

Anglican Church Noosa
SOW GROW GIVE
Matthew 25:14-30 & Proverbs 3:5-18
26 October 2025
Rev'd Chris Johnson

Last week we completed our Confronting Jesus series with the topic Jesus the Lord. This week I want to look at the practical implications of that for our financial lives.

This is a paragraph from that chapter of the Rebecca McLean's book,
"Jesus claims to be Lord not just of the Jewish people, not just of his disciples, and not just of one region or religion, one country or continent, one ethnic tribe or racial group, but Lord of all. The one who took a slave's towel, who washed his disciples feet, who was mocked and stripped and crucified, now claims he has the right to rule in heaven and on earth. There is no millimetre of the universe, no moment of time, no man and no woman that Jesus does not rightly rule. The only question is: will we submit to him?"

I love this paragraph because it paints a picture of a big Jesus, in fact a huge Jesus. The claim that Jesus is Lord is so familiar to us as Christians, it rolls off the lips so easily, but it is in fact enormous.

The claim that Jesus is Lord is so practical. If Jesus is Lord, then he has to be Lord over every aspect of our lives, and that includes our financial lives.

Our topic is Sow Grow Give. We're going to look at two passages of scripture - Matthew 25 and Proverbs 3.

In Matthew 25 we find the "Parable of the Talents" or in my NIV the "Parable of the Bags of Gold". Some translations use the word talents others speak of money. When I was reading this passage with Priya earlier in the week she had an edition of the NIV which used the word talents. The NIV in the pews says, "Bags of Gold". So even in one version of the Bible it is translated in different ways.

The Greek word is 'talanta' and it means money. It's where we get our English word talent from, only we've switched the meaning to gift, which can mean money or have a much broader sense of the things people are good at. But in the Greek, the word originally simply meant money. And in fact this parable only makes sense if the word is money. Because it talks about putting the money to work and making more money.

In our story three servants receive different amounts of money. One receives 5 bags of gold, another two bags and the third, one bag. The first two servants put their money to work and double their capital investment. The third one hides the one bag of money in the ground.

Jesus commends the first two servants by giving them more responsibility in proportion to their ability and the size of the original gift they received. They are told to come and share their Master's happiness. I imagine the smile on Jesus' face as he says these words,
'Well done good faithful servant.'
What beautiful words to hear.
How blessed is the servant who hears those words.

The servant who hid the Master's money in the ground has even that taken from him and he is cast outside into the darkness where there is '*weeping and gnashing of teeth*'. This is a little phrase describing eternal regret. I had my chance and I missed it. The master gave me a bag of gold and I did nothing with it, I missed my opportunity. Now I'm paying the price.

So how might we apply this parable today? On a first reading the story could easily be read as good investment advice for making more money. Indeed many over the years have used it as a justification for capitalism. I don't have a problem with capitalism, but I don't think that was the point Jesus was making in this parable. Jesus is talking about investing in the Kingdom of God. It's about taking whatever resources you have been given and investing them in Kingdom work in order to see it grow and expand. It's about God wanting to multiply our efforts for the sake of the Kingdom.

In the story the master is Jesus. He distributes the treasure of the Kingdom. He goes away for a while. We can take this to be his ascension into heaven. But he has promised to return and then we will have to give an account.

I think Jesus is putting before us here very clearly the prospects of ultimate happiness or ultimate disappointment. I think he makes this sharp contrast regularly because he knows how stubborn human heart is and we need to be shaken out of our complacency.

This parable illustrates well our theme sow grow give. The first two servants sow the capital they have been given into some sort of enterprise. We don't know whether it was the stock market, or property or maybe a business. One gets the impression there was some sort of work on their part, that it wasn't just a passive investment. They gave themselves, putting the money to work. They sowed into their enterprise whatever it was and it grew.

The third servant however failed to sow. Failed to give of himself. We are told he was lazy. So there was no growth, and all the servant had to look forward to was judgement.

A good way to understand faith in the Bible is that it's spelled R I S K. It is not passive. It is active. It involves obedience. It is an adventure. And the stewardship of our finances should be a part of the adventure - seeing how much we can give away to enable the Kingdom of God to grow.

This is so different from the world. The world says when you get to the end of your life the winner is the one with the biggest bank balance or superannuation fund.

Jesus says the winner is the one who's given the most away investing in the Kingdom of God.

Let's look at our Old Testament passage. Proverbs 3 is all about wisdom.

v13 says, *"Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better results than gold."*

And this chapter has one of the best known verses in the Bible, v5 *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight."*

Trusting the Lord with all your heart brings a number of blessings,

- v5 straight paths.
- v8 health to the body
- v11 says do not despise the Lord's discipline. Yes discipline is a blessing because it keeps us on the straight path.
- -v16 Wisdom brings long life
- -v16 Wisdom brings riches and honour
- -v17 Her ways are pleasant and her paths peace

but most importantly on our theme this morning are vs 9 & 10

"Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine."

V9 Says the wise person brings the first fruits of all their crops. The wise person doesn't just give God the leftovers after their own needs have been met. The wise person budgets the first fruits, so that is money committed to God before any other needs are considered.

One of the things I've noticed in life is that people's needs will always rise to the level of their income. If I have \$50,000 income then a recent second-hand car would be very nice thank you very much. If I have a million dollar income then a Lamborghini would be very nice, thank you very much. Our needs rise to the level of our income. Or should that be our wants!

This is why it is so important to decide up front that giving is your priority, and to work out what a generous percentage to give away is, and then live off the rest. I think you will find God will still meet your real needs very generously. And I can certainly testify to that.

I want to direct your attention to the brochure you should have received as you came in this morning, SOW GROW GIVE. Please take time to read this and pray as you consider what your giving will be in 2026. Don't let the new year happen without a specific commitment about your giving.

Inside the brochure you'll find a table which helps you to think about your giving in percentage terms. Whatever percentage you're giving at the moment what would it mean to move along to the right in that table and increase the percentage.

The OT starting point was 10%. God's people gave 10% of their crops or income. It was a way of saying Yahweh is Lord, he comes first in my life.

In the New Testament the 10% tithe is assumed, but not commanded. If you are on a very limited income, on the pension; then a much smaller percentage might be your widow's mite. And Jesus commended the widow's mite. And he will commend your small percentage.

If on the other hand you have a large income and you only give a small percentage then I have to say that is just a tragedy. That's like burying your bag of gold in the ground and we know what Jesus said about that.

New Testament Christians are called to honour Jesus as Lord by simply being generous. This is about looking at how I might increase my giving and grow in the grace in the grace of God and grow in the love of God.

I want to let you know that currently our regular offertory income is \$28,000 behind our Budget target. However we have received a number of one off special gifts and this is keeping us financially buoyant. But we would like to make up that \$28,000.

If you're in a place to be able to help us in this financial area, your support would be greatly appreciated.

But all of your giving doesn't have to go to the church. I strongly encourage you to put aside some of your tithe to the mission agencies that God places on your heart. I know that most of you already do this through the generous giving that comes in through the mission offertory at the back of the church each week. Our mission giving at the moment is \$39,377 which is 12.6% of Offertory. Our target is 11%

so that is very encouraging to see. There is a mission heart in this congregation and that warms my heart no end.

Also remember the poor in your giving. The Bible regularly speaks about God's heart for the poor and that those with plenty should share generously with those who have little. Through your church and mission giving some will make its way to the poor, but I encourage you to think about spontaneous giving when you see someone in need.

And I know that happens in this church where members of the body who are going through a tough time are given financial support by those who have the means. May that long continue.

So my friends it's all very simple really, Sow Grow Give.

Sow into the Kingdom.

Grow in Jesus.

Give generously.

I want to finish with this little quote from Rebecca McLaughlin,

"The early Christians had three words by which they lived well,

'Jesus is Lord.'

If you can only let those words sink in, you'll find your life. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for Jesus sake will find it."