The Tragedy of Wasted Opportunity
The Future: Don't Miss the Signs
7.5.15

>>> And as you’re seated please take your Bibles and open them to Matthew 25. Matthew 25. And we also want to welcome those down in the classic service in the Chapel. We’re glad you’re here this morning. Invite you, as well, to take your Bibles, open them to Matthew 25. And this morning, we're down to three messages left. Three messages left in our series through the Olivet Discourse. And this morning, we're going to look at a parable that talks about the tragedy of wasted opportunity. It's called the parable of the talents.

Now, let me just very quickly give you a synopsis of the context of what we're dealing with today. Matthew 24 and 25 is Jesus giving a discourse which is the answer to a question given to Him by His disciples. The question was, what will be the signs of Your full presence to set up and establish Your kingdom? Now, remember the disciples thought that when Jesus came the first time that He was going to overthrow Rome and set up His kingdom on earth. They had no knowledge of the church age that we live in today. It was still a mystery back then.

And so, when Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed that was so cataclysmic in their mind that they thought, this has to be it. This has to be Jesus getting ready to put down His enemies and set up His kingdom. So they said, Jesus, what will be the signs? And in Matthew 24, Jesus gives them those signs. Now, I believe that all those signs Jesus gives which occur during the seven-year period called in the Bible the tribulation that is still future. We don't know how much future but it's still future. And then, at the end of those seven years, Jesus will return physically to set up His kingdom on earth.

And so, now as we get to these closing stories of the discourse, what Jesus is doing is this. He's saying, now that I've given you the signs about My second kingdom to establish My kingdom, let me now stress to you how that should impact you. And I believe that He is referring and talking in these stories to every generation that would exist in between His first coming and second coming. Five different times He said you don't know the day or the hour. You could be the generation. So as a result, I want you to live in a state of perpetual readiness. And that's really what these stories are all about. They're asking the question, are you ready?

And so, last Sunday, we looked at the parable of the ten virgins. And we saw in that parable the need for us to be watching for the return of Christ. Now, today we're going to see the parable of the talents, and in this parable, we're going to see our need to be working as we await the return of Christ. Here's a statement I want to begin with and end with and the statement is this. If you put these two parables together, what are they really teaching us? What's the take home point? I think it's this. I think the take home point is that while we're watching for the return of Christ we should be working for the name of Christ. That's really what these two parables are teaching. One deals with our attitude. While we're watching for the return of Christ we should be working, that's our actions, for the name of Christ.
So, this morning, we want to study the parable of the talents and I want to begin this morning by reading this parable to you. It's pretty lengthy. In chapter 25 it goes from verse 14 all the way through verse 30. And so, if you have your Bible, I hope you'll follow it along. Here at E-Free, we believe that the Bible's the inspired Word of God. We believe it's been preserved accurately for us today. We believe it contains everything God wants us to know to do everything God wants us to do and we believe that it should be the final authority for our life and for our church.

And so, in honor of the Word of God, as I read this parable, I'm going to invite you to stand with me both here in the Gospel Center as well as down in the Chapel. If you'll stand with me as I read. Follow along either in your Bibles or on the screens. Here's the parable that Jesus told. He said, beginning in verse 14, for it is just like a man about to go on a journey who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents. To another two. To another one. Each according to his own ability. And he went on his journey. Immediately, the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them and gained five more talents. In the same manner, the one who received the two talents gained two more. But he who had received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Verse 19, now after a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents saying, Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents. His master said to him, well done good and faithful slave. You are faithful with a few things, I'll put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master. Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents. His master said to him, well done, good and faithful slave. You are faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

And then in verse 24 it says, and the one who had received the one talent came up and said, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed, and I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. But his master answered and said to him, you wicked, lazy slave. You knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scatter no seed. If that's so, then you ought to have put my money in the bank and on my arrival I would have saved my money back with interest. Therefore, take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents for to everyone who has, more shall be given and he will have an abundance. But from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness, in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Thank you. You may be seated.

Well, let's walk through this parable. Let's begin by understanding what's going on in the parable and then we're going to end by saying what are the points that we can apply to our life today. All scripture is profitable for application. So we always want to end by saying, how can this change my life today? So, notice first of all, the symbols in the parable. In the parable, now, keep in mind that when you're studying the parables every parable has one main point. And the parable of the ten virgins and the
parable of the talents is be ready. That's the one main point. But within the parables you also see some very practical lessons.

Now, we have to be careful when we study parables because when you study a parable you can make the mistake of trying to symbolize every little thing in the parable and that's not necessarily what God intends for us to do. But there are aspects of the parables that I think are symbolic and are very clearly symbolic and usually that entails individuals that are involved. Now, in this case, it seems very evident to me that the man or the master in the parable represents Jesus. How do we know that? Well, number one, he owns everything. That's Jesus.

Number two, he's going to leave on a long journey. That's what Jesus did after His death and resurrection. He ascended into heaven. He's been gone for over 2,000 years. But the man was going to one day return at a time his servants did not know and he was going to settle all accounts. One day, Jesus is going to return. And when He does, He's going to settle all accounts. So I think it's very obvious to me at least in the parable that the man represents Jesus.

Well, then who do the slaves represent? Well, I believe contextually they represent professing believers at the time of Christ's second coming. Remember, the whole Olivet Discourse are the signs of His second coming. So I believe that these are representing professing believers at the time of Christ's second coming. And I think there are some wonderful principles we can learn from what we see in their lives.

Now, notice the specifics. Notice what happens. The man is going on a long journey. And again, I think that is showing the time in between the first coming of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus. In fact, it's quite possible that when Jesus told this story He was giving a little hint to His disciples. When He talks about this man going on a long journey, who's going to be gone for some time, remember, the disciples thought that Jesus had come to set up His kingdom. And I think Jesus is giving them little bit of a hint to say here, guys, there's going to be something that's going to happen you don't even know about yet before that event occurs. The church age. So, a man's going to leave on a long journey. Jesus is represented by that man.

Now, before he leaves, he gives talents to three of his servants in order for them to use the talents for his benefit. It was very common for business men to have to go on long journeys and they would entrust the business to faithful servants who would carry on the business and make profit for the master while he was gone. Now, with that said, we need to focus on the word talents because I think this is where many people go a little bit off in their interpretation of this parable because, and I have told you this many times, when you study the Bible you cannot read the Bible through a western culture mindset because words don't have the same meaning in our culture as they did back in Jesus' culture when He walked on earth.

And this is one of those examples. When I use the word talents, what do you immediately think of? Well, in our culture, you think of abilities, right? A talent being the ability to sing or to fix things or public speaking or whatever it might be. We see talents as natural abilities. If I said to you that in the story he gave his servants talents you would be thinking, okay, he gave them the ability to sing. He gave
them the ability to speak. He gave them the ability to fix things but that's not what a talent was in Jesus' day. When Jesus said in the story to His disciples that a man gave his servants talents, they did not think about singing. They did not think about speaking. They did not think about fixing things. A talent in Jesus' day was a unit of measurement. That's what a talent was. It was a unit of measurement. Like we might say pounds. They would say talents.

Now, here's the thing that gets interesting. Because even in that day depending on where you were in the Middle East, a talent was different. In Egypt, a talent was one weight. In Israel, a talent was a different weight. So, we really don't know the exact weight. And it's really not important to know the exact weight or Jesus would have told us. It probably ran somewhere in between 50 and 80 pounds by our standards. So if you were given a talent of something, you were given something that was at least 50 pounds. Maybe up to 80 pounds.

Now, what was the value of a talent? Well, it depended on what was being given to you. A talent of gold would be worth a lot more than a talent of silver which would be worth a lot more than a talent of bronze which would be worth a lot more than a talent of copper. So back in Jesus' day, a talent was a unit of measurement. Its value was dependent on what the material was. Now, in the story, we don't know what material it was. We don't know exactly how much they were given. Now, if the number one material and usage of that day was silver. You can kind of estimate it.

And we could say this. One talent of silver would be an extreme amount of money in that day. Can you imagine 50 to 80 pounds of silver in that day? It's an extreme amount of money. In fact, it would take the average Jewish laborer 20 years to save up a talent of silver if they were fortunate. So, what does the master give to these servants? He gives them a measurement of a certain price type metal. Gold, silver, bronze, whatever it is. He wants them to use that amount in order, obviously, to make a profit for the master. So it has nothing to do with someone's ability to sing, someone's ability to speak, someone's ability to fix things. That's not what the talent means.

In fact, notice next that not every slave got the same amount. Notice that. Not every slave got the same amount. One got five talents. So if you figure, a talent is 50 pounds, he got 250 pounds of, let's say, silver. Another slave got two talents. That would be 100 pounds minimum of silver. The third slave got one talent. That would be a minimum of 50 pounds. But they got different amounts. Now, that's very important. Why's that important? Because it shows us something. It shows us that the amount that they were given was based on the decision of the master. It was based solely on the sovereignty of the master.

Now, by the way, how did the master make his decision regarding how much talents he would give each servant? Well, look exactly what it says. It says in verse 14, it's like a man about to go on a journey who entrusted -- who called his slaves, entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five, to another two, to another one. And look at this phrase. Each according to his own ability. So what do we learn? The master knows his slaves intimately. He knows what abilities they have. And so, to the one that has greater ability, he gives greater amounts of talent. To the one who has less ability, he gives lesser
amount of talent. But he’s asking for all three of them to do the same thing. And that is, to be faithful to use whatever amount they’ve been given to profit the master.

Now, what do these talents represent? Obviously, they don’t simply represent your natural ability. That’s not what the text is talking about. I believe the talents really are representing this. Think of it this way. Every believer in Jesus has been given what we could call a stewardship sack. That stewardship sack contains everything God’s given to you. Does that contain your talents? Yes. Does that contain your spiritual gifts? Yes. Does that contain your resources? Yes. Does that contain your personality? Yes. Does that contain your knowledge? Yes. Does that contain your possessions? Yes. That’s your stewardship sack.

And God says, listen. I’m giving you these opportunities because I want you to use the abilities I’ve given you, to use these opportunities so that I, God says, prosper. So that My kingdom expands. I think you could simply say it this way. Talents represent the opportunities that God gives to us to enhance His kingdom. That’s what a talent represents. God has given to each of us different abilities. And based on those abilities, he gives us opportunities. And He says, based on the abilities I’ve given you, I want you to use these opportunities to make an impact for My kingdom. To make an impact for all of eternity.

And it’s okay that I’ve given some of you more abilities than others. It’s okay that I’ve given some of you more opportunities than I have others. That’s okay. It’s all designed by the sovereignty of God. And I think, folks, we make a serious mistake when we try to be somebody else, when we try to make our abilities somebody else’s abilities. I know we can fall into this trap even in church work where we hear about bigger churches doing these incredible things and we think, oh no, now we have to do that. Folks, listen. God hasn’t called us to be like other churches. God has called us to be faithful to use what He’s entrusted to us and take advantage of the opportunities He’s given us to enhance His kingdom.

And to some He gives five talents. To some He gives two talents. To some He gives one talent and that’s okay. Don’t waste your time wishing you had more talents, more abilities, more resources. Instead, use what God’s given you now. Take advantage of the opportunities God’s given you now to enhance His kingdom. And that’s what He wants these servants to do. So, based on their abilities, He gives one of them five talents, one of them two talents, one of them one talent. He says I’m going to be gone for a long time. I want you to use what I have given you according to your abilities. Take advantage of this and use it in a way that prospers my kingdom.

Now, what happens as a result? Well, each slave handles their talents differently. We see that in the story. The first slave takes his five talents. He handles it very wisely. He uses his abilities and he sees that increase to ten talents. The second slave takes his two talents and does the same thing. Using his abilities, he’s able to see that increase to four talents. Now, in both cases, what percentage increase is that? Yeah, I know. You watched fireworks last night. It was late. You’re tired. It’s not a trick question. In both cases, it’s 100% increase, isn’t it? Five to ten. Two to four. It’s an equal percentage increase. Now, you might say, yeah, but ten’s more than four. Yeah, but one guy started with five. One guy started with two. They were both faithful. They both saw 100% increase in their talent for the profit of the master. Keep that in mind.
Now, notice what happens, though, to the third one. The third one who's given one talent, he doesn't take advantage of the opportunity at all. He doesn't in any way use his limited ability to help increase that. Instead, he takes it and he buries it in the ground. So, you have slave number one, five talents became ten. Slave number two, two talents became four. Slave number three, one talent remains one talent.

Now, after a portion of time, what happens? The master returns to settle accounts. Now, what does the master do when he returns to settle the accounts? Well, the one who was given five talents and ended with ten came to the master and said, you gave me five. I now have ten, and the master greatly rewards him. He rewards him with commendation. Well done. He rewards him with joy. And he rewards to him with even more responsibility. He does the same thing to the second servant. The second servant comes in and here's what's interesting. Don't miss this. Notice that the words to the first servant that you can find in verse 21 and the words to the second servant that you find in verse 23 are identical. They're word for word identical. They both get the same commendation. They both get the same joy. They both get additional responsibility.

Now, one of them brought ten talents to the master. One of them only brought four talents to the master but they got a similar reward. Why? Because don't miss this. The number one thing God is looking for is your faithfulness. Your taking whatever abilities He's given to you, using them to take advantage of the opportunities He's given you to enhance His kingdom. And God bases reward on one thing, folks. Faithfulness. That's what He bases reward on. He's not going to judge your amount versus somebody else's amount. He's going to look at your amount and say, were you faithful to use the abilities I gave you? Don't worry about everybody else. Were you faithful to use the abilities I gave you to take advantage of the opportunities I put before you to enhance My kingdom? Because if you were faithful to do that, you will get the reward.

Now, here's what I love about it. What I love is notice what one of the rewards is. I think this is wonderful. Here's what God is saying. God's saying, listen, when you're faithful, when you're faithful to use the abilities God's given you to take advantage of the opportunities God places before you, to enhance His kingdom do you know what God's going to do? He's going to give you more opportunity. Don't miss this. See, you might be sitting here, going I just wish I had the opportunity to do something even bigger for God. You want that opportunity? If you really want that opportunity, here's how you get it. You strive to be faithful to the opportunities God's given you right now. And if you are faithful to use the opportunities God's given you right now in order to enhance His kingdom, do you know what God says He will do? He will now open up for you even more doors of opportunity. You see, one of the greatest rewards to serving our master, Jesus Christ, is that when we're faithful to point people to Jesus, to enhance His kingdom, He will give us even more opportunity to continue to do the same.

You see, I believe with all my heart, my friend, that God's never going to open up more doors of opportunity for you until you're faithful to take advantage of the opportunity He's already given you. Are you utilizing all the opportunities God's given you? Are you utilizing your job to its fullest? Are you utilizing your home to its fullest? Are you utilizing your resources to their fullest? Are you utilizing your time to its fullest? Are you utilizing your abilities to their fullest? Are you being faithful? Are you being
faithful to use your abilities, to use your resources, to use your stewardship sack? Are you being faithful to use that to take advantage of the opportunities God's put right before you? Because if you want the opportunity to do even more for God, you first have to be faithful to do the opportunities He's already given you.

And, folks, the same thing is true with our church. If we want to see God open up even more doors of opportunity for us as a church, we must be faithful to do what? To take advantage of the opportunities He's already given us. And, folks, let's just be honest. God has given us a lot of quote/unquote talents here at E-Free. He's given us amazing resources. He's given us a building that is amazing for northern Michigan and totally debt free. He's given us state of the art technology. He's given us opportunities to be on radio, internet and very soon TV. He has given us an amazing reputation within our community. He has given us all kinds of amazing opportunities. And, folks, listen. If we want to see God open up even more doors of opportunity for us, we have to be faithful to take advantage of the opportunities He's put right before us right now. And that's the principle of the parable. That's what Jesus is communicating. So, five brought his ten. Two brought his four. They were rewarded with even more opportunity.

But notice, notice that third slave. The one that just buried his talent. Now, folks, I believe that this slave represents a disingenuous believer. I believe that this slave represents somebody who may have claimed to be a believer, he seemed part of the master's household but he really wasn't. Now, how do we know he wasn't? I see three reasons. Three reasons he wasn't. Number one is, there was no fruit. There was no fruit. His one talent was just buried in the ground and forgotten and there was no fruit at all.

Now, don't get me wrong. Ladies and gentlemen, listen to me. Don't misunderstand me. I believe we are saved by faith alone. I believe it is our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus that brings about salvation in our life, but I believe the Bible teaches clearly that true genuine faith always produces a fruit. And if there's no fruit then I highly question if there was real genuine faith to begin with. And this is a servant who did not show any fruit. Not only that, this is a servant that totally misunderstood who God was. When the master comes to him, what does this servant say? Well, I buried it because I know you're a hard man. You show no mercy. You show no compassion. You're just a man that wants to bring the hammer down. That doesn't sound like my God, folks. He didn't have a clue who his God was. In fact, he even accuses the master of stealing. He says, you reap where you don't even sow. You go and you pick other people's corn. You're a thief. That doesn't sound like a genuine believer to me. And not only that, not only that, but notice what his punishment is.

In fact, look if you would again at how the wicked slave was punished beginning in verse 26. His master answered and said to him, you wicked, lazy slave. And now I think what the master's doing here is he's being very sarcastic. He says, if you think you're right that I reap where I do not sow, that I gather where I scatter no seed, if you really think I'm that kind of a person, then you would have put my money in the bank so at least it got a little bit of interest. But you didn't even do that. There was no fruit at all. He says this. Therefore, take away the talents from him. Give it to the one who has ten. For to everyone who has more shall be given more. He will have an abundance but from the one who does not have
even what he does have will be taken away. And then he says in verse 30, throw out this worthless slave into the outer darkness in the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Folks, all through the New Testament those phrases are used to describe hell. There's no doubt in my mind that this one represents a disingenuous believer. One who was playing the part but really wasn't a genuine believer in Jesus. Folks, listen. Every generation has them. Every generation since Jesus, the church has had people sitting in their auditoriums who seem like Christians, look like Christians, try to talk like Christians. But there was never real true saving faith ever to begin within their life. In the parable of the ten virgins, it was five out of ten. In this one it's one out of three. That's a pretty significant percentage. This wicked believer, this wicked unbeliever is ultimately cast into eternal punishment.

Now, what's the point? What's the point of the parable? What is it that we can really try to apply to our life? Well, again, let me remind you that I believe the two wise slaves represent genuine believers who understand their need to use all that God's entrusted to them. Their stewardship sack to further His work in His kingdom. They take advantage of the opportunities that God puts in front of them right now today. Folks, listen to me. There is not a day you're alive on this earth that God does not put opportunities in your path. You have the opportunity today to enhance the kingdom of God using the abilities God's given you. You will have the opportunity tomorrow to enhance the kingdom of God by using the abilities and the stewardship sack God has given to you.

The question is this. Will you be a faithful servant? Will you take advantage of those opportunities? Will you use all that God's entrusted to you in order to enhance His kingdom? That's how we live in a perpetual state of readiness. While we're watching for the return of Christ, we are working for the name of Christ. I believe the wicked slave represents a professing believer who does not truly possess salvation. As a result he is separated from his master forever in the story.

So what is the result? The result is this. The genuine believers who are good stewards of what God's given them will be rewarded with even more opportunity. I want to stress this. I think this is an exciting principle. I hope you'll catch it. Listen. If you will be faithful today to take advantage of the opportunities God's given you to enhance His kingdom, I believe that God will give you even more opportunity. I believe if we as a church will be faithful today to take advantage of the opportunities God has given to us that God will give us even more opportunity to enhance His kingdom. That is an exciting principle if you really grasp it. The disingenuous professor obviously spends eternity separated from God.

So what are the applications? What are the applications we can apply to our life? Well, I think this story brings about two. Application number one is this. We must be certain of our salvation. Folks, that is the number one step to living a life that's ready for the return of Jesus. We must be certain of our salvation. Five out of ten in the parable of the virgins got left out. One out of three in the parable of the talents got left out. That's why Paul told the church at Corinth, you need to test yourself to see if you're in the faith. You need to examine yourself. Have you really genuinely put your faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Are you truly part of His family?
And, ladies and gentlemen, listen. Whether you’re here in the Gospel Center, whether you’re watching
down in the Chapel, whether you’re listening on radio, whether you’re watching on the internet,
whether you’re watching live or an hour a day, a week, a month, a year from now, if you have never
genuinely trusted Jesus Christ to be your savior, putting your faith in His death and His resurrection
alone for the forgiveness of your sin, there is no better time than now to make that decision. The Bible
says if you will confess with your mouth that just is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him
from the dead you will be saved. For whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Paul told the Philippian jailer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. John wrote, but to
as many as received Him, God gave the power to be children of God, even to those who believe on His
name. And if you’ve never trusted Jesus to be your Savior or if you’re sitting here or sitting in the Chapel
or sitting at home or wherever you are, an you’re totally unsure if you’ve ever really trusted Jesus to be
your Savior, then let me give you some really good, sound advice. Do it right now. Call out to Him in
your heart right now. Put your faith in Him right now. Because the number one way to be prepared is
to know for sure that you’ve put your faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s
application number one.

Application number two is this. We must be good stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Folks,
listen. Every one of you have abilities. They’re God-given abilities. Every one of you have a stewardship
sack that God has given you amazing abilities and resources, and every single day God gives you
opportunities, and God’s desire for you as you live in a state of perpetual readiness as a believer in Jesus
is that you would take advantage of every opportunity God has put before you. Quit looking at how
much talent somebody else has, at the ability somebody else has. Just look at what God’s given you.

And listen. Paul told the crunch at Corinth at the number one thing God requires of a steward, of one
that’s been entrusted with the mysteries of God, the number one thing He requires is that we’re faithful.
You see, ladies and gentlemen, it really doesn’t matter how much ability you have. That’s not the issue.
The issue is are you using those abilities to take advantage of the opportunities faithfully, daily that God
has put in your path? The one who had two talents and doubled it to four got the same commendation
as the one that had five talents and doubled it to ten. It’s not a matter of how much ability you have.
The issue is, are you faithfully using the abilities God’s given you to take advantage of the opportunities
He’s placed before you to enhance His kingdom? Because if you will be faithful to that, the Bible
teaches God will give you even more opportunity to enhance His kingdom.

Folks, I don’t know about you but in my mind the greatest thing in life is being part of enhancing the
kingdom of God. And think about it. For us as a church, if we will be faithful to walk through the doors
of opportunity that God is creating for us now, I believe we’re going to see God open up even greater --
we have already seen it. We have already seen it through our ministry in technology. God opening up
doors of radio. God opening up doors of internet. God opening up doors of TV. And I believe if we’re
faithful to keep walking through the doors, to take advantage of the opportunities that God’s laid before
us, that God is going to open up even more opportunities and more opportunities and more
opportunities for us as a church to make an eternal impact for the kingdom of God. But it begins with
being faithful to what God’s given us right now.
So, here's the take home point. Here's the bottom line. It's very simple. Folks, listen. How do you live in a state of perpetual readiness as a believer in Jesus? While you're waiting for the -- while you're watching for the return of Christ, that's your attitude. While you're watching for the return of Christ, you need to be working for the name of Christ. That's the bottom line principle. That's what it's all about. While we are waiting and watching for the return of Christ we need to be working for the name of Christ. That's perpetual readiness that I believe Jesus was wanting in every generation leading up to His coming.

Would you bow with me for prayer? Father, we know that the day is coming when Jesus is going to return to set up His kingdom. And, God, five times in the Olivet Discourse You stress to us that we don’t know the day or the hour. And because we don’t know the day or hour, You told these stories to show us the need to be ready. God, these weren’t stories just about those living in the tribulation period. These were stories that were directed toward all the generations leading up to that because our generation could be the generation. If the rapture occurred today and the church was taken to heaven and the tribulation began, we would just be seven years away from the return of Jesus to set up His kingdom. We could be the generation. And that’s why it’s crucial. It’s crucial for us to live in a state of perpetual readiness, to know for sure that we have put our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus and to be faithful to use our abilities, to take advantage of the opportunities You’ve placed before us right now because if we’re faithful to use our abilities You’ve given us, to take advantage of our present opportunities, you will reward us with even more opportunity. God, that excites me. That excites me as an individual. It excites me as a pastor. It excites me as someone who’s part of this church. Because You have opened up amazing opportunities for us. God, may we be faithful as a church to keep walking through, to keep taking advantage of them, believing that as we do You will open up even more opportunities for us to meet as many people as possible right where they're at and help move them to where God wants them to be. So, Father, thank You. Thank You for all You’re doing and all You’re going to continue to do. And I pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.