

Uncovering Buried Treasure at Clements
Matthew 25:14-30
March 24, 2014

Introduction:

Passing the Plate: by Christian Smith and Michael Emerson

Americans are among the wealthiest of their faith in the world today and arguably the most affluent single group of Christians in two thousand years of church history. Nearly all American Christians also belong to churches that teach believers, as stewards of the belongings with which God has blessed them, to give money generously for the work of God's kingdom.

Most Christians belong to churches that teach tithing, the giving of 10 percent of one's income. Most American Christians also profess to want to see the gospel preached in the world; the hungry fed, the church strengthened, and the poor raised to enjoy lives of dignity and hope. All tasks that normally require money. And yet, despite all of this, American Christians give away relatively little money to religious and other purposes. A sizeable number of Christians give no money, literally nothing.

All of the evidence points to the same conclusion; when it comes to sharing their money, most contemporary American Christians are remarkably ungenerous.

Within the pews of every church on every Sunday morning is a wealth of buried treasure that will never be used.

A Working Definition of Generosity

Generosity is at its core a lifestyle, a lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and ever will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace.

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If American Christians were to give from their income generously, not lavishly mind you, only generously—they could transform the world, starting right away.

Ordinary American Christians have within their power the capacity to foster massive and unprecedented spiritual, social, cultural, and economic change that closely reflects their values and interests. In order to achieve such dramatic, world-transforming change, ordinary American Christians simply need to do one thing: start giving reasonably generously from their incomes, let us just say 10 percent—or in SBC life, it's called a tithe!

Fostering such changes could begin immediately. It would not require getting Congress or the United Nations to act. It would not require a military mobilization or waiting for a majority turnover in the Supreme Court. It would only require ordinary Christians from one country to start doing something that seems entirely within their power and that most of them, according to the teachings of their own faith traditions, ought to already be doing anyway: giving generously from the financial resources with which they have been blessed.

I. The Responsibility we Receive

A. The portrait presented

Matthew 25:14-15 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his own ability; and straightway took his journey.

B. The people presented

1 Corinthians 3:8 (NASB77) Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

II. The Response we Have

A. The reaction of gratitude

Matthew 25:16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

B. The reaction of ingratitude

Matthew 25:18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

No matter how much or how little the Lord entrusts you with; you're responsible for a return.

Principle:

The owner wasn't upset because the servant lost money, he was upset because he lost opportunity.

III. The Reckoning we Face

A. The return we owe

Matthew 25:19 Now after a long time the lord of those servants comes back, and makes a reckoning with them.

I have always desired for the Lord to catch me doing what He saved me to do when He does return.

B. The responsibility we face

II Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The only one of these servants who gave an excuse for his performance was the person who did nothing. I am convinced the only people in life who make excuses are the "do nothings." I find it interesting that when Jesus asked the two faithful servants what they did with their talents, they simply said, "We took the talents you gave us, and made more talents." But the unfaithful servant took thirty-four words to say basically "I did nothing."

IV. The Recompense we Receive

Notice What This Slave Said:

Matthew 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: Here, you have what is yours.

Principle:

Whatever you do for God now will reap an eternal reward later, but whatever you fail to do for God now will be lost forever.

When I look across the congregation of Clements Baptist Church I see buried treasure everywhere. Let's uncover it and put it to use in the kingdom of God, before we lose opportunity.