

Stand Up Stand Out

“Materialism & Stewardship”

October 5-6

Introduction

Hey everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This week we continue our series, *Stand Up Stand Out* where we've been tackling some of the biggest issues of our day. These are critical areas where we will face the choice to either bow down and blend in or stand up and stand out.

Over the past few weeks we've tackled everything from objective truth, to radical love, and last week we saw what scripture says about sexuality. It has been an incredible series so far and if you've missed any of it I want to encourage you to visit our website at nhcohawaii.org to catch any of our past messages.

Biblical Stewardship

This week we move from the bedroom to the bank account because today we're talking about Biblical stewardship. I know some of you are probably thinking, “Good heavens! Is *nothing* sacred!” Actually, everything is sacred and it all belongs to Jesus!

But we're living in a time where many people are feeling financial strain. The housing market is out of hand, inflation is out of control, and good jobs are out of reach. It reminds me of the young man who recently found himself unemployed.

This guy applied everywhere but no one was hiring. Finally he ended up at the local zoo. The zoo keeper told him there was no work but the man pleaded with him. Finally the zoo keeper said, “Well, we do have one position, but it would only be temporary.” “Yes! Anything,” said the man, “What do you want me to do.” The zoo keeper said, “Recently we lost our main attraction here at the zoo — a gorilla named Bobo. If the public knew that Bobo was gone we'd go out of business. So what we'd need you to do is put on this gorilla costume and sit in Bobo's cage until we can replace him.” The young man thought this was the craziest idea he'd ever heard but he desperately needed the work so he agreed. “It's pretty easy,” said the zoo keeper, “Just sit in the cage and at the end of the day you get paid.” It sounded easy enough so the young man put on the gorilla costume and sat in Bobo's cage, humiliated. The day was largely uneventful. A few people stopped by the enclosure to take some pictures and after closing the zoo keeper paid the man. The next day the man felt a little more comfortable so he decided to take the act up a notch and he clambered around the cage beating his chest from time to time. This drew larger groups of people and at the end of that day the zoo keeper gave him a little bonus. “Keep it up,” he said, “The crowds love you.” The third day the man was determined to put on a show the people would never forget. He started to climb the jungle gym and swing from the bars. Large crowds of people began to gather around. But as the man was swinging he lost his footing and flew off the jungle gym and into the alligator river below. By this point the entire zoo had gathered to see what all of the commotion was about. Suddenly a young girl screamed from the crowd, “Look mommy! The alligator is coming!” Sure enough, the man looked behind him and swimming toward him was a hungry looking alligator. The man began to swim with all his might for the nearest embankment but the alligator was slowly gaining on him. The man reached the embankment but the costume made it hard for him to climb out and the alligator was getting closer. Finally, the young man thought to himself, “No job is worth this!” And he began to scream for help, “Help! Help! I'm not a gorilla! Get me out of here!” Suddenly, he heard a voice behind him and he spun around to hear the alligator say, “Keep it down pal or we'll both lose our jobs!”

The Olivet Discourse

As the world emerges from a global pandemic, many of us are just starting to regain our footing. Uncertainty about the economy, the elections, and global tensions can make it easy to play it safe and hold back. But today we're going to heed the call of our Master, Jesus, to leave the comforts of self-preservation and risk boldly for the Kingdom. Jesus is looking for those who will stand out from the crowd to radically steward the time, treasure, and talent He has bestowed.

Today we're going to look at a parable of Jesus found in, what is commonly known as, the *Olivet Discourse*. The *Olivet Discourse* is found in Matthew chapters 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21. It is called the *Olivet Discourse* because Jesus gave this teaching while sitting on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. Jesus' audience are His close followers and in this teaching He is answering their questions about things to come. He talks about the destruction of the temple, the end times, and His return. The central theme of this teaching is living in light of eternity. He's teaching His followers how we should live in light of His return. To drive this point home He tells stories that contrast those who are ready vs. those who are not. The moral of each story is that Jesus is looking for those who stand up and stand out.

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴ "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money," (Matthew 25:14-18).

In this story, the part of the man going on a journey is played by Jesus. In Acts 1 we read that Jesus ascended into heaven before His disciple's eyes. As they stood there looking up into the clouds two angels appeared and told them "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven," (Acts 1:9-11). So Jesus has gone on a journey but He didn't book a one-way ticket — it's round-trip. Like Arnold in *Terminator* He said, "I'll be back."

And before the man departs on his journey he entrusts his servants with his wealth. In the same way, Jesus has entrusted His wealth to His servants — the Church. The Bible says we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. He has entrusted the good news of the gospel to us, He has placed His Holy Spirit inside of us and has empowered us with the gifts of the Spirit, He has given us His very Word — the Holy Scriptures, He has given us the keys to the Kingdom and authority over every spiritual darkness, He has given us the promise of eternal life, and fills our lungs with breath so that we may live for Him.

The first takeaway from this story is that we are,

1. WE ARE STEWARDS NOT OWNERS (ENTRUSTED NOT ENTITLED). (V14)

The world's message is, "You are entitled to all that you have because you worked for it, You bought it, You own it." Jesus says the correct way to look at your time, the correct way to look at your talents, and the correct way to look at your treasure is that you have been entrusted with these things to steward them for God's purpose. Jesus is the Master, we are the servants, and He has entrusted His wealth to us. This is contrary to the way the world thinks.

But as God's servants we need to be reminded that we are here for a purpose beyond daily comforts and that all of our time, treasure and talents are on loan from Jesus to be used for His glory. So what is the difference between an *Entrusted* mindset and an *Entitled* mindset?

Entrusted Mindset - Grateful because everything is a gift from God.

Entitled Mindset - Expects to receive without recognizing the source.

Entrusted Mindset - Is responsible and feels a sense of duty to manage resources wisely.

Entitled Mindset - Is careless with resources believing they exist only for self-fulfillment.

Entrusted Mindset - Generous and gives freely knowing that they are merely a conduit of God's blessings.

Entitled Mindset - Stingy and holds tightly to possessions fearing loss and scarcity.

Entrusted Mindset - Thinks about eternal impact and legacy.

Entitled Mindset - Focuses on immediate gratification and comfort.

Entrusted Mindset - Accountable knowing they will answer to God for how they manage His resources.

Entitled Mindset - Believes they are free to do as they please with no consequences.

Entrusted Mindset - Finds security and confidence trusting in God's provision and timing.

Entitled Mindset - Feels anxious and insecure about resources constantly striving for more.

Entrusted Mindset - Works hard, knowing they are serving a higher purpose.

Entitled Mindset - Avoids risk and seeks comfort.

Entrusted Mindset - Finds joy in using resources for God's glory and others' benefit.

Entitled Mindset - Discontent, always desiring more and not satisfied with what they have.

There was a story of a man who walked into a shop one day and saw a priceless treasure sitting on the shelf — It was the Kingdom of God. The man knew at once that he needed to have this valuable treasure so he inquired about it with the shopkeeper. "Please," said the man, "I need to have this!" "Ok," said the shopkeeper, "But that isn't any mere trinket." The man reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. "You can take all the cash I have on me!" "Do you have a bank account?" Asked the shopkeeper. "Sure, I have a bank account," said the man. "Ok, I'll take everything in there as well." "But how will I make my car payments and pay my mortgage?" Asked the man. "Oh, you have a car and a house?" Asked the shopkeeper, "I'll take those as well." The man looked shocked. "But without my car and house I won't be able to drive to work, my kids won't have a place to sleep!" "You have a job and a family?" Said the shopkeeper. "I'll take them as well." The man thought long and hard about the cost but concluded that the Kingdom of God was worth everything he possessed. After some time he agreed to give everything to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper took the man's wallet, and his car keys, his house key, and everything else he possessed and then handed them back to the man. "These belong to me now but I need someone to steward them for me. There may be times when I call on you to use your car or when I ask you to open your home to others. I may ask that you and your family put other things aside in order to fulfill my plans or to give to certain areas of need. Can I trust you with *My* possession?" Can God trust you with His possessions? Do you see yourself as an entrusted steward or do you believe you own everything and are therefore entitled to it.

¹⁹ *“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.*
²⁰ *The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more,’ (Matthew 25:19-20).*

Jesus has not only entrusted us with time, treasure and talents to fulfill the work as His servants but the Bible says He is returning to settle the account. A wise servant knows that the Master will return to take account of His wealth. Notice the wise servants knew exactly what the Master had entrusted to them? “You entrusted me with five bags of gold.” Can you give an account of what Jesus has entrusted to you? Do you know what you have been given? Have you taken account of all that God has entrusted to you? Because one day we’re going to give an account. It begins with knowing what you have been entrusted with. Here at NHCO we are committed to helping you discover your God-given gifts and abilities so that you can use them for the Master’s purpose. We have classes, Bible studies, and small groups all designed to help you take inventory of what you have been entrusted with and then to utilize those things for God’s Kingdom.

²¹ *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’*
(Matthew 25:21).

The first servant was a stand up stand out individual. They knew that they were a steward who was entrusted with the Master’s wealth and they were faithful with what they had been entrusted with. Because of this they received a reward. But Jesus also leaves us with an example of a foolish servant.

²⁴ *“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ (Matthew 25:24-25).*

So the first thing we learned is that we are stewards not owners and that we need to live as if we are entrusted not entitled. What the foolish servant teaches us is,

2. NO RISK, NO REWARD. (FAITH OVER FEAR).

Look at the servant’s confession, “I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you,” (v. 25). This servant did not exhibit faith but fear. We may be tempted to think that this servant’s crime was not deserving of the punishment (Spoiler alert — He gets chewed out and fired in stunning fashion). After all, he didn’t squander the Master’s wealth like the prodigal son. He merely played it safe and kept it hidden. In essence, he did nothing. He probably thought to himself, “I’m not a stand out but at least I didn’t lose anything.” He just played it safe.

After High School I would work Summers for different contractors doing whatever was needed at different construction jobs. Often times the contractor would give us a task, leave, and then come back at the end of the day to check on the progress. And mistakes were sometimes made. Once, our job was to demo a condo that had burned in a fire. The guy I was working with took a sledgehammer and bust through the ruined drywall but he swung with so much force that he broke through the wall of the guy in the next unit. And the boss was pretty upset. But the times I saw the boss get the most angry was when he would return to a site and felt like the workers hadn’t been working.

Mistakes could be fixed but inactivity and laziness was an unpardonable sin. So if you didn't have a job, you found one. But you never stood around. This is why I always tell people, "Jesus is coming, look busy."

Jesus is gracious and merciful. He's after our heart. If He sees that we're trying (even if we're failing and making mistakes) He's going to be gracious with us. He can work with that. What He doesn't tolerate are people who take all that they've been entrusted and just play it safe. He doesn't appreciate when we do nothing. His response to the servant who "played it safe" was to call him a wicked and lazy servant. Jesus is looking for people of faith who will risk big for the Kingdom even when it's scary or we don't feel like we have all the answers. We need to have faith over fear.

And there are so many ways people are stewarding well the time, talents, and treasure God has entrusted to them.

1. Investing in Others

- **Discipleship and Mentorship:** Many people are giving of their time, treasure and talent to invest in others. Many of you are helping to teach or mentor others. Any time you help another draw closer to Jesus, grow in their walk, and live a fruitful life you are doing eternal work. This includes raising your own children to love God but also young believers or those who do not yet know Him.
- **Loving and Serving Others:** Others of you invest in others through acts of love and service. When you meet another's needs you are making an eternal impact. Jesus said that when we serve the least of these, we serve Him. This includes feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, or supporting others through difficult times.

2. Kingdom Stewardship

- **Using Resources for God's Purpose:** Giving financially toward Kingdom work is another way that we steward what we have been entrusted with. Many of you give generously to support the work of the Church, missionaries, ministries and charities to advance the Gospel and serve the community. We have experienced so many stand up stand out stories of radical faith in this area.
- **Serving in Your Church or Community:** Volunteering time, energy, or skills in ways that support the mission is an investment in God's Kingdom. We have so many skilled people in the Church who use their gifts to further the gospel and bless others.

3. Prayer and Worship

- **Contending for Encounters with God:** Many of you serve in prayer and worship to help usher people into an encounter with God and experience His Presence. This ministry has an eternal impact on people's lives.

There are so many stand up stand out examples of how people are faithfully serving! So many have answered the call to steward what they have been entrusted with for God's Kingdom.

As we close I want to highlight one last thing that we learn about what it takes to be a stand up stand out servant of Christ. It all stems from how we see the Master. Not only did the wicked servant confess that he has done nothing to steward the Master's wealth, he makes any even more damning confession in the way he viewed the master,

²⁴ "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not

scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ (Matthew 25:24-25).

The wicked servant’s fear and faithlessness stemmed from a faulty view of the Master. He didn’t see the Master as a loving, gracious, generous person. This is why,

3. HOW WE VIEW GOD WILL DETERMINE HOW WE LIVE.

The foolish servant had a faulty view of the Master. He probably thought to himself, “Why should I work for this guy? He just gives us some orders and then digs out? Also, why’d he give that guy 5 bags of money and me only one? That’s not fair. Doesn’t he trust me? I bet you he’s not even coming back? I’m not going to waste my time on him. He wants his money, he can dig it up himself.”

It can be tempting to think that God is like a Master who just gave us some orders and then disappeared. Many question if He’s ever coming back. It can be tempting to think this life is all that matters and that we should just live for the temporary instead of eternity. Or we can fall into the comparison trap and become disillusioned. How can I serve God? I don’t have gifts like so-and-so. Why didn’t God give me those gifts? There are so many faulty views that we can have that will lead us into a fruitless life.

The first two servants saw their Master as generous and faithful. They knew their Master would return and that they would give an account so they dared to risk boldly knowing the Master would reward their faithfulness.

Conclusion

This Monday I’ve been asked to attend a Pastor’s Appreciation chapel at the school my daughter attends. One of the questions they want us to answer is how we were called into ministry.

So I thought back to when I was probably 19 years old. I had a couple years of community college under my belt with no real plans for the future. It was at this crossroads in life that I attended an HIM conference in Honolulu. The keynote speaker that year was Francis Chan. And I remember sitting in a breakout session packed with young adults. And Francis said, “I ask so many young people what their plans are for the future. And they say, ‘I don’t, probably go to college, then get a job, then get married, then have some kids, then retire, then die...’” And he said, “That’s your plan? You think God is going to applaud that and say, ‘Well done my good and faithful servant?’” And I realized all of my life’s plans involved playing it safe. And the Holy Spirit stirred in me that day and I decided to risk big — risk it all for the Kingdom. I told Jesus, “I want to give you everything. Whatever time or resources I have I want to leverage for Your Kingdom.” That was nearly 20 years ago and I have never looked back. It may not look like a pulpit ministry for every one of us but whatever you choose to risk for God, the reward will be so much greater. As one wealthy businessman said when asked about how he was able to donate so much, “When I shovel it out, God shovels it in. Only, God’s shovel is bigger than mine.” When we give, we give with a man-sized shovel. When God gives, He uses a God-sized shovel. And everything we give belongs to Him anyway.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has the Master entrusted you with? Take time in prayer this week asking God to show you specific things He entrusted you with. Write them down — whether it’s financial resources, skills, relationships, or time.

2. What's one area in your life where God is calling you to take a risk for His Kingdom? Maybe it's giving generously, stepping into a new role, or using a talent for His glory. Commit to acting in faith rather than fear and risk boldly for His Kingdom.
3. Do you have any mindsets that need to be shifted? Maybe you've been operating more as an owner than a steward. Maybe you have misconceptions about God's character. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you in these areas and to show you opportunities where He would have you step out in faith.