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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**August 28, 2016**

**The Tale of Two Servants**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

**Prayer:** *Father, I once again thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for your mercy. I thank you especially for the gift of your word and the privilege that we have to open it up and to examine it and to mine it for wisdom. And Lord, we want to do that this morning, we just want to open up your book, we want to pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us as we examine it, look into one of your parables and to see what it is you have to teach us through this. And once again, Lord, as we pray every week, I pray that your Holy Spirit would make these words of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Jesus once told a parable about servant hood, it's in Matthew 25:14-30. Let me read it to you. It says this: *"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also*

he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 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.' 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.' 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.' 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.' 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, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 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? 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. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 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. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*"

Well, this is the story of two servants and one imposter, and actually most of the story was devoted to the imposter. And the story really is a tragedy not because the servant was an imposter, but because he never knew it until it was too late. See, Jesus doesn't mince words when it comes to true and false conversion because he understands that the stakes are incredibly high here. You know, Jesus came to earth to live out his life perfectly and then offer that life up at the cross as a substitute for our life of sin, and he did that to redeem and rescue sinners so that they could glorify God through their rescued and redeemed lives. And he equips those sinners to live those lives through his Holy Spirit who literally takes up residence within them. And Jesus was using this parable to point out the difference between a real believer and somebody who's deceived themselves. And the parable brings up a huge question and it gives us a very important answer to another question. The question is: Who is a real servant? Now this is a question that often divides people into two groups. We got the legalists on the one side, you know, they're the Pharisees, they're the ones who think that pleasing God is really just a matter of keeping an external set of rules. And we have on the other side

the easy believers who say, well, Jesus did it all, just say the sinner's prayer and continue to live your life as if obedience is strictly optional. Both miss the mark. You see, stewardship is not about performance or nonperformance, it is all about attitude. And the false servant wasn't cast into outer darkness because his performance did or did not fail or pass. He was cast out because his performance meant nothing to him. And it's incredibly important for you to see that distinction. You see, Christians, we're brand new creatures. We are creatures who God himself now lives inside. *1 Corinthians 3:16* says: *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* Now, when that happens, that changes drastically how you think, how you plan and how you act. And today it is frighteningly easy to kid yourself into thinking that that has happened, that the Spirit actually is indwelling you when in fact it may not be. And when it really has happened, we operate with the kingdom as our number one priority. We think like stewards think. Instead of me being at the center of all things, there is God and his kingdom. The presence of God's Holy Spirit now living inside me changes my thinking from flesh-based to Spirit-based. And *Romans 8:5* says: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life*

and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. The biggest word and the scariest word in that whole section is that word that little two-letter word "if". I mean it defines whether or not you are a Christian. You see, if the Spirit of God isn't in you, you can be the chairman of the deacon board, you can be a Sunday school teacher, you can be the pastor, it doesn't matter, if the Spirit of God is not in you, you are not one of his. If the Spirit of God lives in you, God's word says you will have certain identifying characteristics, certain proofs that God is there inside you. One of them we have what Romans just identified, we call it a mindset. *Those who live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* Now, a spiritual mindset is precisely what was missing from the mind of the false servant. He was centered on himself. He didn't think like a servant thinks, so his master and his master's kingdom meant very little to him. And when you look at what he did, I mean, he didn't squander, he didn't embezzle, he didn't steal his master's talent, he just didn't care enough to do anything with it because stewardship is all about ownership.

If we look at the parable of the talents, we can identify what real ownership of the kingdom entails because two of the servants had it and one of them didn't. Two of them were faithful, loyal, and joyful in their stewardship; one of them was not. And by looking at the stewards, we can ask ourselves two vital questions to determine if we are true or false stewards. Here's the questions. Number one: How does a steward think? What's his mindset? And question number two: Is that how I think? Is that my mindset? Well, the first and most obvious mindset of a steward is faithfulness. And God makes that very clear, I mean, all three stewards were given different resources. There was one given five talents, one given two talents, and one given only one talent. So all of the stewards have very different levels of responsibility and they all have different levels of response. However, the master judges each of them not on the basis of their performance but on the basis of their faithfulness. Now, the implications of this difference are huge. What this does from God's perspective is that it levels the playing field for virtually everyone. We all play from the same field. You see, our view of servant hood, our view of stewardship, that is our view of what it takes to make a successful manager is terribly flawed by our understanding of how the world works. I mean it's based on competition and performance and results, I mean, we think a good steward, a good servant is somebody who produces a good bottom line. You see, God's view of

stewardship is based solely on faithfulness. Our view is based on how we are doing relative to somebody else. I mean we just assume a five-talent servant is -- well, he's two and a half times better than a two-talent servant who's twice as good as a one-talent servant. God's view is different. God's view is relative only to the resources that he's given us. You know, for example, a brilliant gifted speaker can look very impressive compared to a tongue-tied, unchurched, uneducated country preacher, but God sees it very differently. Picture a brilliant speaker and a country preacher and they're both answering not to a standard of performance, they're both answering, according to God, to their faithfulness. By that criterion, what you do performance wise matters far less than your mindset than how and why you are doing something. A brilliant gifted speaker could impress incredibly maybe with half of his effort. And a tongue-tied country preacher might fall short giving it every single thing he's got. Now if the performance -- if the criterion is performance, well then the country preacher fails. But if the criterion is faithfulness and he's doing the very best that he can with what God has given him, well then he clearly succeeds. And the only two parties who will really know if their actions were a success or a failure is God who gives the resources and the one who receives them. They're the only ones who will know if they have been faithful. I mean I or anyone else for that matter can fool you with my performance. I

mean, I can make you think that I'm faithful with a half-hearted effort if I've got the resources. The only one that I can't fool is the one who knows precisely what my resources are, and he's going to judge me the way he judges all stewards, by my faithfulness with what he's given to me. The five talent steward earned five more talents and he's told "Well done, good and faithful servant." The two talent servant, he earns two more talents, that's really less than half the results of the five-talent servant, but he receives the exact same response: "Well done, good and faithful servant." And the reason why is that he was faithful to the resource that God had given him.

Now the trouble starts when we take a look at the one-talent servant. You see, this level playing field, well, it cuts both ways. I mean, we look at the one-talent servant, he got only one-fifth of the resources that the five-talent steward had, he had half the resources that the two-talent steward had, so relatively speaking, you can say, well, he really got the short end of the stick. But God judges by faithfulness rather than by performance. So resources really, they mean nothing. I mean, what do you suppose the master would have said if the one-talent servant approached him the way the others did and said that he produced an additional talent? I mean, do you think he would have berated him because he had only one-fifth of the five-talent steward or half



the two-talent steward? No, no, absolutely not. No doubt he would have said what he said to the other stewards. He would have said: "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," and he would have said that because faithfulness and not performance is what counts.

So let me make this practical, and let me apply to us as a church, I mean, a church has five-talent, two-talent and one-talent stewards, it has no no talent stewards. They don't exist. The problem is many one-talent servants think like that one-talent servant did, I mean, it's not a five, I mean, after all, it's not a two, it's only a one, so it's probably not really worth investing it. I mean if it was a five or a two, maybe I'd do something about it, but I'm just a one, what's a one worth? Well, let me tell you, that's a disastrous way to think. That's the way false servants think. See, the vast majority of any church consists of one-talent servants, and if they understand that faithfulness and not performance is what God judges by, then five, two or one, it doesn't really matter. What you do with whatever God gives you is what matters, and it matters immensely to God, because that's the measure of your faithfulness and God is looking for faithfulness. You know, the one-talent servant, he never got that. And because he only received the one talent, he figured he's just going to bury

it in the ground, I mean, it was only one talent, so he just ignored it. And he ignored it because he never had a servant's heart and he never saw faithfulness as something of value, something personal between him and his God. It was something he couldn't see because he never had the mindset to see it. And the reason he had no mindset for it is because the Spirit of God was not dwelling in him. He was a false servant. He had his mind set on the things of the flesh. Again, *Romans 8: For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* So the Spirit of Christ did not belong to him and he wasn't a faithful servant because there was no faith there in him to begin with. And he was cast out because he never was an owner of the kingdom in the first place.

Now the second characteristics of a steward's thinking or mindset is loyalty. The false steward had divided loyalties. Okay. You might say, okay, how do you know that? Well, the scripture says the master gave the servants the talents and that he then went away on a long journey and the five-talent steward and the two-talent steward immediately got busy and the one-talent steward did nothing. So just put it into our context, I mean, if I gave you instructions to invest for me and I wrote you a check, let's say I went away for two or three years and I came back and I found out

you never even cashed it, I mean, I'd have every right to say, what are you doing? I mean, I had asked that and I'd be right in assuming that he you had something else on your agenda, but there's far more to it than that. See, the false steward demonstrated the classic symptoms that Jesus said a servant with two masters has. Jesus in *Matthew 6* explains what happens to you when you have divided loyalties. He says in *Matthew 6:24*: "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" You see, the false servant, he didn't merely disobey his master, he despised him. In fact he despised him so much he couldn't keep his mouth shut. I mean, he used the occasion of his own judgment to launch an attack on his master, he says this in verse 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, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'*" Now what he is saying is I happen to know, Master, that you're a bully, a fraud, and a thief, and I have every right to be frightened of you, so here's your money back. Hatred can make you say things that you shouldn't even when you're being judged. I don't think many of us get to this level of hatred but it all starts with resentment and the false steward resented the service that the true servants loved. Again, how do I

know that? Well, let's look at the third mindset of a steward. You know, first he serves faithfully. He serves faithfully knowing that faithfulness is the measure of God for success. And secondly, he serves loyally knowing that split loyalties can produce resentment and hatred; and finally he serves joyfully, and here's why. You see, if I know that my emptying garbage cans in the church is as important and as meaningful as somebody else preaching, teaching or leading in a church, well then I can do whatever my job is with joy. You know, it was Francis Schaeffer who pointed out that in the kingdom of God there are no little people and there are no little people because the playing field is all level, and the playing field is level because faithfulness is the measure by which we're all measured by. All of us stand as stewards uniquely and individually before our Master, and stand each of us will. God says in *Romans 14: Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.* God cares intensely about us as individuals and we will stand before him as our only master. I've got to tell you for false stewards, this will be a time of dread. For true stewards this will be a time of complete joy. And it all has to do with one little word in this parable of the talents. Now the NIV translates this little word "see," the King James translates it as "behold," and the ESV translates it as "here." We might translate this word as, "Oh, check it out." Listen to what

it says. This is verse 20, it says: *"And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here'"* -- or check it out -- *"'I have made five talents more.' 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.'* 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.'* 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.'"*

See, the steward is saying here's what you gave me, here's the resources that I have, I got a five, I got a two, I got a one, he's saying here's what you've given me, behold, see, here, check this out, look what I did with your resources. There's joy in that statement, there's excitement. Now the false steward used the very same word "here," but it came after his tirade and it proceeded -- preceded his handing back his talent. The best he can muster is *"Here, you have what is yours."* The translation's: *"Here's your stinking talent back."* See, the two things that the false steward never understood was urgency and consequence, and his master now gives him both. This is what he says. He says: *"'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and*

gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was mine own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it is to him who has the ten talents. 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. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" You know what the master is saying is if you really believed I was what you accuse me of, you would have understood something, you would have understood the urgency of complying and you would have banked my money at the very least. So the fact that you didn't proves that it's you who are the fraud, and it further proves that you never had the mindset of a servant in the first place. And so the master says: "Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Understand something, there's no doubt at this point the false servant is astounded. He's shocked. I mean he was faithless, disloyal, resentful and joyless but no doubt blown away because he's been cast out. But understand, that's the way it is with false servants. Listen to *Matthew 7:21*, Jesus's words, he says: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out

*demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them; 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"* Now we would think, I think, how in the world could that happen? I mean, how could these people not know that they were false servants? Well I think the answer is simple. You see, the father of lies sold them a lie and they bought it; they were deceived. It's the same line that's being sold wholesale today. It's the lie that the church often times promulgates when it says you're not a steward, you're a customer; when it says life isn't service given, it is service expected. You see, many churches have devolved into spiritual consumer service centers rather than living expressions of the body of Christ where people go to express their worship through kingdom citizenship and responsibility. We call that stewardship. We call that servant hood.

You know, I mentioned last week about the death of Bob Barber, some of you know -- many of us here knew him, a lot of you didn't, but wonderful, wonderful man. I just wanted to share with you why his life was so successful. Let me tell you about Bob's gift, Bob's gift was cleaning and maintenance. He was an extremely soft-spoken guy who applied the talent that God gave him to cleaning the churches that he went to. Now by most accounts, cleaning and maintenance is a one-talent gift. You know, Janice and I went to

his wake last Tuesday. We had to wait 45 minutes outside the building just to be able to get inside the building where the service was taking place. Two things were going on there, I believe. Number one, the people themselves who Bob touched by faithfully using that one-talent gift to the very best of his ability, they were recognizing what a blessing in their lives Bob's simple life and simple use of his simple gift was. One person came up to me and said I was hurting really bad one day and he came up to me and he just said, "Hey, I'm praying for you," and I knew that he was telling the truth and I knew that he would. Another thing I sensed in that service was that God was honoring this faithful life. You know, Bob wasn't a pastor, he wasn't a gifted leader, he wasn't a gifted speaker, he was just someone who made sure that the building was clean. He had a one-talent gift, but he used that talent to the very best of his ability, and God was honored and glorified by that and God was honoring his faithfulness in that service. And that should say something to you and me about what really, really matters.

Now, I asked two questions at the beginning of this message. The first one was: How does a servant think? Well, number one, he's faithful. He knows that God first and foremost cares about one thing and one thing especially in his servants, it is what God said to the good servants, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* Now,



are you a faithful servant? Do you care more about pleasing God than making a splash? Would a one-talent service interest you if you knew that God alone was there to truly appreciate it? And secondly, we said that a faithful servant's mindset is one of loyalty. He knows, he knows he cannot serve two masters, and he knows that divided loyalties always produce resentment. And so he sees himself or herself as a kingdom citizen first and everything else, that's jobs, that's career, that's friends, that's relatives, everything as subordinated to the kingdom. Is that the way you see yourself in the kingdom? And thirdly, the good steward's mindset is joyful. It's joyful because he's found his place. I mean a joyful steward knows he's going to stand before his master, he's going to be able to say, look, here, check it out, look what I did with what you gave me, regardless it's five, two, or one talent. He knows that he's been faithful with the resources that God gives him and that gives him great joy. And whether you are a king or a servant, top dog or low man on the totem pole, that's why Jesus says, "Enter into the joy of your master."

Well that's only the first question that I asked, I asked how does a steward think? The second one is much harder. Second question is: Is that how I think? You know, there's really only one person who can answer that question and that's you. See, the parable of the talents is really about two things that the church seldom

considers, that is urgency and consequence. True servants understand those. They are faithful, loyal and joyful in serving the kingdom. So again I ask, is that you? If that description is foreign to you, take heart, because there's still time to receive your servant hood.

I want to tell you a story about what happened this week. In fact, it dates back to last week. Last week almost at this time there was a phone call that came in, someone received it, and said that he had gotten a call from a fellow -- in fact I have the card right here that somebody handed to me and it says -- the card says Wayne -- I won't tell you his last name -- attends a reformed church in California, visiting Port Jervis, would like a pastor or elder to call. Well, I got home and he had called a second time. So I called him back, and I said, "What can we do for you?" Now I have to tell you that we get these phone calls fairly regularly from people, and a lot of times it's just people working churches. I hate to say that, but they just get a list and they go down the list and they try to kind of appeal to your sense of compassion. And so, you know, I usually am very jaded going into these conversations. And so he basically said, "Well, I'm stuck here in Port Jervis, I'm at the Days Inn." And then he went on to explain to me what his situation was. And he said that he had journeyed from where he lived in West Hollywood, Los Angeles, by via Amtrak

up to Portland, Maine, to visit with his family who was running an occult center up in Portland, Maine. Now just to back up a little bit, the reason why he went on this journey is that prior to that -- I should also add a couple of other facts that are important to this -- he told me that he has full blown AIDS and that he's an ex-homosexual, told me that he was 240 pounds originally, he's down to 140 pounds and that he had started is this journey from West Los Angeles up to Portland, Maine to approach his parents for the last time because he knew he had very little time left and just explain the gospel to them. And that he got up there and it went very badly and he wound up getting booted or he wound up -- things got so bad that he ran into somebody who was heading south and he said, "Where are you going?" He said, "Port Jervis, New York," which he had no idea what that was, that was just a town, so he says, "Sure, I'll go." And he wound up in Port Jervis, New York. And what he was asking -- I said, "So what can we do for you?" He said, "Look, my parents sent my ticket, my Amtrak ticket and my meds" -- he's on 47 meds a day -- "to the Days Inn in East Stroudsburg, and that's the only place that I can get picked up from and I'm going to get an Amtrak back." And so we were talking, and I said, okay, well, you know -- I'm trying to evaluate all this stuff, and it was Monday and I meet Eli sometimes for lunch on Mondays, so I said, "Look, you're at Best Western, I'll come pick you up, and I'll take you to lunch," and that way Eli and I can

kind of sit there and chat with him and just see what's going on. So I picked him up, and it was -- I mean it was really obvious, he was thin as a rail and he was panting from the effort of just putting his luggage in the car. You can tell he was a very sick man. And so we went to the restaurant, we sat down, and I basically I said is to him, I said, "So tell me, explain to me how did all of this happen?" He said, "Well, I ran into a young man who was 17 years old who also had fell blown AIDS" -- incidentally, he didn't know he had full blown AIDS until he went to the doctor. He had probably been HIV positive for a long time but he was fully, fully -- the disease had fully expressed itself by the time he knew it, and so he was meeting with a 17-year-old boy who was AIDS-infected as well through a blood transfusion, was not at all in the gay life-style. And he said, "I met with him for 45 days and he shared the gospel with me every single day," he said, "until one night it all just clicked." And he said, "That night I gave my life to Christ." He said, "I woke up the next morning, I was no longer gay." He said, "I've been gay for 30 years, I live in West Hollywood; that's Mecca for the gay life-style." He said, "I woke up the next day and I was no longer gay." He said, a week later this young man, age 17, got pneumonia and died -- he said actually went home. And so he decided -- this man is 50 years old -- he decided with the time he has left, he wanted to go visit his family who was operating a Theosophy society under Madame Blavatsky -- if

you know anything about that, it's an occult center up in Portland, Maine. So he said he took an Amtrak to Portland, Maine, got there, he said, "My parents were far more happy with me as a gay son than they were at the thought of me being a Christian." They were horrified. So he had -- basically it had not gone well, and so he was there in Port Jervis in the Days Inn. And so we're sitting at the restaurant, me having picked him up, and I said to him, "What did you -- what did you do after you got saved?" He said, "I started reading voraciously." I said, "What did you read?" He said, "I started off with Calvin's Institutes and then I went to Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology." And so I instantly, okay, this guy's legit, I mean, you can't drop names like that unless you really know what you're really talking about. And he went on to say that he had a long meeting with a guy from TBN who said he can't possibly be a Christian because he has full blown AIDS and if you have -- you're a member of TBN, you just pray and it goes away, and so he said, he concluded that, said I'm not a Christian. The point he was -- was this, I said to him, I said, "Wayne," I said, "What would you do if" -- well I asked him, I said, "How did you find us?" He said he just opened up the computer, I looked, I Googled 'Reformed churches, Port Jervis' and your name came up." Okay. So I said to him, "What would you have done if nobody showed up?" He said, "Well, I just -- I would have started hiking." He said, "Look, I've got four, five months to live." He said, "If I

die, it's no big deal." And I thought, you know, I said you know, that Kris Kristofferson song, Freedom's Just Another Word for Nothing Left to Lose, well here's a guy who has nothing left to lose. He said, "I'm virtually hated in my community." He said, "From the minute I got saved, I started preaching in my community that you can have the power to leave this life-style." He said, "I got death threats. I had people that want nothing to do with me whatsoever." He owns a house in West Hollywood. So I said to him, you know, so what he wanted me to do is drive him to East Stroudsburg, which I did, and I put him up for the night, and I said, "Why in the world are you taking Amtrak?" He told me he was going to take Amtrak back to West Hollywood. It's a 72-hour train ride with a one-hour layover. And I said, "Why in the world are you taking -- why don't you fly?" And he said, "You probably don't know it but an awful lot of gay and lesbian people work for Amtrak." And he said, "I just think it's my opportunity to share with them the gospel on my way back."

So I want to just -- I want to point out to you that this guy was living a life for 30 years in the life-style, he said, went to Europe, went all over the place, and he said was so completely into that life-style and God instantaneously said that's done, that's over. He sent a servant, a 17-year-old servant to convert this guy, to bring him the gospel, and so the Holy Spirit now entered

into him and he's now on his way to LA. I don't know even know if he's going to make it to LA. Said it took him two months to get to from LA to Portland because he had two extended hospital stays on the way. But understand, he doesn't care. He doesn't care because if he dies, he dies; he knows exactly where he's going. Now you talk about reorienting your priorities kingdom wise, this guy understands this. He understands exactly what it means. And I understand this, no life, including the lives of every one of us in this building is beyond reclaiming as a good servant.

You know, *1 John 1:9* says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The point is God wants nothing more than to make you into a faithful servant, and he wants to reorient your priorities toward the kingdom just like he did with brother Wayne. If you've been given the gift he faith, if you've been given a God-given mindset, then these words will make perfect sense. Again, *Romans 8*: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* Now if you're not one of his, these words and this warning will have the same effect on you that it had on the false servant: Zero, zilch, nada, it won't mean

a thing. You won't know and you certainly won't care if you are one of his. But if God is speaking to you here and now and you sense from his indwelling Holy Spirit an urgency to attend to the talents you've been given, ask him to show you what faithful, loyal and joyful service looks like to you. Speak to me, speak to the elders, speak to the deacons. Make your life count for something in the kingdom. I mean Wayne's only got months, yet his life is going to immensely count for something. Be ready and excited to tell the master, "behold," "see," "here," "check it out," as he welcomes you into everlasting life with the sweetest words human ears will ever hear: *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

Let's pray.

*Father, I just again, I pray for brother Wayne. I have no idea where he is, I have no idea if he's even going to successfully make it back to LA, but again, I think of these two men, I said this is a story about five servants actually, the three servants in the parable and Bob Barber and brother Wayne, these are two servants that are flesh and blood that we can see and know and understand. And Lord, they give us examples as to what it really means to be a servant, to have your kingdom priorities, to be faithful, to be loyal, to be joyful in our service, Lord, give us the ability To do just that and to be just that, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*