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Presentation Transcript
Burying It Deep
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This is the eleventh part of *The Important Stuff* series. It's called *Burying It Deep*.

Good to see everybody today. We're having a little technical problem – hence the late start with our...as you can probably tell, if you're online, our audio today. It worked great last week and we don't know what's going on today.

We've been talking for some weeks now about the things Jesus told us that were super important – love God, love neighbor – all things that we should *do*. Now we're going to look at some things He said *not* to do. And the first one of those we did last time – that was to be careful not to offend children and impact their spiritual development by our bad behavior. The second one is what we're going to talk about today – and that is *Burying It Deep*.

What's this about? Well, you've probably already guessed. It's about burying our talent – something He told us *not* to do. Do you remember what that is in the Bible? It's a parable. It's in Matthew 25. There are a couple scenes to this parable.

In the olden days a rich man decided to go on a long trip. And, understanding human nature, he called his servants together and assigned them important tasks, so they would be goal-directed when he was gone. He wanted to keep them engaged while he was gone, because there was so much work that needed to be done. So he gave to one of them five talents of silver. To another he gave two, and to yet another, one. We presume he gave them different amounts because he thought each of them capable of handling what he had given them. You know, there's really only *one* sharpest tool in the shed. Right? And it's none of us, so we get what we're capable of.

So then he left on his trip, trusting that they would all work like they were told. By the way, a talent – a talent of silver – on today's market – well, roughly, because it's been going up and down – is about \$130,000.00. So this was no small thing. So we can see that even the one who got only one talent was entrusted with a lot! I mean, has anybody ever handed you a stack of thousand dollar bills, totaling \$130,000, and then said, "Invest it for me. I trust you?" No. Not me anyway – maybe you. I guess maybe the only person I

know that has had that happen to them would be my retirement advisor. He invests people's money for them. But that's scene one.

Scene two – the rich man returns after his long absence. He calls his servants together and he says, “Okay, what have you done while I was away? What have you profited?” The servant who was given the five talents had turned it into ten. And the rich man was extremely pleased with this man. He said, “Well done!” “Well done!” he said, “You’ll always have a place with me. You know, you’re responsible. You’re a hard worker. And you’re dedicated.” So then the second servant came forward – he had received two – and he had turned it into four. So he also doubled his investment. He said, “Well done! You’ll always have a place with me” to this man, too. “You’re responsible and a hard worker. And you’re dedicated to me.”

So why did they get the same commendation if one of them produced five talents and one two? Well, because they both doubled what they were given. Right? It's not the second servant's fault that the master had given him less than the first one. That's what he was given to work with. So he doubled it. So he produced just as much as the other fellow did, based on what he was given. It's like talking to my retirement fund manager. I would tell him that, if I'm ever going to retire, I still need a lot more money if I want to eat when I'm old. And he says, “Well, I can only do what I can do. We didn't start with very much, so I can't make much out of it.” Well, the second servant wasn't given as much proportionately, but he did just as much with it. He turned a hundred percent – just like the first guy. I only wish that my fund manager could produce a hundred percent for me. I don't think that's going to happen.

Okay, now we come to the third servant. He was the one that received the one talent. When it was his turn, he came forward and he gave it back. He didn't lose it, but he didn't produce anything with it. And the rich man said, “What? You didn't make me any money with the \$130,000.00 I gave you?” And the servant said, “No, but I didn't lose it either. It's here safe and sound.” And the rich man asked him, “Well, what did you do with it?” He said, “Well, I buried it. I buried it deep, so nobody would get it.” And the rich man said, “Well, why did you do that?” And the servant answered him, “Because I knew you were an austere person – tight – and there would be the devil to pay if I invested it and lost it.” Well, the master didn't like that answer. He was extremely displeased with him. He said to him, “If you thought I was that way, why didn't you at least put in the bank and make me some interest?” Of course, in today's market, that wouldn't be very much, would it? “But because you didn't even try, I'm going to get rid of you, because you're all together unprofitable. You're not going to be a part of my organization any longer.”

So I think we get the general drift here, don't we? This is a dire warning. How does it apply to us? Well, it's pretty clear who the master is in the parable, isn't it? And who the servants are? So this is about us, isn't it? And our relationship with Jesus Christ. We won't belabor those aspects. We're going to look at something else.

Let's talk about the rich man's investment. What do you think his investment with these people represents in our lives? What do you think it is? What was the rich man telling them to do, really? And why is it so important that we invest for God? What is God's goal? What's He trying to accomplish? The rich man was trying to make more money. So what's God trying to do? Well, He's not trying to make more money. The clue is in something that the rich man said to the first two servants. He said, "Enter you into the joy of your master." So it's about joy, isn't it? So God is striving to accomplish a great goal. What is it that He's trying to accomplish? Let's go to Hebrews 2, and verse 5, and take a look at this scripture, where, I think maybe more clearly than anywhere else, we get an insight into the mind of God about His goal. Paul says in Hebrews 2:5:

Hebrews 2:5 – *Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. Not to angels. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You care for him? You made him, for a little while, lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now, in putting everything in subjection to him, He left nothing outside his control. At present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see him, who for a little while was made lower than the angels – namely Jesus – crowned with glory and honor, because of the suffering of death, so that, by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

So God's goal is to bring many children into His family and to glory. That's what He's trying to do. And He takes great joy in that. He's excited about it. You know, most of the people that I run into in my work, work at a job that they don't like so that they can make money and go do something with it that they enjoy. They revel in their vacations. They travel. They do whatever. Very few people have the opportunity to have a job that they like to do. I happen to be one of those few people. I am blessed in that. I can hardly wait to get up in the morning and go to work, because I like what I do so much. God is like that. Now, if you don't have that kind of job, that isn't, probably, your fault. We live in a real world, where we have to make difficult choices sometimes, but God is outside of our economy, and He gets to do what He likes to do. He set for Himself the best goal He could possibly have, and that is to bring more people into His family. He's a relational God and He loves people. He loves to interact with people. So He's busy doing that. He's so excited about it.

Now let's go back to the parable a minute. So the rich man... what's he doing? Well, he's inviting his servants to be a part of what he likes to do, isn't he? He's giving them some stuff and he's asking them to produce the same kind of fruit he's producing. So Jesus is offering us the same kind of assignment, isn't He? He's giving us a chance. He's inviting us to be a part of His passion, His great hope, the reason He gets up in the morning, so to speak. That's what He's trying to do for us.

Now, how does that strike you? That God is offering you that opportunity? What does that feel like? Do you think that's an honor? You know, I'm learning so much this year in

working with other people to create a festival site. We have a lot of work that needs to be done, so we offer responsibilities to people. And we're trying to find people who have abilities in the various areas that we need to have people working on. We need people who will work hard and use the talents that they have to produce good fruit for the Feast. And we need people who won't think that their responsibility is the most important part, and think that everything should revolve around their aspect of the Feast. We want people who will see the overall picture and realize that it is *all* important. You say, "Well, I don't know about that." Let me tell you. For everything that happens at the Feast, there is somebody that thinks that part is the most important. So they're all important. You know, some people like music. Some people like sermons. Some people like workshops. Some people like youth activities. Everybody has their thing. So what we really are looking for is people who will be role-players like we are. And when we find somebody like that, we try to engage them. You know, it's really hard to find people that have all those capabilities. And we have huge respect for people that can take that approach and do those kinds of things. It's an honor. It's an honor to say to somebody, "We believe that your heart is in the same place ours is. And we appreciate that and respect that in you." We try to pick people that we respect. So that's a compliment, isn't it? It's an honor. And it's the same way when God offers us a chance to get in on His project – and really, if you understand it, in on the ground floor, because we are the firstfruits.

You know, when Jesus sat down with His disciples, after He had been resurrected and glorified, and He said to them, "Make disciples," He was honoring those guys more than they could possibly know. He's saying that to us, too.

Okay, so that's the invitation. What about the talents? Let's talk about that for awhile. What are they? What are the talents – the money, the currency – that the rich man gave his servants? What does that represent? Well, it says that God is bringing many children to glory. The fact that we are alive and breathing is evidence that we are God's children and destined for that glory. So what are we going to do with that? What are we going to do with it? You know, we all have the same life. So what are we going to *do* while we're waiting for Christ to return – with the time of our life?

Another thing I think about is... I think another *huge* thing that God has given us is our calling. Why were you called? Why was I called? It's all through the Bible. And yet it's so hard for us to stay focused on what's really important. If you go to Matthew 4, and verse 18, it says:

Matthew 4:18 – *While walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers – Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother – casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me and I will make you champion game players. You'll be the fastest thing on earth when it comes to computer games." No, He didn't say that, did He? He said, "Follow Me and I will make you the world's best accountants." He didn't say that, did He? What did He say? He said, "I will make you fishers of men." And that must have sounded good to them, because immediately they left their nets and followed Him. They were smart enough to recognize a good thing.*

So we were all called to be fishermen – or fisher persons, if we want to be PC. That’s our investment field. That’s where we invest. So what else has God given us to invest? He’s given us our life – our time of our life. He’s called us, so we *know* about what needs to be done, and we *know* that we’re supposed to be fishermen. A lot of us practice selective memory with that one. You know, we don’t remember that, but that’s still what we’ve been called to do. What else has He given us? What else is our *currency*? Let’s go to Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11 – *He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.*

What does that mean? Well, the body is the church, right? So all of those guys – the shepherds, the teachers – are to build up everybody in the church for what purpose? Well, to build up the church. We’re all part of it. He gave us all spiritual gifts – our currency – so that we could invest it. But what is the church? Well, it’s a disciple-making machine. That’s what it is. That’s what we’re supposed to be invested in – involved in. So what gifts do you have to participate in that? And are you using them to advance God’s project that He loves so much – the bringing to glory of everybody? What do you do to advance that goal?

You know, there are lots of ways to do this. Not everybody needs to go on the radio. You know, that stay-at-home mom that works with those three kids? She’s an evangelist. She’s building a relationship with her children through which faith can be passed. People that work in the church to make the church run smoothly...they’re a part. So I think that’s our currency that we’ve been given – our life, our calling and the gifts that God gives us to do the things that He’s equipped us for.

Now let’s talk about the investment that the servants made. They got their money. What are they going to do with it? Well, I think that means that we take seriously what we’ve been given. You know, the one guy didn’t. He just went and buried his talent, didn’t he? He didn’t take seriously what the master said. But, if we see the picture, and we begin fishing, and making disciples, and advancing the kingdom and building the church, that’s what God wants us to do. And what does that really mean? Well, I think the way God looks at that...He looks at it like the master. “Oh these guys value what I value. They’re interested in what I’m interested in. And they’re doing what I’m doing. They’re My partners in this! They’re helping.” And, you know, that really gets back to our original premise in this whole series, doesn’t it? Love God with all your whole being. That’s what He wants us to do – to *join* with God to do God’s work – to get involved in the project – the biggest thing that’s happening in and outside of the universe! We get to be involved in that. And when we do that, we will be moving toward that point, where someday God will say to us, “Well done, you good and faithful servant!” We will have invested our currency.

Let’s talk about what *burying* is. What does that mean? It sounds like he was just trying to keep it safe and like he just didn’t feel like he could do anything, but when you really break it down and think about it, he said, “I knew that you were unreasonable.” So there

are people that feel like God is not fair – like He’s not reasonable. It’s kind of a repudiation of what God is doing – you know, “You’re asking *way* too much of me. I just want to keep doing what I’ve always done. I don’t want to change. I don’t want to stop playing video games and start making a difference. I just want life to go like it’s always gone on. And I really wish You hadn’t given me this talent, because I’m not interested in using it.” So it really is a refusal to participate. “I’m not going to change. I’m not going to participate. I’m not going to use my gift.”

You know, the ranks of our church are riddled with people like this. We were initially taught to pray, pay and obey, and we don’t like to think about anything else. We don’t want to have to get up out of our chairs and start *doing* something, so we just try to forget about being fishermen and we don’t want to think about being anything but a passive participant. I think that’s what this parable is for. And we have all been warned. The day is coming when we’re going to have to explain ourselves. “I was afraid” isn’t going to cut it. “I was too busy” isn’t going to cut it. And “You’re not fair” *definitely* won’t cut it.

Let’s talk about that. Is God unfair? Well, you know, the term *servants* really isn’t an accurate translation. A servant is somebody that you hire to work for you and they can quit anytime they want to, if they don’t like it. But, in those days, these three servants were what were called *bond slaves*. They usually indentured themselves to pay off debt, so they didn’t have a choice about quitting. They were working for room and board and they had to do whatever the master said to do. And they *agreed* to that! That was the deal. And as long as the master is providing a place to sleep and putting three squares out there, then they have to do their part and do what they promised to do.

So how does that apply to us today? Well, we were all in debt, too, weren’t we? We were under the penalty of death to pay for our own sin. And Christ offered to pay that penalty for us so that we could be free. But to do that, we had to agree to become bond slaves to Him and do what He tells us to do – believing that what He would tell us to do is better than being a slave to sin. So, at base, anything that He requires of us is fair, because we said, “You can require whatever of us.” So does He have unreasonable expectations of us? Well, He gives us the tools we need to do our job, doesn’t He? He does. He gives us a life. He gives us a calling. And He gives us a gift to be able to participate. Let’s go to Ephesians 3, verse 7.

Ephesians 3:7 – *Of this gospel – Paul says – I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of His power – not by his own power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.* He knew that he had the opportunity to participate in the project. And he didn’t feel like he was the sharpest tool in the shed, spiritually, because he persecuted the church. But he knew that he didn’t have to worry about that, because he was covered by the grace of Christ. His sins were forgiven.

So we can all quit worrying about all of that – even if we have *serious attachment issues*. Now why did I say that? Because people who say, “I knew that You were an austere person and that nothing is going to work out okay here no matter what I do,” learn that in the first year of their life. That’s where it comes from. We’ll be talking a lot more about that at the Feast. Even if somebody has a raging case of *learned helplessness*, and believes that God won’t take care of them – even if we return a little interest on the talent – God is going to be pleased. Even if you’re depressed, you can still go to the bank and put the money in there, can’t you? It’s probably easier than burying it.

So God is lenient. He’s reasonable. He doesn’t ask more than we can do. *We’re* the ones with the problem – not God.

Let’s think about something else. What is God learning about us while all this is going on? You know, that rich man had a reason besides just wanting to make money. And God has a reason besides just wanting to make disciples. What is it? Well, He wants to make a disciple of us. So what He’s learning in this process is who He can depend on. He’s learning who respects and loves Him. He’s learning who can make something happen. He’s learning who will work for the Kingdom. He’s learning who has overcome their past and has character. And He’s also learning who He wants in His family.

So what’s the warning of this parable? What’s the worst thing we can do? Nothing – rest assured, just keep cruising along, make no changes, stay focused on your own life, your own problems, your own interests – bury that talent *deep* – and after having made a commitment to do something, do *nothing*! And that’s what we will get back. Nothing.