

THOUGHTS

BY DOUGLAS W. SCHROEDER
SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

N O V E M B E R

It has been said that approximately a third of everything Jesus said touched on the topic of money. Eleven of the 40 parables of Jesus are on the topic of productivity for God's Kingdom. When we consider these statistics, what does it mean? It means Jesus emphasized that people who want to be godly, and who wish to follow Him, consider it a top priority to use their money in a productive way for the Kingdom!

The productivity parables appear mostly in Matthew and Luke. John uses an altogether different outline to present the life of Jesus, focusing on the "I am" statements of Christ. Mark's Gospel is skeletal, with much less teaching and more action. Productivity parables have a theme of productivity for God's purposes. They teach the principle of productivity in faith or show an example of it.

As a Christian leader, I am frustrated by the length of time it takes many believers to mature to the point that they understand their call to be productive servants of Christ, a person who is to be dedicated to the expansion of the Kingdom. A pervasive sense of entitlement permeates the Christian community. How can I say that? Consider your perspective; do you feel that your relationship to God is largely one of a child who is to be good, godly, and appreciate the gift of salvation God has given you? Are you under the impression that if you follow the works of righteousness such as attendance at church, prayerfully living each day in faith, and witnessing to those around you that you are doing what God wants? I submit that you are not. If that is your perspective, then you are neglecting a primary work that God expects from you.

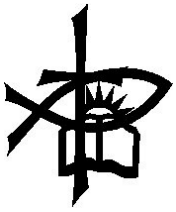
That may sound like a shocking assessment. The typical perception of the immature Christian excludes the necessity of productivity for the Kingdom, specifically financial productivity, and successful proselytizing. In other words, among the highest expectations God has for you is that you don't merely live a good or thankful life, but that you are serving Him in literally growing the Kingdom of Christ.

How can you manage God's monetary gifts to you if you don't budget? How can you measure your effectiveness as a witness if you pay no attention to whether anyone begins to disciple (follow Christ by worshiping and being a student of the Word)? It's easy to think we are successful if we apply no measures of success. Once those measures are applied, it becomes evident that far too many believers are not helping, not getting anything of note done for the Lord. That is an unacceptable situation, and if it applies to you, then it is time to repent and get to work!

Workers, servants, people entrusted with a gift or investment by the king or owner, doing an assigned job is a primary analogy used in Jesus' parables of the Kingdom. The workers are to use the gift to expand the owner or king's business. How many Christians do

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you know who identify themselves as stewards or their priority as being productive for the work of Christ? Maybe 5%? Maybe. We have a dearth of informed, committed Christians in contemporary society!

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In these parables, those who serve well by producing results are rewarded and praised, while those who make excuses or simply do not produce are excoriated and punished. These parables are not about unbelievers but the faithful! They are about the master or king's servants, not enemies! That means they apply to you! Without excuse, YOU are to be budgeting, and managing your money to do what you should for the Master, Jesus. YOU are to be successfully bringing people into worship and study of the Word of God. Do YOU even do that? If not, determine to change to meet God's expectations!

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The point of this exercise is not to make you feel bad, or conversely, make you feel smug if you are doing such things. It is to illuminate you to the overarching necessity of being a productive person for Christ. It is a primary task, not secondary. It is the evident application of the Great Commission, which tells all Christians that Jesus wants them to extend the Kingdom. If you are not actively doing that in a calculated way with your money and in an interpersonal way in bringing people, you are not yet successful in what Jesus wants from you. If that is your current condition, then repent! Get going! Start being a student of the Word of God! Begin to budget (resources on the Internet are plenteous – but beware, secular resources for budgeting hardly touch on the topic of proper giving to God). Join a church where the Word of God is honored, not mythologized. Get going in a Bible class! Make an offering pledge commitment! Send some money to a worthy Christian mission program! Develop a personalized witness, an explanation of why you believe in God. Find a resource, a book some music, or a video online to share with others as a tickler for them to consider Jesus. Bring someone to church. These are the activities that productive people for Christ engage in!

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The productivity parables have another thing in common - an accounting. Jesus is going to return, and He will have an accounting. The question will be, what did you get done for Christ? Well, what are you getting done for Him?

DESIRE, PRAYER, ACTION

Occasionally, you may get a godly desire to do something for God. Let that godly desire stir you to prayer. Pray fervently over your plans to please God. Ask Him to show you whether it is His will to pursue your plans, and consult with other Christians for guidance. Let the plan simmer while it develops. Let your prayers motivate you to act in faith! It doesn't have to be monumental. Like exercise, get started, and see where God takes it!

Blessings,
Douglas W. Schroeder