Kingdom Life: Known

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Duet 16:13-17 13 Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. 14 Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. 15 For seven days celebrate the festival to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed:
17 Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.

Matthew 25:14-30 14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 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.' 21 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.**' 22 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.' 23 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.' 24 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, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 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. 28 So take

the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. [29] 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. [30] And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.
– Deut 16:15

This is an unconditional promise. Read all of Deut. 16 and you might think it is conditional. If I bring a good enough offering, in proportion to my blessings, God will bless the harvest and work… However, it is the other way around. Moses says, because God blesses you don't come the festival empty handed.

How much money is frightening to you? How much would someone have to entrust to you… maybe with no strings attached before you got a little anxious?

$1,000? What is that a couch, 2-3 car payments, a nice push mower to start a lawn business… $10,000? What is that the lease on a car? Or new carpet? A nice riding mower? Not to scary, you could pay that back if something went terribly wrong.

$100,000 dollars … A nice downpayment on a house or a work truck and trailer … I mean that would be al you need to really get going in landscaping.

$1 Million dollars… are you starting to get a little nervous? You got to have some real plans to put that money to work? Might just be better off investing in some CD's and keep it safe?

What if you are a CEO of a fortune 500 company entrusted with billions of dollars and you lose 200 billion in market cap in one

day or $1.4 trillion dollars of market cap in the first week of November? And you have the most successful business in the world. Each according to their talents.

No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed: [17] Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you. -Duet 16:16-17

Eli is starting off his Roth investments. He is excited about it. And I was kind of excited about the big AI tech sell off after the election. I was thinking now is the time for him to learn some lessons. Better to lose 10% of $500 dollars then to lose 10% of $100,000. And better to learn the lessons of ups and downs and staying int the market when you are young and you still have plenty of time for compounding interest to work on your side.

I remember the first time a market downturn cost my retirement account $10,000. It was really, really scary. I remember the urge to sell everything. I was serving in Iowa at the time and my text study group had 4 guys that were about to retire. Some of them literally had to put off their retirement for a couple of years after the 2009 sell off.

How much money is frightening to you?

Here is the thing this parable has nothing to do with money. Sometimes it gets used as a stewardship sermon. You can almost get there is you think about talents as your spiritual gifts, rather than money. God gives to us, each according to our gifts, abilities that we should and can and often do use in our daily lives, to support our families, contribute to society and find our niche of volunteering in the church.

It seems that Jesus might be telling us how to use our most precious resources. This is a lesson on the value of your time and energy much less your money. Right? NO! This is a lesson on trust and fear.

But let's go there. If this is a lesson about resource management… how much talent would God have to give you before you would get scared of squandering it.

I don't think it would take long for us to discover some crushed dreams, buried in the sand long ago, in each of our families. Singing on Broadway, drafted to a professional sport, or that dream job.

How much would god have to trust you with before you would start to second guess every decision and worry about failing him.

'Master, I knew you to be a hard man… so I was afraid…

I mean money is one thing. A crushed dream, yes painful, but really only affects you, how about when God has entrusted us with actual human life. A small child with an illness, A teenager in existential identity crisis, A parent who can no longer drive a car or care for their home… You do not know fear until you are faced with the life-or-death decisions that come at the end of a parent or a spouse's life. And yet at the same time I have seen, in those moments, some of the most faithful and courageous decisions made by those <u>entrusted</u> with the power of attorney or honoring a DNR order.

And that is actually getting us closer to the faith that Jesus is creating in us, and the disciples back then, through the parable of the talents. This parable is not about the resources God has given you. This parable is about trust and fear.

How much has God given you and why is it that we sometimes get scared and bury … what has been entrusted to us… unable to make the decisions, dream the dreams that really matter.

It is our human nature. You are not the only one that gets scared when the stakes get high. And yet the promise stands despite our frozen moments of indecision.

For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.
– Deut 16:15

Never put a question mark were God puts a period. You can trust God to bless you. It was for your fear that Christ died on the cross… not so that you could remove your fear on your own, but because we are afraid, and we do not deserve the, 'Well done.' At the end of our lives… Because we can all point to times and places where there was no harvest and the work of our hands failed. Because fear has squandered and buried our life… Jesus stepped into human history… Jesus steps into your life even know to replace your doubts and worry with His promise. In the cross Jesus literally removes the accusations of our failings by placing around our shoulders His cloak of righteousness.

Because of the cross we are set free. The only answer to fear, and the way it shapes our lives, is the promise of forgiveness… that our mistakes do not define us. You do not have to prove yourself to God. You do not have to withhold your resources, your talents, your very life to self-preserve. You have been set free from that. You can once again see all that God has provided and entrusted to His spirit within you.

For me it comes down to the central argument of the man who had buried His treasure. I am that man. And I have said these words to Christ. And He has taken from me the money, the dream, the

expectations that were threatening to rob me of life. And he will do it again. He will rob me of my idols until there is nothing left But Christ and His righteousness… His work on my behalf which renews my faith in Him, His harvest, His work through my hands.

How many time have I found myself saying to myself that I must know God, I must find God, I must figure out what God wants and prove myself to him…!!

Only to find God telling me … I know you! I now your fears, I know your limits… I know you. I know what you need. I know what is next. I have the whole world in my hand! It is I - *the Lord your God who will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.*

It is not that you have figured out God, it is that He knows you! And because of Christ we hear:

'Well done, good and faithful servant. ... ***Enter into the joy of your master.****'*



**The Parable of the Talents or Minas* by the 17th-century Dutch artist Willem de Poorter