

## Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup>For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' <sup>21</sup>His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' <sup>22</sup>And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' <sup>23</sup>His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' <sup>24</sup>Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' <sup>26</sup>But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?' <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 25:14-30, 2014

Enter into the joy of your master.

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I wonder what that is like. What is Jesus describing here?

There was this blonde haired 5 year old little boy who stepped up to the plate in his very first T ball game ever. He had his new team shirt on and baseball cap.

He had been to every practice and listened to the coach teach them how to hit the ball off the T. He had practiced at home with his dad and got pretty good.

But here he was for the first time in front of all these people and in the excitement of his first game.

As he stepped up to the T he was a little nervous, but determined to not be embarrassed by striking out. He stepped into the batter's box and swung the bat the first time and hit the T, and the ball fell off, strike one.

Oh, maybe this isn't so easy after all. But he gets back in the batters box and swings the bat again. That bat hit that ball and it went flying and he was a little startled, and he heard his coach yell to him over the screaming crowd. Run!

And he took off while the ball kept bouncing out into the outfield. And he runs and runs until he gets all the way around the bases. As he steps on home plate everybody is cheering, his team mates come out to greet him and he looks for his coach who is wearing proud smile and gives him a high five. Then he looks over to mom and dad and they all celebrate together.

That investment in hard work and practice paid off.

I believe that little boy's name was Sean.

Everyone there had invested all they had in that moment.

Enter into the joy of your master.

I remember while I was serving in my first call in Virginia, going to a piano recital at Trinity Lutheran Church in town. You could see the pride the piano teacher had in each of her students as she called them up one at a time to play their piece.

This girl with long wavy blonde hair and big blue eyes heard her name called and nervously got up and went to the piano. She took her seat on the bench and placed the music her teacher had taught her, and that she had practiced at home for hours, on the piano, and she began to play, determined to play that piece of music just the way her teacher had taught her.

Everyone in the audience cheered her on in anxious silence. And when she played that final note a smile broke out on her face and the audience began to applaud her performance.

She turned toward the audience as she stood up from the bench and bowed, and turned to her teacher who gave her an approving smile and clapping hands. She could hear mom and dad celebrating her performance as she found their proud smiling faces.

I believe her name was Stephanie.

Everyone had invested everything into that moment.

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There was a Cub Scout Master named Wayne who one day came to the pastor of the church where his pack met. He was nervous but smiling with pride. He said,

"Pastor, I need to talk to you. You know our Cub Scout Pack has grown so much we now have 63 scouts and more about to join. We don't have enough room here anymore and so I wanted to let you know we have to find a new place to meet. We are so grateful for everything your congregation has done for us, the hospitality you have shown and the support you have given in the years we have been

here, and we are sad to have to do this, but we have no choice."

Congratulations Wayne, Cub Scout Pack 456, Scout Leaders. We have all invested everything into this moment.

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There is an organist at this church I am familiar with. And this organist always gave more than she was required to, more than she was paid for. She volunteered to do things around the church, some of which didn't necessarily have anything to do with music. She help her pastor plan worship, select hymns for each week. She invested everything into serving God with this beautiful gift He had given her.

Along the way she discovered she was on a faith journey and she invested everything to see where God was taking her. As the pieces of that puzzle came together she was surprised, she was healed, she was reconciled with her Lord, she was at peace, and she was elated.

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We talk about how we are supposed to give to Gods work in the world through His church with our lives, gifts, talents, resources. We have had some of those

conversations in the cottage meetings we have been having, and there are questions. How much should I give?

We remember and discuss all the measures of giving that we have learned about. Of course the conversation of tithing comes up, that 10%. We are reminded that biblically that is the starting point God speaks of in the Old Testament. But then Jesus talks about starting at 50%, and then giving it all to God.

There has been the idea of giving sacrificially, or until it hurts, and the other side of the coin that calls us to give until it feels good, until it feels right. And how surprised are you when you discover where that takes you!

I met a family who gave that way, and not out of their wealth but like out of their gratitude for what God was doing in their lives, and they were living difficult lives. They didn't even count what they were giving, just until it felt good and right.

It was in Kissimmee, Fl. while I was on internship at Trinity Lutheran Church, and we did most of the case work for the Kissimmee Area Ministerial Association helping the needy in the community.

Many people moved to that area under funded for any kind of relocation. People would often show up with

nothing left but good intentions, and had gotten caught in what we called the motel trap.

That was when they would work each day and make enough to cover the days motel bill and food expenses, and never be able to get ahead. Families would end up stuck in these motels for long periods of time, and they weren't the nicest motels in town. In fact you and I wouldn't stay in any one of them.

I might add that very thing happens around here all the time.

One day, just before Christmas, I was in the office talking with a woman who came in for assistance. As we talked another woman with a little pre-school aged girl came in. She looked very familiar to me and after finishing my conversation I said to her, "You look very familiar to me where have I seen you before?"

She told me she had been in to see us in October to get some assistance, and that she, her husband, and her two children had been staying at the Super 8 Motel down the street and we had helped them out. I remembered we paid for one night's stay at the motel at a cost of \$32. I may have given her some food we kept in the pantry.

She went on to say that she is now working as a security guard and her husband was working at Universal Studios

in construction, in fact started working a second shift and had gotten a raise on both jobs, and they had saved enough money to get out of the motel trap. Now they were in an apartment of their own,

and intermingled with the details of her story she kept saying

“I just thank Jesus for all he has done for us, we just thank Jesus for blessing us with all we have, I just thank Jesus for opening the doors.”

Then she reached into her purse and pulled out an envelope and handed it to me. She said that Jesus had taken really good care of them and she remembered that I had told her that we had real limited funds to help people with. To say thank you for the help we gave her and her family she wanted to contribute to the fund we had.

She said I don't know how much money is in there. I have just been putting money in all along because we wanted to give back some of what we got.

I let her know that this seldom happens and that we were deeply grateful for gift.

After she left I counted the money. I pulled it out of the envelope and there were ones on the top. I thumbed through the stack and then turned it over and there were 20s on the bottom. There was a total of \$289 in the envelope;

\$289 from a family of 4 who two months before didn't have two pennies to rub together and still set aside what felt good and right for God's work.

This is a family who met their every day living expenses while living in the motel trap, saved at least 1500 for rent and utility deposits, and moved themselves into an apartment. All the while they were thanking Jesus for every little thing they got along the way by stashing away enough money to bring \$289 to help with our ministry. They didn't wait until they had some extra, they sat it aside along the way. Is that faith our what? They knew ahead of time Jesus would provide.

They knew Jesus would open that next door for them to walk through.

We ministered to them two months before, and now they have returned that ministry almost 10 fold.

She left with her little girl and I thought I would never see her again. But a couple of months later she appeared again, handed me another envelop full of cash, thanked me and was gone; another \$261.

Money slipped into an envelope along the way because they wanted to give back, because they were grateful, because it felt good and right.

I will always remember the great faith that family had. With what they gave they would help at least 15 other families in the same desperate situation they had been in. Thank you Jesus!

Enter into the joy of your master

There was a pastor who realized he had some real gifts for transitional ministry after serving three of them successfully, but was worried after accepting a regular call to serve a church that he might not be able to lead a congregation through the normal ebbs and flows, the rhythms of daily ministry. He was afraid of failing. He was always good at fixing things but never so good at building new things.

Along the way God talked to him, continued to give him and the congregation all they needed to accomplish the mission He had for them. God gave that pastor discernment about the matters of the church, raised good leaders to help him, and faithful people to follow.

God gave that pastor a vision for the future of that church that had struggled so mightily and had been faithful in its efforts to rebuild a ministry that had nearly collapsed.

That pastor began to share that vision with the leaders in the church and with others. God helped them see the resources He had provided to support the ministry that

would make that vision for God's mission a reality for their community and the world.

Finally there was a plan developed and presented to the congregation one September day, and people got excited and ten of them committed themselves and formed a stewardship committee, and they put a plan together.

There were bookmakers inserted in bulletins each week with the story of the people of Macedonia who gave to God's ministry when called upon.

There were talks, testimonies even, about how that congregation had changed the lives of people who had no connection with the church and a broken one with God.

There were cottage meetings held so that the congregation could have a place to see the plan, talk about it, ask questions and they even went to them.

Because they went they got excited about the future of their church. And then they all got a letter in the mail from the pastor and inside was a beautiful flyer with pictures and more stories. And there was a commitment card inside the envelope. At the bottom was a place to write in their commitment of support for this exciting future they were going to experience in the life of the church God had brought them to.

As they looked at those commitment cards and pondered how they would support this ministry they remembered the stories, the cottage meeting, the excitement, and they smiled because they discovered they had already invested everything in Gods vision for their life and faith, and they filled out that commitment card and took it to church on commitment Sunday, and put it in the basket with all the others, and it was blessed, and they smiled and rejoiced and thanked and praised God for all he had done and given throughout their life.

They knew that God had provided all that was needed and His vision would change their lives and the lives of so many others forever.

Well done good and faithful servants...Enter into the joy of your master.