the story is devoted to the imposter. It is a tragedy not because the steward was an imposter but because he never knew it until it was too late. The parable brings up a huge question, and it gives us a very important answer to the question: What is a steward? It's a question that often divides people into two groups. You've got the legalists on one side who demand performance at all cost, and you have the easy believers on the other side who say well, Jesus did it all. And both miss the mark. You see, stewardship is not about performance or non performance; it is about attitude. The false steward wasn't cast into darkness because his performance did or did not fail. He was cast out because his performance meant nothing to him. It is incredibly important to see that distinction. You see, Christians are new creatures who have God himself living inside them and that

changes how they think, how they plan, and how they act. Today it is frighteningly easy to kid yourself into thinking that that has happened when it really never has. You see, when it really has happened, we operate with the kingdom as our priority. We think like stewards think. Instead of me being at the center of my being, there is God and his kingdom. The presence of God's Spirit changes my thinking from flesh-based to spirit-based. Romans 8:5-9 describes this process, it says: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* You know what the biggest and most important word in that statement is? The most critical word is the two-letter word "if." It defines whether or not you are a Christian. What this text is saying is if the Spirit of God isn't in you, you could be the chairman of the deacon board, a Sunday school teacher, even a pastor, if the Spirit of God is not in you, you are not one of His. On the other hand, if the Spirit lives in you, God's word says you will have certain identifying

characteristics, certain proofs that God really is alive within you. And one of them is what Romans 8 identifies, we call it a "mindset." Again, Romans says: *Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*

When we look, we see a spiritual mindset was precisely what was missing from the mind of the false steward. He was centered on himself. He didn't think like a steward thinks, so his master and his master's kingdom meant almost nothing to him. He didn't squander, he didn't embezzle, he didn't steal his master's talent. He just didn't care to do anything with it. See, stewardship is about ownership. And if we look at the parable of the talents, we can identify what real ownership of the kingdom entails. We can also see that two of the stewards had it, and one didn't. Two of them were faithful, loyal, and joyful in their stewardship. One of them was not. And so by looking at these stewards, we can ask ourselves two very vital questions to determine if we are true or false stewards.

The first question is this: How does a steward think? What's inside his head? What is his mindset? And is that how I think? Is that my mindset? Well, the first and most obvious mindset of a steward is faithfulness, and God makes that clear. You see, all three of the stewards were given very different resources. One is

given five talents, one is given two talents, one has given only one. So each has a different level of responsibility and each have different levels of response. However, the master judges them not on the basis of performance but on the basis of faithfulness. Now, the implications of this difference are huge. What this does from God's perspective is level the playing field for everyone. You see, our view of stewardship, that is, our view of what makes a successful manager is based on competition, it's based on performance, it's based on results. In our mind, a good steward is a good manager. He produces a healthy bottom line, period. God's view of stewardship is based solely on faithfulness. Man's view is always relative to somebody else. God's view is relative only to the resources that He has given to us.

For example, a brilliant, gifted speaker can look very impressive compared to a tongue-tied, unsophisticated country preacher, but see it how God sees it. You know, the brilliant speaker and the country preacher both answer not to a standard of performance but to one of faithfulness. By that criterion, what you do performance wise matters far less than your mindset, the how and the why of what it is you're doing. A brilliant, gifted speaker might impress us with half an effort, and a tongue-tied country preacher might fall short, giving it all that he's got. If the criterion is performance, he fails. However, if the criterion is faithfulness,

if he is doing the very best that he can with what God has given to him, he succeeds. And the only two parties who will really know if their actions were a success or failure is the God who gives him the resources and the ones who receive it. They are the only ones who know if they've been faithful. I or anyone else for that matter could fool you with my performance. I could make you think I'm faithful with a half-hearted performance if I've got the resources. The only one that I can't fool is the one who knows precisely what my resources are. And he judges me like he judges all stewards, by my faithfulness with those resources. The five talent steward earned five more talents and he was told, "*Well done good and faithful servant.*" And the two talent servant earned two more talents, that's really less than half the results of the five talent steward, yet he received the exact same response, "*Well done good and faithful servant.*" The reason why he got that response was because he was faithful to his resource.

Now the trouble starts in this story when we start to look at the one talent servant. You see, a level playing field cuts two different ways. You know, the one talent servant, he got only one-fifth of the resources of the five talent servant and half the resources of two talent servant, and so we could agree, relatively speaking, he got the short end of the stick. God judges by faithfulness and not by performance, so resources actually mean

nothing. You know, what do you suppose the master would have said if the one talent servant had produced one additional talent? Would he have berated him for getting only one-fifth of the five talent steward or one-half of the two talent steward? Well, the answer's no. No doubt he would have said what he said to the other stewards, he would have said, *"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."* He would have said that because faithfulness is what matters here.

Let me make this practical. The church has five talent, two talent, and one talent stewards. It has no "no talent" stewards. The problem is many one talent servants think like the one talent servant did. You know, it's not a five, it's not a four, it's not a two, it's only a one. Therefore it's not really worth investing. You know, if I was a five, even if I was a two, I'd do something but I'm just a one, what's a one worth? That's a disastrous way to think. That's how false stewards think. You see, the vast majority of any church consists of one talent servants, and if they understand that faithfulness and not performance is what God judges by, then five, two, or one, it makes no difference at all. What you do with whatever God gives you is what matters, and it matters immensely to God, because it is the measure of your faithfulness.

Let me give you another practical example. Here at the church, I'm the pastor. I'm the one who's been given the five talents, and I'm going to have to answer to God for those five talents but, you know, I also volunteer once a week at the Tri-States Crisis Pregnancy Center, you know they decided a while ago that it would be a good thing if a man were there on a regular basis if just in case a man came there accompanied by his girlfriend or his wife and wanted another man to counsel with. So I offered to come in for a couple of hours once a week just to establish the presence of a man in case someone shows up there. I've been doing this for quite a while now, and so far there's only been two occasions where I've even had an opportunity to speak to a man. So I'm there and I'm there more or less as a fixture with nothing to do but be a presence in case some guy shows up. But the women there are not ones to waste any resources whatsoever, so my primary job there has been putting together cribs and checking to see whether or not the hardware is right for each and every crib, putting garbage in the debris box and changing the fluorescent light bulbs because I'm the tallest one there. Now, there's no question in my mind that all the tasks that have been given there are one talent tasks. But I'm a pastor. I'm a five talent guy. I'm supposed to give fancy sermons. I'm supposed to counsel people. Well, not at Tri-State. At Tri-States, I'm a one talent guy. I can honestly say that I

delight in being there because I know that God's not looking for production, he's looking for faithfulness, and my goal at the Tri-State Pregnancy Center is to be faithful. It's God's job to do the rest.

See, the one talent servant, he never got that. Because he only received one talent, he hid that talent in the ground. It was only one talent, so he thought he could ignore it. Because he never had a servant's heart, he never saw faithfulness as something of value, something personal between him and God. It was something he couldn't see and he couldn't see it because he never, never had the mindset for it. And the reason he had no mindset for it is because the Spirit of God was not inside him. He was a false steward. Let me read you Romans 8:5 again: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. The Spirit of Christ did not belong to the false steward. He wasn't a faithful steward*

because there was no faith there to begin with, and he was cast out because he was never an owner of the kingdom in the first place.

Now, the second characteristic of a steward's thinking or mindset is loyalty. The false steward had divided loyalties. How do we know that? Well, first of all, the scriptures says the master gave the servants the talents and then he went away on a long journey. Let's just put this in context. If I gave you instructions to invest something for me and I wrote you a check, I came back two years later, I found that you never even cashed the checks, I would ask what have you been doing? I mean, I'd be right in assuming you had something else on your agenda. But there's far more to it than that. You see, the false steward demonstrated the classic symptoms that Jesus said a servant with two masters has. Jesus in Matthew 6 explains what happens to a person who has divided loyalties. He said in Matthew 6:24: *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* Here's the point about loyalty. The false servant didn't merely disobey his master; the false servant despised his master. In fact, he despised him so much he couldn't keep his mouth shut. Remember, the mind set on the flesh is what? It's hostile to God. So the false steward uses the occasion of his own judgment to launch an attack on his master. It says this: *"He who had also*

received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is your's.'" Translation, what he is saying is, "I happen to know that you're a bully, a fraud, and a thief and I have every single right to be frightened of you. So here, here's your money back." You know, hatred can make you say things you know you shouldn't even while you are being judged. If you think that can't happen, consider this following Reuters story. This is a story from Spain. It says man on trial for threats to judge threatens judge. Not the brightest bulb. Says: A Basque separatist prisoner on trial for threatening to kill a judge on Thursday told a presiding judge he would shoot him and "skin him alive," risking yet another jail sentence. Ignacio Javier Bilbao Goikoetxea, a convicted murderer and member of armed separatist group ETA, kicked the dock's bullet-proof screen and launched a torrent of abuse that Judge Alfonso Guevara and Baltasar Garzon, the judge he had threatened at a previous trial who was appearing as a witness. "If you're a man, come here. I'm going to skin you alive. Come here if you've got the nerve. I look forward to shooting you seven times when I get my hands on you," the shaven-head Bilbao told Guevara in the Madrid courtroom. It's the second time he has been tried for threatening Garzon after he had been jailed two years at a previous trial.

You see, hatred can make us say incredibly stupid things. Most of us will never reach that level of hatred but it all starts with resentment. The false steward resented the service that the true stewards loved. How do I know that? Well, let's look at the third mindset of a steward. The first is that he serves faithfully, knowing that faithfulness is God's measure of success. Secondly, he serves loyally, knowing that split loyalties produce resentment and hatred; and finally he serves joyfully, and here's why. You see, if I know that my emptying garbage cans is as important and as meaningful as somebody else preaching, teaching, or leading in a church, I can do whatever my job is with joy. Francis Schaeffer pointed this out when he said, "There are no 'little people' in the kingdom of God." What he was saying is that all of us stand as stewards uniquely and individually before our master and stand each of us will. God says in Romans 14:4: *Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master he stands or falls.* So God cares intensely about us as individuals and we will stand before him as our only master. For false stewards, it will be a time of absolute dread. But for true stewards, it will be a time of complete joy. And we see that in the text that it all has to do with one little word in the parable of the talents. You know, the NIV translates that little word as "see." The King James translates it as "behold;" the ESV translates it as "here." We

might translate this word as, "Hey, check this out." Let me again repeat the verses. Verse 20, this is the good steward, this is the faithful steward, he says: *"And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'* His master said to him, *'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'* And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, *'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'* His master said to him, *'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'*" See, the steward is saying: "Here's the resources you gave me. Here's what I have." Then he says "behold," "see," "here," "Here, look what I've done with what you've given me." There's joy in that statement. There's excitement in that statement.

And now we look at the false steward. The false steward used the exact same word: "Here." But it comes after his tirade and it precedes his handing back his talent. The best he can muster is, "Here, you have what is yours." "Now take your stinking talent back." See, the two things the false steward never understood was urgency and consequence. His master now gives him both, he says

this in verse 26, he says, "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has shall be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." See, what the master is saying here, he says, you know, if you really believed I was what you accused me of, you would have understood the urgency of complying and you would have at least banked my money. The fact that you didn't proves that it is you that is the fraud and further proves that you've never had the mindset of a steward in the first place. The master says, "And cast that worthless servant into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." No doubt, the false steward is shocked. He was faithless, he was disloyal, he was resentful, and joyless. But no doubt blown away that he was cast out. And that's how it is with false stewards. Jesus said in Matthew 7: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name,

and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

We look at this, we -- I look at it, how could that happen? How could these folks not know that they were false stewards? Well, the answer really is simple and it goes back to what I said at the very beginning of this message. The father of lies told them a lie, and they bought it. They were deceived. That same line is being sold wholesale today. There's actually a lie that the church promulgates when it says, "You're not a steward. You're a customer." When it says, "Life is not service given; it is service expected." You know, many churches have devolved into spiritual consumer service centers rather than living expressions of the body of Christ where people go to express their worship through kingdom citizenship and responsibility which we call stewardship. It is the measure of how much you own the kingdom of God and how much it owns you.

Now, I asked two questions at the beginning of this message. The first one was: How does a steward think? Well, number one, he is faithful, he knows that God first and foremost cares about one thing and one thing only in stewards, it's what God said to the good steward, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* First

question to ask myself is: Am I a faithful servant? Do I care more about pleasing God than making a splash? Would any one talent service interest me if I knew that God alone was the one who truly appreciated it?

Secondly, we said that a good steward's mindset is one of loyalty. He knows he can't serve two masters. He knows that divided loyalties produce resentment and he sees himself or herself as a kingdom citizen first. And everything else, jobs, career, friends, family, everything, everything is subordinated to the kingdom. Is that the way you see yourself in the kingdom?

And thirdly, a good steward's mindset is joyful. He has found his place. The joyful steward knows he's going to stand before his master and be able to say, "Look! Look! Here!" Whether or not he's showing a five, a two or one talent, he knows that his faithful service is what really matters, and that gives great joy whether you are a king or a servant, whether you are a chief, top dog or low man on the totem pole.

Well, that's only the first question: How does a steward think? Second one is much, much harder. The second one is: How do I think? There's really only one person who can answer that question, and that's you. The parable of the talents is really

about two things the church seldom considers, and that is urgency and consequence. True stewards understand them. They are faithful, they are loyal, they are joyful in serving the kingdom. So the question is, is that you? Now, if that description is foreign to you, take heart, because there is still time. 1 John 1:9 says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Here's the point. God wants nothing more than to make you a faithful steward. He wants to reorient your priorities toward the kingdom. You know, if you've been given the gift of faith, if you have been given God's mindset, then these words make perfect sense, once again, Romans 8: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* You know, if you are not one of his, then these words and that warning will have the same effect on you than it had on the false steward: Zero, zilch, nada. You won't know and you certainly will not care. But if you are one of His, if God is speaking to you right here and right now, if you sense from his indwelling Holy Spirit an urgency to attend to the talents you've been given, ask him to show you what faithful, loyal, and joyful service looks like to you. Now really is the time, I mean, Jan has put together a catalog of every single task

that this church needs to be done. Now is the time when each of us are to be reviewing our service. You know the June reviews are supposed to be turned in. What kind of a steward am I? That's the question you need to ask. How can I apply myself? And so speak to me, speak to the elders, speak to the deacons, make your life count for something in the kingdom. Be ready and excited to tell the master, "Behold! See! Here it is!" as he welcomes you into everlasting life with the sweetest words human ears can ever hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Let's pray.

Father God, I do thank you for these words, I thank you for your word and I thank you for the encouragement that it is, and I thank you for the warning that it is. Father, I pray that each and every one of us here would be touched by your indwelling Holy Spirit, about our stewardship, about our passion, about whether or not we are faithful, loyal, joyful servants, about our priorities. Father, gave us the ability to respond to your Spirit's prompting, give us the ability to set our minds on the things of the Spirit and thus to please you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.