

Title: Use it or Lose it

Today, we are going to talk about Christian Living.

Introduction:

Have you ever thought about what you are doing in San Antonio? Not just where you work or what you do at work? But why you do what you do. Why you work where you work, why you spend the time that you spend? Are our lives just one big hyphen until we go to heaven? Or is there something else?

In the book of Esther there is a quote that I love. King Xerxes (Zerk-seez) marries Esther and they are about to live happily ever after. Unfortunately, Haman who is the villain comes up with a plot to kill all the Jews.

Mordecai, who is Esther's uncle and raised her, makes an appeal to Esther to do something. He tells her, (NIV) "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Don't those words just take your breath away? Do those words call out to you?

Our society is crumbling, truth is fading, families are breaking apart, children are crying out.

Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? What do you do with the grace that has been given to you? Do you use your new life to serve the kingdom or do you hide it away? Do you use it to serve God's kingdom or serve yourself? There are four reasons to serve Jesus and his kingdom. First, to Glorify our God.

Second, because we fear him. Third, because we love him. Fourth, because we will be rewarded. If we are obedient to God with the gifts we are given we will be rewarded. Today I will be speaking about rewards. And when it comes to rewards, either we use it (gifting) or we will lose it.

Pray

v.11 Setting

¹¹While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

This is the last stop before Jesus enters Jerusalem. The disciples knew Jerusalem was the center of Israel. The disciples probably thought Jesus was going to take back his kingdom. However, Jesus is correcting the idea that the physical kingdom of God was going to appear. That Jesus was going to take over the Romans. Instead the spiritual kingdom has already come! Jesus is telling them that they will have to wait until Jesus' Second Coming to see the physical kingdom.

v.12-14 Accession Period

¹²He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' ¹⁴"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'

Jesus who is the nobleman will leave to be crowned King and receive his kingdom and then return. He calls his ten servants and gives them ten minas.

A mina was about three month's wage. He told them to put the money to work. Do something with it.

His citizens however sent a delegation to oppose him because they did not want him as their king.

v.15-19 The Good Servants

¹⁵"He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. ¹⁶"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ¹⁷" 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' ¹⁸"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' ¹⁹"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

The good servants are given cities to rule! The amount in which they managed is small in comparison to the reward. Three months wages to cities. The true purpose comes out: a test of faithfulness to determine worthiness to rule.

v.20-25 The Bad Servant

²⁰"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' ²²"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' He wrapped his money in a piece of cloth. This piece of cloth was wrapped around the head to protect it from the sun. (Osborne) What was his reason?

Fear. First, the servant believed the master to be a hard man and he takes out what he does not put in. This is a banking metaphor for demanding too high an interest on an investment; virtually accuses the nobleman of being a fraud and exploiter (Green).

Second, the nobleman reaps what he does not sow. This is an agricultural metaphor to support a hard ruler. (Osborne)

So the King responds with judgment of the third servant.

First, by the servants own words. Even if servant was

correct he still is guilty of disobedience. He was a fool because the harshness of the master should have made him work harder. He could have at least earned money through investment.

And the King takes away the mina from the third servant. By default the servants were all going to be rewarded. But now the responsibility to use the mina is transferred to another servant (Marshall). And the reward is to do more for the master.

v.26 Principle

²⁴"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' ²⁵" 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' ²⁶"He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.'

This principle is that those who work for the kingdom gain added rewards. Those who do not work for the kingdom will have no rewards.

v.27 The Enemies of the King

²⁷But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me."

The enemies of the King are brought and slaughtered in the presence of the King. This is a picture of the final judgment found in revelation.

So we know what it meant for Jesus' age but what does it mean for our age. We all understand the banking illustration but the question is do we really apply this? Well, let's begin with the most important person of this parable: Jesus.

1. Jesus is the King who will Judge us

Jesus is our Savior who is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He is the crowned King who will return and create

his new physical kingdom. He will set up the kingdom which the Jews have been waiting for so long. He will set up the kingdom which we have been waiting for so long. Jesus rewards us not out of obligation but out of generosity. But we will stand before Christ. This parable brings to light what Paul was writing in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." Or Romans 14:10 ... "For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God.' So then each of us will give an account of himself to God"

We will stand before Christ for judgment of what we have done and not done. Now we won't be judged for salvation. Our free ticket is when we accept Jesus. When we accept Jesus as Savior, we are justified, adopted, born again, and sanctified. However, while we are on earth, we are judged for putting God's gifts to work. How we live today will determine the rewards we receive in eternity. So who won't have eternal life? The enemies of Jesus.

2. Enemies of Jesus will be condemned

The second group is the citizens whom rejected Jesus as the Messiah from the 1st century. They are the non believers from the book of Revelation. In Revelation, when Christ comes back he kills his enemies and throws them in the lake of fire.

Now we move on to the final two groups – good and bad. Now I can't tell whether a certain person is or will be a certain servant. The Holy Spirit is the one who will confirm whether the way you are living is biblical. I know there will be some who have so twisted their thinking that they

can think they are not sinning but that is between them and the Lord. The third group is the wicked servant.

3. Wicked Servants will lose rewards

The servant did not have the Master's intentions. He did not trust the master's intentions. Selfish. Did nothing. So what is the result of the bad servant?

They experience shame.

The King tells the servant that he will be judged by the servant's own words. He also calls the servant wicked. Imagine the embarrassment and shame that the servant feels when the wonderful King tells him this.

They experience temporary rejection.

The King has the mina taken away from the servant. A gift which is given is taken away and given to another. Rejection is felt and probably regret.

They experience loss of reign.

Unlike the good servants, this servant will has no cities to help rule over. They have squandered their time on earth and reap what they sow.

Wicked servants can be good, born again Christians who let opportunities pass them by for whatever reason. Take for instance an encounter between Marco Polo and the Pope.

Illustration: Marco Polo

The fate of Asia was handed to three merchants. It is a shame that the Pope would let an opportunity like this slip through him like sand slipping through the hands. Would Asia have been different if it converted to Christianity? Would we have as many problems today if Asia converted to Christianity? Would we be in Iraq and Afghanistan right now if Asia was converted?

The Pope was entrusted with all Christendom. The Leader of all Christians had access to everyone who was called Christian. And yet he sent practically nothing. What is done now, affects all eternity.

I often tell my soldiers, "Eternity is racing towards us. What we do in this life will echo in halls of eternity"

But, there are some misconceptions concerning rewards. First, people think quantity is more important than quality. We must realize that the value of a deed depends foremost on the attitude of the heart. Think of the story of the rich vs the widow (Luke 21). The rich gave out of his excess whereas the widow gave out of which she had to live. Do we use our talents for God out of the excess or out of the best? Remember that rewards are given not because of results or size of followers but on loyalty to Christ with the time, talents and treasures that he has given us.

Secondly, we must remember rewards are from a generous King not from an obligated King. Therefore we must not think to seek favor over obedience to Christ. Just like the older brother in the prodigal son who sinned because he thought he could seek the favor of his father. We cannot think that by doing good that we can twist the arm of our Father in heaven. Rather we obey because he this passage calls to obedience.

If the Holy Spirit is convicting your heart, take encouragement. God's grace has given us freedom. Freedom to choose. How you have lived does not have to determine your destiny.

But Pastor, how do I start? What if I have been living like the bad servant?

1. Confess and recommit to the Lord
2. Start with the FAMILY

- a. No more passive parents
- b. No more distracted spouses
- c. No more wandering children

3. Edify the Body of Christ

Shoulder weekly kingdom responsibility. Use our gifts to build up. Christ came to serve not to be served. Which leads to...

4. Fan the Flames of Revival

America has not seen a revival in decades. Some would say in a century. Who knows maybe if we serve God's kingdom with the gifts he has given us, he will bless this world with a revival.

The Holy Spirit can break any chain. The blood of Christ forgives the darkest of sin. You are never stuck. You have the choice today of being the wicked or the good servant.

Which leads to the fourth point.

4. Good Servants will be rewarded.

What do we know about the good servant?

They were given commendation

The servant is called Good and in Matthew called faithful. That is what so many of us long for. To be called good and faithful. The only experience that might be similar would be when finishing a football game and putting it all on the line. Whether losing or winning, knowing that you did your best. Paul fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, his life was a drink offering. Billy Graham in an interview was asked about his ministry. He told them his only care is that he is called a good and faithful servant.

They were called trustworthy

Those who trustworthy in little will be trusted with much. God has given us this opportunity on earth to be trustworthy in heaven. The thoughts and actions we have

today, determines the person we are in eternity. The person we are today, determines the rewards we will have in eternity. Use it or lose it.

They were given reign of cities

The servant is given cities to rule over. This could mean that we will rule over heavenly beings as servants of Christ.

What is the work that we can do? What is a mina? The following are some aspects of Christian living. These passages speak specifically about being rewarded or being obedient for the life you live now. The reward will be given when Jesus returns.

Financial Generosity Matthew 6:19-21

We must be good stewards of God's money

Hospitality Matthew 25:35-36

We must serve those God has put in our path

Spiritual Disciplines Matthew 6

We must discipline our spiritual walk

Faithfulness of Calling Colossians 3:22-24

We must be true to the path God has put before us

Loving the Unlovable Luke 6:27-28

We must love our enemies

Doctrinal Integrity 2 John 1:8

We must keep the faith

Suffering 1 Peter 1:7; Matthew 5:11-12

We must persevere in our afflictions

Fighting Injustice Micah 6:8

We must fight for the helpless

Investment in People 1 Corinth 3:14

We must pour lives into others

Being Kingdom Minded Matthew 28:18-20

We must bring Christ to the nations

William Carey is the "father of modern missions"

He was reading books from Jonathan Edwards and God was preparing his heart for missions. So he went to a minister's meeting in 1786 and asked if it was the duty of all Christians to spread the Gospel throughout the world. One of the leaders told him, "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid and mine". So Carey decided Matthew 28 was telling all Christians to be kingdom minded and sailed for India where he served. His quote was, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God"

Conclusion

My wife and I love playing board games, especially monopoly. After playing so many times, we already know each others strategies. She always goes for boardwalk and park place. I always go for the green (Pacific, N. Carolina, Pennsylvania Ave) and red (Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois Ave). I slowly take her money and then every fourth turn or so I give it all back. But finally one of us goes bankrupt and the epic battle has been won. Everything goes back in the box. But in eternity, everything does not go back in the box. What is done now, determines the future.

This passage teaches us Jesus who is the King will judge us, enemies of Jesus will be judged, wicked servants will lose rewards, and good servants will be rewarded.

"Eternity is racing towards us. What we do in this life will echo in the halls of eternity." Use it or lose it.