

The Kingdom Assignment  
Matthew 25:14-30  
December 6, 2009

What would you do with 5000 gold coins?  
Considering gold is selling for over \$1,000 an ounce that would be a lot of money.

As you heard in our Scripture Lesson, that was the challenge of one of the three servants. Along with the one who received 5000 coins, there was a servant that received 2000 and another that received 1000 gold coins.

Our pew bibles call this the Parable of the Three Servants.

If you read this same text in different translations, you will find different wealth being distributed.

I like the New Living Translation. In this translation it says the master gave the servants bags of gold.

If you look in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the Bible, it has the owner giving \$5000 to one servant, \$2,000 to another servant, and \$1,000 to the third servant.

In all the translations you have a large amount of wealth being divvied up by 5, 2 and 1 allotments. If however you look at an older translation, say the King James Version, you will find this.

*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them the goods.  
And unto one he gave 5 talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his ability.*

When I was young, I learned this story as the Parable of the Talents. Even though we were all taught a talent was a measurement of money, where one talent was equivalent to what one would earn in a lifetime, there was also the implication of a skill or ability.

Thus, as we consider this parable, it can speak to us in two ways. We can see this parable as a challenge to how we use our money, or we can also take it as a challenge to how we use our talents.

Ultimately this parable is about Stewardship.

Stewardship is a big word that basically means the management of someone else's wealth. All that we are, all that we have comes from God. The question becomes, what are we going to do with these gifts?

The parable teaches us two things right off the bat. What we have is extremely valuable and not everyone is equal. Why else would Jesus use such crazy numbers? It would be like today someone giving out millions of dollars!

What are we doing with what God has given us?

The parable actually narrows the question down to the issue of Kingdom Building. Are we using our time, talents and resources to build God's Kingdom, or are we just worrying about ourselves?

Before we can answer that it might be helpful to know what the Kingdom of God is all about. If you were to describe "The Kingdom", what would you say?

Another way to put it might be to say, "in a perfect world this is how it would be". In a perfect world nobody would be hungry or homeless. In a perfect world there would be no fighting, no hatred, no war. In a perfect world we would all respect each other and wish the best for one another.

God's kingdom, a "perfect world", is about quality of life and relationships. Contrary to what our culture says, life isn't about stuff! As our parable suggests, to those who have been given much, much will be expected.

With Christmas coming, it is easy to get caught up in the consumer mentality. We want to buy nice presents for those we love. Spending a whole lot of money on gifts however does not help to advance God's Kingdom.

Maybe instead of buying a number of expensive things, we buy several less expensive things and then take the rest of the money we would have spent and support a ministry that is doing Kingdom Building work.

That is the concept behind the Alternative Christmas Gift. After the service we are having an Alternative Christmas Fair. You can go down stairs and select a mission or two you can support. You will be given a paper that you can give to your loved one. This paper will let them know that a donation was made in their honor to further God's Kingdom.

An Alternative Christmas Gift is just one small application of our parable. The larger challenge of the parable is taking what one has been given and expanding it to do even more good.

You might wonder how that would work!

I remember a few years back the United Methodist Church was really promoting the "Nothing But Nets" Campaign. We were raising money that would buy bed nets for the people in Africa.

A young girl in Texas heard how these nets help keep the malaria carrying mosquitoes from biting children while they sleep. The girl was so moved by this project she took her allowance and bought the ingredients to bake cookies. After getting approval from her pastor she had a bake sale. Not only did all the cookies sell, the whole church became excited by this project. In the end her allowance of \$5 turned into over \$5000 sent to the "Nothing But Nets" project.

God is still trying to build the Kingdom. It is up to us and other Christians to do the work. God is the Master. We are the servants. Just as in the parable, God has given us the talents to work with. Some have been given more than others, but we all have something. How will we help with the Kingdom Building?

This is such an important lesson I want you to never forget it. I would like to try something that may help us in remembering. I need 15 volunteers.

(\$100 was given to each of the 15 volunteers)

I have an assignment for you. Let's call it a Kingdom Assignment. If you choose to accept this \$100 and participate in this assignment, you do so under 3 conditions...

1. You must understand and agree this is not your money. It is the Master's money and God has entrusted it to you.

2. You are to manage, multiply and invest this money as a steward in some way that advances God's Kingdom Agenda in the world. What you do and how you do so is between you and God.

3. In 90 days, you must come back and tell us what happened to this \$100.

We will look forward to hearing about how our 15 volunteers managed their money. We will be praying for them.

What we are doing with the Kingdom Assignment is a reflection of what we all are challenged to do with our own resources. God has entrusted much to us. What would God say to us?