



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

## First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

### March 17, 2013

### "Pound for Pound" (Gospel of Luke Series)

### The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

**H**ear the word of the Lord:

*Luke 19:11 As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.*

*Luke 19:12 So he said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return.*

*Luke 19:13 He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.'*

*Luke 19:14 But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.'*

*Luke 19:15 When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading.*

*Luke 19:16 The first came forward and said, 'Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.'*

*Luke 19:17 He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.'*

*Luke 19:18 Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.'*

*Luke 19:19 He said to him, 'And you, rule over five cities.'*

*Luke 19:20 Then the other came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth,*

*Luke 19:21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'*

*Luke 19:22 He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?*

*Luke 19:23 Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.'*

*Luke 19:24 He said to the bystanders, 'Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.'*

*Luke 19:25 (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!')*

*Luke 19:26 'I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.'*

*Luke 19:27 But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.'"*

This is the word of the Lord. And you may respond by saying, "Thanks be to God."

Interestingly, this is the only parable in the Bible that is based on a historical event.

When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., he divided his kingdom among his three sons: Philip, Antipas, and Archelaus. It was Archelaus who was given Judea, a decision that had to be ratified by Rome. The Jews hated Archelaus, so they sent a fifty-man body to Rome to tell Emperor Augustus that they would not accept Archelaus as king.

Jesus, knowing this historical background about Judea where he was teaching, used history and then made it serve a double purpose. He used history in crafting the parable. He also used history to symbolically point to the time when He would be gone, the future time when He would be with the Father in heaven. But He would be back for His second coming to check on what happened on earth and to judge His servants.

This parable is so rich that I could stay on this parable for many Sunday sermons. But for now, Jesus' message is clear to us today.

**W**e too have been given pounds, or talents, and the question is: are we using these God-given talents for God? Are we using them only for ourselves? Or are we not using them at all because of some kind of fear? In essence, this is like burying our talents in the ground.

This is the basic thrust of the parable. Are we all in or just kind of in with God? Are we using the gifts He has given us for Him and for Kingdom work? Are we leaning in or leaning out with the skills and talents He has given us?

Understand this: God is a just God. When He returns or when our time is up on earth, we will be judged. Today we shall learn that God is generous, God is encouraging, and God is just.

### **1) God is generous.**

God has given each of us talents. The Greek word for pound or talent in today's Bible text is *mina*. A *mina* back then was a coin worth 200 denari. Two hundred denari was worth about six month's wages. This was a lot of cabbage. Big bucks.

Relating this to the parable, it was expected of the servants to put the nobleman's money to work while he was gone. That way the money would increase through their wise business investments, which would then result in a thriving and expanding kingdom that benefits everyone. The nobleman expected his money to be multiplied.

The parallel is pretty clear. Jesus is gone. He has given each of us supernatural gifts and talents. All of us have a lot of gifts because of His generosity. When Jesus returns, He will want to see the results of

how we've used our talents to expand His Kingdom. He wants to see if our use of skills has been a ministry multiplier.

The first servant grew his one talent into ten more talents. The second servant grew his one talent into five more talents. But notice the third servant in the parable. He wraps his talent in a piece of cloth, buries it to hide it. He suffocates his talent, so to speak, because of fear. He fears the master so he misuses or neglects his talent. He fears he can't be used.

Many of us have fears or other issues that prevent us from using the talents God gave us. We might have the fear of failure. We might have self-pity and say, "Poor me, why would God use me? I don't even think I have any talents." Or we might be playing the comparison game and say, "I don't have as many talents as others."

The fact is God has given many skills to each of us. He has given us a lot of moolah – a lot of *mina*. The reference in the story of all the servants being given six month's wages at one time is meant to say that God has given us much more than we could ever have imagined. God is generous, far more than we would know.

I believe this is true. God is far more generous than we think. And part of life is discovering, unveiling, and being open to what those gifts are. We think we have one month's "wages" when He gave us actually six months' "wages." We think one pound, but God says, "If you are willing to be used by Me, that one pound can flourish into five or ten pounds or more."

When I was in high school, I was afraid to even raise my hand to

speaking. I hated speaking publicly even in front of my classmates. What I didn't discover till later in life is that God gave me a talent of public speaking. I discovered it and I practiced it, and it grew. Later I would speak publicly in churches, arenas, stadiums and on live TV.

I never thought I could counsel people. But God showed me how to develop my latent gifts for listening, empathy, and sharing wisdom – three major strengths of any successful counselor.

I discovered in the last ten years only that when I pray for healing, people often get healed. So I started to use it more and train others.

I found out in seminary that sometimes God talks to me supernaturally and very specifically about people and how I am to help them.

As I got older, I discovered more and more skills. I didn't think I had the gifts of compassion or mercy, but then God unveiled to me a tremendous heart for children in poverty, which led to my desire for other people to sponsor these children.

It's never too late to discover God's *minas* in our lives. I believe that is the same for everyone. We have a lot more skills and talents than we think, a lot more compassion than we think, a lot more heart for God's Kingdom than we think. God is more generous than we think.

Praise God that our church has a regular course called BodyWorks led by Ty Aldinger.

**B**odyWorks helps us discover our spiritual gifts and passions, and matches us with counselors to help us find where we can effectively serve in the church. Call the main office to find out when the next class is.

## 2) God is an encourager.

He is cheering us on in front of a cloud of witnesses according to Hebrews 12. People like Abraham, Moses and Peter and Paul are cheering us to put aside any obstacle in our life that keeps us from running all out for God. Here's what Hebrews 12: 1-2 says:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us."

Are we all in for God? Are we running for Him, laying aside the weight of distractions? Are we leaning in at the finish line for Him, or are we being selfish and playing it safe? Are we living just for ourselves and our career?

Two weeks ago I went to Kona to see the international headquarters of Youth with a Mission, more commonly known as YWAM. I spent over an hour with YWAM founder Loren Cunningham, a man who goes all out for Jesus.

Loren Cunningham started YWAM in 1960 with his wife Darlene to train youth all over the world how to lean on Jesus and go all out for Him by sharing the gospel with others. Our church has supported YWAM'ers for years and continues to do so.

Today Loren's vision has grown to more than 1,000 training sites and 30,000 YWAMers around the world. YWAM has a 100-acre campus on Kona where more than 1,000 students are being trained. Loren's vision was big. His attitude was to be all-in for Jesus and to go all-out for Him.

Loren says he has traveled to more than 180 countries, but his wife Darlene has traveled to only 85 countries, so Loren jokingly calls her a stay-at-home mom. Here's a picture of Darlene (a picture is shown on the screen) with the two Salvadoran women from Compassion International who spoke at our church last week—Rocio and Tatiana. Tatiana is thinking of joining YWAM after college.

I was so impressed with the YWAM staff and students and their all-out passion. Young people with PhD's gave us a tour of the campus to show me how they are trying to use what they learned in top universities for new research for God's Kingdom work.

They told us about plant growth advancements that can teach people in developing countries how to grow food faster and more efficiently. Aquaponics is one way. It's growing plants in water instead of dirt [there is water underneath those plants in the picture]. They raise fish in the water under the plants, where the fish's fecal matter then fertilizes the water for the plants. Aquaponics can quadruple plant growth and yield of crop.

Here is another research project: growing plants on mounds of dirt that has great amounts of moisture in the bottom. This way of

growing plants can help arid countries grow crops.

These young YWAMers could have stayed in the city and just developed their own careers, but instead they are using all of their university and business training for Jesus. They have raised their support to be a worker for Jesus full-time. They see life as BAM: Business As Ministry.

Is it just working on dirt or seeds? No, they are doing cutting-edge research FOR THE WORLD that will help improve the planting of crops and the raising of animals, for food consumption, and ground fertilization.

After I met with these young people and talked with them, I wondered – Have I lost that passion to go all out for Jesus? As years have gone by, am I still willing to risk all of my time, talent, and treasure for Christ, or am I fearful of failure? Am I just getting into the same old, same old? How about you? Are we like the servant who wants to play it safe and just wrap and hide our talent in a piece of cloth so we don't fail, but then as a result not be used as much by the Lord?

God has given us each other—valuable and talented people—to do ministry in a great 242-acre campus. That's a lot of minas! Are we willing to risk it all for God? Are we willing to serve God?

We need more parking. People are coming and leaving for lack of a parking space. Are our people willing to park in a distant parking lot so others can find parking space in the lot? Or is that too much of a risk or an inconvenience to us?

**B**ut then if we don't take the risk, others won't get a chance to come to our church and hear the gospel.

If we go all out for God, if we lean in, if we are all in for Him, then can we trust God that everything that has gone on in our lives—failures, successes, experiences, life lessons—can be used for His glory and kingdom?

This was made evident in the three great appointments for Christianity that happened this past week. Notice how God used all of their life experiences and talents for this time.

The Catholics chose a new pope—Pope Francis. He's a man who has a heart for the poor. He lived with the poor, and now as Pope, he shows he has not forgotten his roots.

News reports say he chose not to wear the fine, rich vestments reserved for the Pope for his first introduction to the people. As pope, he paid for his last hotel bill and didn't let the Vatican pay for it. He even took the bus instead of the motorcade to get to his first mass. He is all in for Christ.

Second great appointment last week was that of the new President of Compassion International—Santiago Jim Mellado. God used all of his experiences to now be the new leader of one of the largest human relief organizations in the world with a half-a-billion dollar budget.

Born to American parents in El Salvador, Jim grew up in seven countries, five of which Compassion ministers to. Initially an engineer, Jim then became devoted for 20 years to training leaders of 15,000

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churches as the President of the Willow Creek Association, which serves 85 countries. Jim speaks fluent Spanish. He has a Harvard MBA. Great choice and friend.

Third big appointment was that of the new President of Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest non-denominational seminary in the world. The new president chosen last Monday was Mark Labberton, former senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Berkeley. He becomes the first Fuller president who was a pastor.

A Fuller graduate, Mark has been on the Fuller faculty for the last three years so he knows how the Fuller faculty and the school work. He has a PhD from Cambridge University in England. He's the author of three books. He's a great choice for the position, and is a friend.

By God's grace, with Ron Mathieu on the Compassion Board and my being on the Fuller Board of Directors, we had a hand in the search and the final two unanimous votes to elect the presidents. First Prez is there influencing the world.

Here's the point. All three men were surprised how God was grooming them with experiences both big and small, successes and failures, and with talents and gifts that led them to God's appointment to the two presidencies and the Papal position.

Now we won't ever be a Pope or maybe a president of a non-profit, but God has great plans for us, greater than we can imagine if we use our mana and minas for Him in our present jobs or homes for Jesus.

Don't whine that you don't have all the gifts. Use the ones you have and pray that God might reveal to you what OTHER gifts you

have that you don't know about, that maybe God might be grooming or is waiting to unveil. We all can be used.

Last weekend was the HIM Honolulu 2013 conference. At the very last session I interviewed Kirk Cousins who I knew as a little kid. He's the son of Don Cousins who has spoken here many times at First Prez. Kirk was this really tiny young kid whom I have seen over the years, and now he has grown into this huge man who is now the number two quarterback behind Robert Griffin III of the Washington Redskins in the NFL.

Let me play this little interview portion that speaks to how God can use us all. (Video is shown.)

So God expects us all to use whatever gifts, whatever body or stature you have for God's purposes. Pound for pound, whatever skills you have, you have enough to do great things for God!

Pound for pound you are not inferior. Pound for pound, use your gifts whether they be hospitality, mercy, compassion, administration, or generosity. Be an all-star for Jesus!

For if you don't, if you don't, I'm sorry that it is NOT good news. I am going to give you the real picture. To be true to the text, there is one last point.

At the top of the sermon, I said there are three points to this sermon: God is generous, God is encouraging, and third, God is just.

**G**od is not happy if you do not use all of the skills He has given you. He's not happy if you use them just for your own gain and not for Him, for His causes, or for people to know about Him. He will judge you. He will call you wicked if you don't use your gifts. Not my idea. His.

What does the text say in our parable?

*Luke 19:22 He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?'*

*Luke 19:23 Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.'*

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*Luke 19:27 But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.'"*

Now remember the historic context. Jesus is reminding them how Archelaus was not loved by the Judean people, and so Archelaus would probably do payback to the 50 people who spoke against him. He was the kind of king who would slaughter them in his presence.

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Jesus is not Archelaus, but He is saying that He will judge us, harshly, if we have not used our gifts for His purposes and the common good. Sorry, but as of today you can't say, I didn't know!

IF we choose not to use our gifts for God, Jesus is saying, "I will NOT be happy," and will judge accordingly those who have lived their lives on this earth just for themselves and not for God after all of the gifts He generously distributed to His servants.

Here Jesus speaks not of salvation, for if you have declared that you are a fully devoted follower of Christ, you will never lose that salvation. Once saved, always saved. But if you are a Christian, Jesus will judge you on your stewardship, your use of your gifts and whether you will be rewarded in heaven.

I say to you today - be open. Be open to hearing God's voice of how you are to be used for His kingdom. Be open for Him to unveil all of the talents you have. Use your time, talent, and treasure for Him.

Take time to know your gifts. You have more than you think. I suggest jotting them down during your next private devotional time. Make a list. Ponder the possibilities. Be open to practice and use those gifts in your office, in your home, in your neighborhood. Whatever your age, the choice is yours: lean in or lean away, for pound for pound you are gifted and God is awaiting your service.

Amen? Amen!

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