**Faithfully Awaiting the Kingdom**

Matthew 24:14-30

**Introduction**

I have spent a good portion of my life on construction sites all over New England. My dad is a painting contractor and I worked with him since I was 12. Because he predominantly worked in very upscale houses, anyone who begins working with my dad starts off performing very **menial tasks**. *Inside*, you are stuck painting the closets. And you don’t leave the closets until you prove you can paint. *Outside*, you are the “gopher”—go for this, go for that. And you don’t stop bringing people what they need until you watch and learn the skill. He isn’t going to have the new, inexperienced guy paint the accent wall in the master bedroom or paint around the brand new kitchen cabinets. In a trade like painting, the skill is taught and caught. When my dad hires someone, it is **an investment** in them. In order to be entrusted with bigger things, you had to prove you with faithful with little things.

After working for my dad for many years, we had many employees come and go. Many of them only worked one summer and they never made it out of the closet. They had low interest, low motivation, and low skill. They came out of the closet after two hours exhausted and frustrated with paint down to their elbows, on both arms. There was always the guy who was either content to stay in the closet forever or the guy who was embittered at the fact that he started in the closet. **They couldn’t see the bigger picture.** They missed the fact that my dad was investing in them and giving them opportunity to grow and become more useful, fit for a greater purpose. They missed my dad’s generosity in letting them work for him. They missed the fact that by virtue of their relationship, there was an understanding that to continue working for my dad, they needed to show growth and improvement.

**The PRONOUNCEMENT of the Kingdom**

The parables in Matthew are about the Kingdom of Heaven (vv. 1, 14) Jesus explained to His disciples in Matthew 13:10-13 that He began speaking in parables **to reveal** the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven to His disciples and **to** **conceal** them from the self-righteous. A kingdom can simply be defined as a dominion or sphere of rule that includes **a ruler, a people to rule over, and a physical territory.** This idea of an everlasting kingdom is the grand central theme of the Scriptures.

 **The Old Testament Anticipates the Kingdom**

The Old Testament looks forward to the Kingdom of God. After Adam fell from his position in the Garden, it was promised that a future Messiah, the Promised Seed, would come, conquer Satan and make all things new. As the story progresses, in *Genesis 12*, God makes a covenant with Abram. He promised that He would make his name great and establish a kingdom—a great people, in the best land, and with a Seed that will bless all the nations of the earth. Again we see **a ruler, a people, and a physical territory.** Then moving forward after God fulfilled His promises and Israel became a great kingdom, God made another covenant with David. In *2 Samuel 7*, God promised David that He would make his name great and establish an everlasting kingdom through one of David’s descendants, or his seed. In this covenant, we also have **a ruler, a people, and a physical territory.** God said, “I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (v. 13). Then when God’s people were in exile, Daniel had a vision of this coming everlasting kingdom. In *Daniel 7*, he saw One like **the Son of Man** coming and to Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nation and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

**Matthew Anticipates the Kingdom**

The Gospel of Matthew is all about the King and His Kingdom. The word “kingdom” is used 32 times in the book. Matthew uses the terms “the kingdom of heaven,” the Gospel of the kingdom”, and the secrets of the kingdom” throughout the book. Matthew was writing to a predominantly **Jewish audience** who were familiar with the Old Testament and he went to great lengths to show that Jesus was the Messiah King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and covenants. Right off the bat, in the very first verse, Matthew declares that **Jesus is the son of David and the son of Abraham** (1:1). John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (3:2). Jesus began His public ministry declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (4:17). The most common title Jesus used to describe Himself in the book of Matthew is **the Son of Man** (31x). In the immediate context of our parable, in chapter 24, Matthew records Jesus’ explanation of His second coming. He tells His disciples that He will leave them and then return on the clouds in the sky as Daniel envisioned (v. 30). But He explained that no one knows the day or the hour (v. 36). The Son of Man will come at an hour you do not think He will (v. 44). In this context He gives 3 parables that anticipate the coming kingdom—the parable of the fig tree (24:32-33), the parable of the virgins (25:1-13), and the parable of the talents (25:14-10).

 **The Church Anticipates the Kingdom**

Austin explained last week that in redemptive history, the church still has one transition left, one final step. In this age—after his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension—Jesus is coming back and He will bring the Kingdom of God to earth. But these 3 parables help us to see different aspects of anticipation. The parable of the fig tree teaches us to **faithfully wait** for the kingdom. The parable of the virgins teaches us to **faithfully watch** for the kingdom. But the parable of the talents makes it clear that waiting and watching are not passive, but active. We are to **faithfully work** as we await the coming kingdom. We are to seek first His kingdom. We are to enlist our efforts and invest our entire being into God’s economy. And Matthew helps us understand what this work looks like; and it is radically different from the world’s economy. Jesus, our King has given us **the royal cost, the royal command, and the royal commission** of God’s kingdom. Jesus declared that the requirement of a disciple is to take up his own cross and follow Christ and that whoever wishes to save his life must lose it (Matt 10:38-39; 16:24-28). Jesus pronounced that the greatest commands are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor more than yourself (Matt 22:34-40). Jesus also, before His ascension gave us a royal commission. We are to be disciples who make disciples of all the nations baptizing them and teaching them all that He commanded us (Matt 28:18-20). We are to be actively waiting for God’s kingdom. We are to be so consumed by God’s glory and our neighbors’ wellbeing that we willingly lay down our lives to fulfill the great commission.

**The PARABLE of the Kingdom**

Now that we’ve briefly established the context of the kingdom in the big story of the Old Testament and in Matthew’s story of Jesus, we are now ready to look at this short story. In the parable of the talents, we can clearly see **all 3 elements of a kingdom**. There is a master, his servants, and his estate or his dominion.

**The Beginning** (vv. 14-15)

Although the beginning of this story seems like an ordinary event in the life of a servant, it is actually filled with **hyperbole and surprise**. Masters of large estates would often have to travel long distances for business. Without motor vehicles they would be away for long periods of time and without cell phones there would be no way of knowing exactly when they would return. It was even ordinary for a master to have head servants that would manage their property, possessions, and other servants while they were away. What is so surprising about this story is the excessive amount of money he left them with.

**The Generous Entrustment.** He left his capital to the management of his servants. A talent was a measure of weight. One denarius was a typical day’s wages for a servant. One talent is equal to 6,000 denarii. Therefore, this master entrusted his servants with an extravagant amount of money—85 years wages to the first, 35 years wages to the second, and 17 years wages to the third. He was a generous master who was very trusting and believed the best about his servants. He did not micromanage them.

**The Wise Allotment**. The greatest mistake a supervisor can make is to treat everyone the same. The master did not lay on all an equal charge to all, but gave each according to his ability. This master knew his servants intimately and gave to each what he knew they could handle. But still, each amount was shockingly abundant and radically excessive.

**The Purposeful Investment**. He could have simply left his money with moneylenders and received the guaranteed 12% interest of that time, but rather, he was intentional to invest in his servants. He was a generous and kind master intent on training his servants to become more useful, fit for a greater purposes in his kingdom. It wasn’t about the money, it was about the servants.

 **The Middle** (v. 16-18)

The middle of Jesus’ story is brief, yet it is where all the action takes place. A major aspect of this parable is time—the interim time between the master’s coming and going. Yet it is the shortest part of the story. It has a familiar ring to it as it resembles Old Testament wisdom literature by using **antithetical parallelism**. We see *the juxtaposition of the wise and the fool*. The righteous and the wicked. The faithful and the slothful. The grateful and the ungrateful. They are put so closely together so we may see how extremely opposite they are.

**The Faithful Servants.** Immediately after the master left, the servant with the five talents went and traded. He engaged in business with other people. He had **face to face** business transactions. He bought and sold, traded and invested, lost and gained, reaped and sowed. **He invested in others**, put them to work and managed the money that was entrusted to him. The second slave with two talents did the same. **The first two servants saw the big picture**. They were grateful for their master’s generous entrustment and saw that he was intentionally investing in them. They had the utmost love and respect for him. They understood by virtue of their relationship that their responsibility was to increase what had been entrusted to them. Therefore their work was done with joy.

**The Lazy Servant**. The third servant did the complete and total opposite. As soon as the master left, he went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money there. He didn’t misspend or misemploy the money. He did not embezzle it or squander it away. But he refused to enter into transactions with other people. He refused to risk for fear of failure. He refused any and all time-consuming, emotionally-exhausting work. **He refused to see the bigger picture.** He was jealous that the others got more capital than he did and was embittered toward his master. He thought it was unjust of his master to take what he had gained. He was a sluggard. He was a lazy, selfish servant. **He thought of no one but himself**. He refused to be invested in and refused to invest in others. He valued comfort and ease. He was ungrateful, unsubmissive, and unproductive. He was unwilling to risk, sacrifice, lose, and let go of control. He shirked all responsibility and sheltered himself from all relationships. **In a very real sense, he buried himself in the ground with his money.**

 **The Ending** (v. 19-30)

The ending is also a very ordinary situation. What happens is expected. The day of reckoning has come; the master returns and settles his accounts. But this final movement is also marked by **great irony**—the servant who refused to take risks and had a guarantee of keeping what was entrusted to him, lost everything. The one who played it safe, realized that was the most dangerous thing he could do.

**The Commendation** (vv. 19-23).The first two servants who were faithfully waiting, watching, and working were filled with joy and excitement upon their master’s return. They ran to him and were excited to tell him of all they gained for him with what he had left them. They both doubled what was given them and even though the total amounts were radically different, they were commended the same. The master **praised** them saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” He **promoted** them and entrusted them with more responsibility. He also **permitted** them to enter into his joy. In other words, his investment in them paid off and he was pleased to reward them. It was never about the money. It was about teaching them to be like himself—to love, to risk, to sacrifice for and invest in others.

**The Condemnation** (vv. 24-30). The lazy servant who buried his allotment in the ground did not go to his master with the same excitement and joy. He did not go in with his tail between his legs either. He entered into his master’s presence with guns blazing. **He was filled with excuses and accusations**. He accused the master of being a **hard** man. He accused the master of being **unjust** for reaping from his servants’, work. He claimed that he was **fearful** to put it to use because he didn’t want to lose it. He gave it back to his master and said, “See, you have what is yours.” In other words, he was saying that even if he had any increase, the master had no right to it. He was saying that he was now absolved of all responsibility. The responsibility was too much for him and he was relieved to free himself from it. He was fearful, self-protective, jealous, bitter, and ungrateful. His master, like a parent of a young child, saw through all of these excuses and condemned him as a wicked, lazy servant. He pointed out how illogical and irrational his reasons were. If he thought his master was harsh and knew he reaped where he did not sow, he pointed out that he could have at least left the money with lenders and he would have received 12% interest with no effort, but even that was too much work for him. So, he took what he entrusted to the lazy servant away and gave it to the more faithful servants. The irony is that the one who held on most tightly to what had been given, ended up losing everything. He didn’t lose it, he wasted it. He was a worthless servant. He refused to love, sacrifice, risk, and invest in others.

**The PRINCIPLES of the Kingdom Parable**

 **#1 With Great Privilege Comes Great Responsibility**

Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher, and a servant like his master” (Matt 10:25). Our Lord and Master has generously given himself to you and you need to give yourself to others. Your Master has given you extravagant gifts and you must invest them in His kingdom. Nothing you have is your own; it is all the Lord’s. It has been given to you, entrusted to your stewardship. **He has wrought you**—He has created you in His image and endowed you with faculties designed for relationships and productivity. He has given you your very being and existence, your life, your time, your intellect, emotions, will, and your bodies. **He has bought you**—when you were dead and enslaved to sin, He died in your place, took your penalty, and forgave your trespasses. **If you are a believer, you are twice His**. You are not your own, you have been bought with a price, purchased by His blood. You have been endowed with spiritual gifts for the common good of God’s kingdom (1 Cor 12:7). These gifts have been distributed to each one individually just as he wills (1 Cor 12:11). **He has taught you**—you have been entrusted with the Gospel, the Scriptures, and a body of doctrine. You are to guard what has been entrusted to you (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14). **He has brought you**—everything you have up to this point in your life . . . all your possessions, accomplishments, skills, abilities, have been brought to you by His divine providence. None of these things belong to you. You don’t even belong to you. You are a steward. God has given to us ACCORDING to His riches (Phil 4:19). Not OUT OF, but ACCORDING to them. The word **“talent”** in our story refers to a measurement of weight, for gold or silver. But over the years, because of this parable, it has come to have a more figurative meaning. It refers to the weight and wealth of one’s entire being, such as his skills, abilities, and predispositions. **Are you employing your talents in the Master’s economy? Or are you burying them in the ground?** Money is like manure. It is useful and practical when it is spread out. But when it is kept in a big heap, it is useless and all it does is stinks. You know what else stinks? A swamp. A body of water with no output will stink. A body of water with no input will dry up and be useless. **You need to have an input and an output.**

Who are you allowing to invest in you? And who are you investing in?

Whose disciple are you? And who are you discipling?

Who is speaking truth into your life? And whose life are you speaking into?

Who are you suffering with? And who are you suffering for?

 **#2 With Great Faithfulness Comes Great REWARD**

We are so accustomed to performance based reward systems. But this is not sports. This is not school. This is not investment banking. It was not a competition. This is God’s kingdom, God’s economy. The currency that God is interested in is faithfulness. God delights in rewarding faithfulness. Our rewards our eternal. We need to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and lay up treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19-21). There is an element of expectancy in faith. It is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1). Our faith must be actively seeking God. Faith recognizes God’s existence and authority over your life and believes that He is a rewarder of faithfulness (Heb 11:6). Faith spurs us to radical, self-sacrificial, counter-cultural action that will be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:7). **Matthew 19:27-30.**

There will be no greater reward than standing before Jesus and hearing Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” That alone should motivate you to take more risks, to give away more of yourself, to sacrifice more, to invest more. I have floated through most of my life doing the bare minimum. I don’t want any part of that any more. You don’t need to be a pastor to minister. I have been encouraged to see God’s people in this church use their coaching abilities, cooking expertise, and teaching skills as an avenue for face to face kingdom transactions. I have been encouraged that you have seen the value of sacrificing even with the revitalization in Rancho.

“It is better to lose your life than to waste it. If you live gladly to make others glad in God, your life will be hard, your risks will be high, but your joy will be full.” –John Piper

 **#3 With Great Laziness Comes Great RUIN**

The warning is clear—do not be a wicked and lazy servant of your Master. He refused to invest in others and be invested in. **The other great irony is that fear is a harsh master that only takes from you.** Fear is crippling and paralyzing. Fear is the opposite of love. Fear is self-preserving, love is self-giving. Fear comes from an intense focus on self. At men’s retreat this past year I shared my testimony about being an introvert. I shared how difficult and uncomfortable it has been for me to speak in public. But the point was that I am constantly and intentionally moving beyond my comfort zone for love of God and love of others. Investing in others is difficult. It is risky, vulnerable work. If you are truly consumed with God’s glory and your neighbors’ wellbeing, then you will have no thought of your own. Kingdom-minded people are not concerned with what they’ll lose or gain for themselves in this life, but what they gain for their Master when he returns. What are you fearful of? What is fear preventing you from doing? What has God laid on your heart that is just outside your comfort zone, that might come at a higher cost, a greater risk, that might require more vulnerability? Witnessing to your neighbor? Confronting a brother in sin? A missions trip? A biblical training program? Foster care? These are but small investments of your time and money that will yield huge dividends in this life and in the life to come!

“I’m not afraid of failure; I’m afraid of succeeding at things that don’t matter.” –William Carey

**Unfaithfulness comes from faithlessness.** When you don’t love your Master, His investment in you is more of a burden than a joy. Jesus said, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn and attack you” (Matt 7:6). The wicked servant’s contempt for the investment was a result of his contempt for the master. He bit the hand that fed him. Jesus also warned, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt 3:10; 7:19-20). Are you a lazy and slothful servant? Are you passive in your waiting and watching? Are you doing the bare minimum? Are you avoiding responsibility and relationships? Do you believe showing up to church every week is enough? Friend, that is like burying your talent in the ground. It is unsubmissive to your Master. It is unloving to your neighbor. It is unprofitable and unproductive.

“If you aren’t regularly encouraging others to follow Jesus, I’m not sure what you mean when you say you follow Jesus.” –Mark Dever

I worked for m dad’s company for 15 years. And guess what? I started in the closet and I started out as a “gopher”. But I didn’t stay there long. Why did I have high interest, motivation, skill? I loved him. I wanted to please him. I wanted to be like him. I counted working for him and with him a great privilege. May we have this same childlike love for our Master. And may we be found faithful upon His return. May we be found set apart for usefulness and fit for purpose.