

## Introduction:

- Good morning, everyone. I'm Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC. Continuing our September Series on Stewardship, "Bearing Fruit That Will Last."
- ILL - In 1988 I was in Regina for my 2nd year of Bible College.
  - Edgar Whisenant's pamphlet, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988" had been on the summer reading list of several of my classmates.
  - I remember ... people dropping out of classes, quitting jobs, liquidating assets.
  - A sort of 'triumphal' feeling was in the air that September as Christians prepared for Jesus to come back and set up reign on earth. With us as 'rulers'.
  - There was this kind of 'end-is-near-shut-everything-down-and-wait-for-Jesus' mentality.
  - I also recall the opposite tack illustrated in this 1980's popular bumper sticker,
    - **<Slide>** Q: "Jesus is coming! Look busy."
- Better impress the Boss when He turns up. Or, look out!
- Now, likely none of us has an omnipresent boss, so here's a question for you:
  - When your boss isn't around, how motivated are you to work?
- I suppose a lot depends on who your boss is, what sort of relationship you have with him or her, & what they stand for. And, what your job is: just a 'money-maker,' or, something that drives you out of bed to grab your lunch-kit with a skip in your step every morning, & gives your life deep meaning.
- Let's dive in with a Straw Poll.
- **<Slide>** Question #1: Does production go up OR down when the boss is away?
- **<Slide>** Question #2: Accountability, job reviews, [do you] welcome them OR dread them?
- **<Slide>** Question #3: What makes a good worker, high-performance OR loyalty?
- **<Slide>** Jesus was making his final big geographical movement in the narrative.
- Having journeyed from Galilee, His entourage was making its way south.
- 3 times, Jesus had predicted His death: He was going to Jerusalem to die. But "the disciples did not understand." (Lk 18:34). Their minds were fixated on a far more grandiose plan.
- With a stop in Jericho about 30km outside the big city, Jesus healed people, even picked Zacchaeus, a hated tax collector out of a tree to share dinner with him and his "sinner" friends,
  - Proclaiming in cf. Luke 19:9-10, Q: "Today salvation has come to this house."
- Coming from the lips of Jesus, this must have sounded apocalyptic.
- Messianic overtones. High hopes. Onlookers would have mused, Q: "Could it be the Kingdom of God is coming right here, right now?"
- Jesus will be 'palmed' into town, topple Rome, and set up a long-awaited political kingdom with Israel in its rightful place. On the throne. Finally, what we deserve!
- And, on Passover, to boot! The week-long festival where Jewish people come from near and far to celebrate the Lord's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Beautiful.
- The 'screenplay' couldn't have been scripted more sentimentally. Yes, Jesus! Q: 'And we'll all be royals, driving the Cadillacs of our dreams,' (Lorde) His followers must have thought. Or, sung.
- And Jesus told this parable to smash the myth, to quell visions of grandeur, to focus their hearts and their work -- and ours too -- for what would turn out to be long & challenging times ahead.
- <READ Luke 19:11-27, p 852-53> Prayer: "God, control me by Your Spirit. Move me out' the way."

## Narrative Outline:

- Many confusing parts, but this we do know ...
- The Parable of the 10 Servants is designed to show Jesus' followers what they're to be up to during the gap between Jesus' ascension to heaven & His Second Coming -- the time we're now all living in.

## Scene 1: **<Slide> A Nobleman Calls in His Servants (19:12-14).**

- Jesus introduces a "man of noble birth" -- about to set out on a long journey to a faraway country to be appointed king. And then, he would return. (12)

- Before he goes, the nobleman leaves some of his fortune in the hands of 10 of his servants. 1 pound a piece -- in the ancient world, equivalent to approximately 3 months' wages.
- "Put this money to work," he said, 'I'll be back.' There would be an account. (13)
- A twist in the plot comes in v 14: But his "subjects hated him" and were making every effort to stop him from becoming their king.
- ILL - History tells of 1st Century Herod Archelaus, who found himself in a similar situation.
  - When his father died, he made the customary pilgrimage to Rome. But the people hated him and opposed his becoming king for he was a murderer and perceived as a 'sell-out' to Rome.
  - Evidently his trip to meet Caesar wasn't what Archelaus'd hoped for; he was given a lesser title; not king, but still ruler of Judea, the lands in the south around Jerusalem.
  - **<Slide>** Archelaus as in power when Joseph & Mary & toddler Jesus returned from Egypt.
  - And Joseph was warned in a dream to go north to Nazareth instead of settling in Bethlehem, for fear of Herod Archelaus who'd ordered the killing of all boys 2 years & younger in Judea.
- With the mention of this nobleman, Jesus' audience would undoubtedly have thought of Archelaus.
- Ironically, Jesus' own story would have some similar details. It's perplexing Jesus would seemingly cast Himself as the hated nobleman in the story. What was He on about?
- Perhaps Jesus wished to reiterate that His trip to Jerusalem would not garner the expected result.
- Desiring Him to be crowned king, the masses would soon wake up to His platforms and policies, and rebel against them. And Jesus would instead there meet His death.
- Though we all know that's not the end of the Jesus story.
- Possibly Jesus was also making this point: being a true disciple would not come as easy as thought.
- Think about the servants in the story. Everyone in town would've known who their boss was and it would be difficult for them to put their hated master's money "to work" as he'd requested. (13)
- Would anyone want to do business with them?

## Scene 2: **<Slide>** is a kind of **Day of Reckoning (19:15-24)**

- Surprisingly "made king," the master now much later returns and takes account of what his servants have "gained with his money." (15) His 'job review' tests their obedience:
  - Q: 'How willing have his servants been in his absence to go public and work on his behalf in the face of opposition?'
- ILL - 'Show me the money!' In our western mindset, it's difficult to get beyond ...
  - Our obsession with the 'bottom-line.' Capitalism and rampant materialism have trained us to applaud business expertise, self-reliance -- the ability to become one's own 'empire.'
  - But, was the master in Jesus' story really concerned about profits? Or, something else?
  - It's my view that the nobleman was actually not concerned about making money but rather testing the loyalty of his servants -- far more valuable in Middle Eastern culture: Had they trusted him? Did they listen? Had they done what the master'd asked them to do?
- Servant 1 and 2 respond with humility, not, 'Look at all my hard work, here's what I did with your money.' No self-aggrandizing. Just simple stewardship. The servants remember where their gifts came from, "Sir, your mina has earned ..." (16 & 18) ...
- **<Slide>** APP - Oh man, this punches me right in the guts.
  - I love to own my own stuff -- to run my own show -- be in control. And I want the glory when I 'make it big,' when things go well, when it appears I have been successful.
  - And I love an alibi -- to blame, to duck responsibility ... when the ship goes down.
- But, reality is: I am not an owner of anything I have. The sooner I get it into my brain and heart, the better, because holding tightly onto everything - 'It's all mine!' 'I can do it myself!' only hurts me in the long run and 'railroads' much of what God longs to do in me and through me.
- A viceroy, or steward is appointed by the monarch to represent them and sometimes even govern for the King -- to carry out the King's wishes.
- BQ: With your talents, time, & possessions, how do you see yourself? As an owner OR a steward?
- We are all 'playing with house money.' None of it's ours to stockpile, protect, or spend as we wish.

- All we have is God's and is best employed for the Master's purposes. I speak today to a wide audience - some who have a whole lot of resources and others who feel they have very little.
- APP - I want to say this morning that whatever you have, you are to make good use of it.
- ILL - To some of my friends battling the poverty cycle today, your generosity astounds me.
  - You have so very little, but even what you do have, you look to give away. **<Slide>**
  - I have been the beneficiary of your cards, gift certificates, your time & your love.
  - Even when it's been so hard to give, you have given.
  - And God is using you and your resources to grow His forever Kingdom work.
- ILL - Another friend of mine did well in his business and had just bought a nice, large, new home.
  - On our first visit, he and his wife basically said, Q: 'Our house is your house. We believe God has given us this place. We bought it to use it to bless others -- to do ministry here.'
  - Over the past 18 years, my friends have made good on that promise.
  - Much Kingdom work has happened on their property.
  - As they've held it loosely, opened their doors, & stewarded it well.
- A life of Christian stewardship is never static.
- Whether you have much or little, it's not yours to hoard. Even a seemingly insignificant talent, small amount of cash, or an hour of your precious time properly stewarded can bear fruit that lasts.
- The master rewards servants 1 and 2 with greater responsibility, a share in his authority. He adds to their money-managing, people-managing -- puts them in "charge" of 5 & 10 cities each. (17 & 19)
- Servant 3 is another matter. Frightened, he has misread the master. Either forming his own opinion or listening to the voice of the masses, servant 3 judged the master to be a "hard man." (22)
- He has 'played it safe' and hidden his gift in a 'napkin' (20).
- There is no record of punishment for the 3rd servant's non-action; he is simply stripped of the 1 gift he was originally given and it's passed on to the 1st servant who "already has ten!" (25)

### **Scene 3: <Slide> Amidst cries of injustice, the master delivers **A Chilling Final Judgment (11:26-27).****

- Important to make some sense of v 26: "to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away."
- On first read this looks like a 'rich-get-richer, poor-get-poorer' scenario.
- But that's not likely what Jesus is inferring here. What I believe He is driving at is this,
  - Q: 'To those who are faithful to Me, I will give more responsibility. And to those who have no loyalty whatsoever toward Me, even what they do have will be taken away.'
  - As one commentator puts it, Q: "The one who has no trust in God's goodness, even though he or she has a 'connection' to God, has no relationship with God and ends up with nothing from God in the end." - Bock, p 487.
- Finally the master calls for his subjects -- all those "enemies" who did not want him "to be king" and orders them to be slain right "in front" of him. (27)
- What was Jesus saying here? Most believe the "subjects" represent those who reject Jesus outright.
- There will be consequences. They will be judged. They will be punished.
- Graciously, there is no Scene 4. Perhaps for effect. Or, to keep the story a story. Who knows?

### **Conclusions:**

- To conclude, I see two calls from Jesus 'shouting out' to us this morning.

#### **1. <Slide> A Call to Loyalty**

- BQ: So, how well do you know the Master? Loyalty flows from knowing the true heart of the Master.
- Much energy is needlessly burned on skewed beliefs and views about God and His character.
- Not about doing stuff for the Master, it's this deep knowing -- clinging to Jesus and His plan that radically re-orientes our lives.
- And, our ability to steward the gifts God has given us is directly related to our relationship with Him.
- APP - I believe Servant 3 in Jesus' parable characterizes many church-goers today.
  - He has some connection to the Master. He's part of the community. But not fully.
  - By choice or by influence, He has a misguided view of his lord.
  - He doesn't really know him. He self-protects.

- In the end, he's not dialed in enough to make the right decision and he misses out.
- I believe this speaks to the 'come-late-&-leave-early's' in our congregation -- those who, by choice or circumstance, find themselves on the periphery of church and relationship with Jesus. Something's holding you back. You want a 'piece' of Jesus but can't 'jump in.'
- Perhaps it's because you feel 'burned' by church in the past, or by Christianity or by Jesus.
- Or, you're afraid that if you give Jesus your full loyalty He'll ask you to give up something that you're pretty attached to and it has a huge grip on your life -- your heart. Or, maybe you've kept church and Jesus at a distance ... because you're just not sure about them.
- This morning God is calling us deeper into His heart. Truth is: Our Master is generous. And He is gracious. And we needn't 'play it safe' with Jesus or the gifts He gives. 'Go for it!' Jesus beckons.
- Oh, don't worry, He knows it all. It's not like the closer you get, the more in-congruencies -- the more blemishes He finds. He's sees it all even from the distances we keep.
- And the Master still calls us closer. Where we can be free. Where our loyalties can be shifted away from the emptiness of our own pursuits. And onto Him. And His.
- Where our gifts find new significance loyally offered up to Jesus to enlarge His Kingdom with fruit that'll last forever. No life like it. This is where we find our true meaning.

## 2. <Slide> A Call to Faithfulness

- ILL - A British journalist once asked Mother Teresa how she kept going, knowing ...
  - She could never meet the needs of all the dying people in the streets of Calcutta.
  - And Mother Teresa replied, Q: "I'm not called to be successful. I am called to be faithful."
- Not to 'burst your bubble,' but most of life, and particularly life with Jesus is like this. Tough, it requires simple faithfulness with what we've been given. And not much fanfare accompanies.
- However, from an early age, we are conditioned for success.
- We scheme for it, aspire to achieve it -- or at least the appearance of it.
- And we applaud success in others.
- Now, there's nothing innately wrong with success.
- It all depends on how you get it and what you do with it.
- We can find success doing things the wrong way -- even cheating our way to the top. We can flaunt success in a way that alienates others and propels us to entitlement. Can't live without it. We can be so success-driven, it consumes us and we steamroll over everyone -- ourselves included.
- But with the call of Jesus, there's always a greater value at play.
- I draw your attention to the video screen for a clip many of you have seen.
- Jesus' call to Peter in the movie, Son of God. **<VIDEO: 4 minutes.>**
- You can feel the reticence in Peter as Jesus approaches his boat. Jesus still asks a lot of us today.
- Being a genuine Christ-follower is risky in our culture. Isn't cool. We don't blend in. We stand out.
- ILL - Many years ago I heard a message at a Missions Rally by a guy called, Mike Yaconelli.
  - It was about discipleship, and the challenge to go 'all-in' on God's mission. And it's stuck with me. His Big Idea: Q: "Following Jesus will ruin your life." - Mike Yaconelli, Missionsfest c.2000.
- And Jesus stops his followers 'dead in their tracks' in Jericho with this parable.
  - Q: 'You want glory, success? You want us to ride in and take Jerusalem? You want the wrong thing. That's not my life-plan for you. Soon, I will go away for a long time. And you will face it. There will be haters. And I need you to be faithful with the gifts I have given you. Invest them in My Kingdom work. Love people. Give them your time. Shine for me. May not be what you're looking for. 'Cuz it'll cost you. Ruin your nicely-little-planned-out life. But, it will be worth it. And, we'll change the world.' Together' **<Slide>**
- BQ: What are you giving your life to these days? Who's in charge? What consumes your passion? And, for what cause are you investing your talents, time, & possessions? Only One is worth it.
- We will be held accountable for what we've done with what God's given us.
- Our focus on end-times must never be on when, but instead on faithfulness in anticipation of.
- And for His faithful stewards, Jesus' coming judgment is not to be feared, for it will be an occasion of deep affirmation. I look forward to that day. Amen.