

# Forever Rich

by David Servant

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*David Servant's sermon 'Forever Rich' teaches the importance of prioritizing eternal treasures over earthly possessions through wise stewardship and self-denial.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:19, Matthew 13:44, Matthew 25:14, Mark 8:35, Hebrews 12:2

**Topics:** "Eternal Rewards", "Kingdom Stewardship"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, illustrating the kingdom of heaven as a treasure worth giving up everything for. He emphasizes the importance of self-denial and surrendering all to gain eternal riches, highlighting the need to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. Through the story of the unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents, he warns about the grave consequences of poor stewardship and the necessity of being ready for Christ's return to avoid punishment and receive rewards.

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## Transcript

### Introduction

You are going to love this story. Jesus told it using just one sentence, but with a little imagination, it can easily be expanded without doing any harm to the lesson.

A man is walking across a neighbor's field early one morning when something poking through the soil--perhaps exposed from last night's rain shower--catches his attention. He stops. With the aid of his staff, he digs around it to uncover an old, metal chest. Wrenching the lid open, he discovers thousands of gold coins. It's a treasure buried long ago, perhaps by a prince or king who was fleeing from a foreign army.

He thinks to himself, "If I owned this field, I would own this treasure." So he quickly covers the chest and makes his way to the home of the field's owner.

"Good morning, my old friend Tobiah! I was just walking through your field and I was thinking to myself what a nice field it is. Have you ever considered selling it?"

"No, my friend, Yitzhak, it's not for sale, and I have never thought of selling it. It was an inheritance from my father, and that field helps me feed my eleven children."

"Well, yes, of course brother Tobiah. But what if someone was to pay you a very good price for your field...say twice the going rate per acre? Could that motivate you to sell it?"

Tobiah perceives that he has a highly-motivated buyer on the hook. "Well, my dear friend, Yitzhak, I'm afraid twice the going rate would not be quite enough. For me to be motivated to sell that field, well, it would take quite an offer. That field has been in our family for generations."

"Then how about three times the going rate per acre?"

Tobiah almost swallows his Adam's apple as he tries to keep his exuberance hidden. "Hmmm, that is a pretty persuasive offer." He momentarily wonders why Yitzhak is so motivated to buy his field, but the thought of selling it for three times its value overpowers his concern. He knows that if he sells his field at that price, he can immediately buy another field three times its size. Tobiah looks at Yitzhak's hopeful face and inwardly debates if he should risk demanding even more.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I don't really want to sell it, but, because you're a friend and neighbor, I think I could let it go to you for four times the going rate. But that is my lowest price. My wife was just saying the other day how much she loves that field. I'm going to have to answer to her if I sell it."

Yitzhak grabs Tobiah's hand and shakes it vigorously. "Then we've got a deal!" Tobiah watches incredulously as Yitzhak briskly walks away. "What a fool!" he thinks to himself. Meanwhile, Yitzhak inwardly shouts, "What a wise man am I!"

When Yitzhak arrives home, he tells his wife the good news. They immediately begin to liquidate everything they own in order to raise the cash needed to buy Tobiah's field. In a few weeks, everything is gone. Their home, field, barn, cows, horses, furniture, and tools have all been sold to neighbors--who have all been talking about Yitzhak's foolishness behind his back.

Finally the day of the sale arrives. Yitzhak buys Tobiah's field for his exorbitant price and holds the deed in his hand. The hidden treasure now belongs to him. He's suddenly wealthier than he ever dreamed of being. The "fool" is no fool at all. He paid just a fraction of the field's true worth.

Here's how Jesus told the story:

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field (Matt. 13:44).

Clearly, Jesus was not trying to teach us that the kingdom could be gained without cost. The very essence of following Christ is self-denial--but self-denial with a view to a reward, something that Jesus Himself exemplified (Heb. 12:2). He who endured the cross for the joy set before Him told His followers that they would save their lives by losing them for His and the gospel's sake (Mark 8:35). Eternal gains are ours through temporary loss. And the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure so valuable that it is worth giving up everything to gain it.

Of course, the general self-denial required of those who will inherit God's kingdom (as illustrated in Jesus' Parable of the Hidden Treasure) is expressed through consistent daily acts of self-denial, and it is those consistent acts that will be proportionately rewarded. This is certainly true concerning any monetary sacrifice that we make, as Jesus said at another time:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

We have the alternative of laying up our treasures on earth--where we will inevitably forfeit them before or at our death--or in heaven, where they will never be lost. We are faced with the same decision as the man who discovered the hidden treasure in his neighbor's field, and it is similarly a "no-brainer."

### The Wisest Investment

Although mothballs, rust-resistant paints and home security systems might help modern followers of Christ counteract the work of moths, rust and thieves, the timeless wisdom of Jesus' words stands. Modern wealth evaporates all the time through currency inflation, bad investments and obsolete electronic gadgets. Storing up treasure in heaven is the wisest investment anyone can make for several reasons, one of which is that it eliminates all risk of loss. As martyred missionary Jim Elliot so wisely wrote, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." And that is what this little book is all about--becoming forever rich.

Forever goes beyond death, which is something far too few of us think about. Financial planners often consider the grave to be life's terminal point, but that is the ultimate grave error. According to Jesus, we can and should plan for our financial future beyond this life. In light of the fact that our earthly sojourn is but a blink in eternity, we are wise to be more focused on the next life, on forever.

Imagine that you were given a million dollars, concerning which your benefactor only made one requirement: With that money, you must purchase two houses, one in which you must live for a day, and the other in which you must live for the rest of your life.

If you spent \$990,000 on the one-day house, very few people who knew of your decision would be seeking your investment advice. In fact, if you spent \$500,000 on each home, most observers would be shaking their heads. A wise person would spend as little as possible on his one-day house. He might consider living in a doghouse for a day! That way, he could enjoy the nicest possible house for the remaining years of his life.

### True Riches

The path to being forever rich begins in this life, and the benefits begin here as well. You don't have to wait until heaven to start enjoying all of the blessings. But we must begin to look at wealth from Jesus' perspective, a perspective that runs counter to the world's wisdom. He often sees poverty in what most consider wealth, and wealth in what most consider poverty. He once told a church full of materially rich people that they were poor (see Rev. 3:17). That is, they were spiritually and eternally poor. Yet Jesus told another church of impoverished people that they were rich (see Rev. 2:9).

Jesus' perspective is often radically different than ours, isn't it? He looks at things from an eternal perspective.

All of this is to say that, when we measure wealth only by earthly money and possessions, we're making a significant error, and we reveal an understanding that is a misunderstanding. Becoming forever rich requires a change of perspective, a renewing of our minds, and a re-appraisal of what we currently value.

This is a book that will guide you along the path to becoming truly rich, now and forever, all based on what Jesus taught. Think of it as a treasure map. Let's get started.

## Chapter One:

### Jesus, Venture Capitalist

There is no one like Jesus! Scripture reveals Him as the King of kings, Lord of lords, Son of God, Savior, Messiah, Prince of Peace and Light of the World--titles of which He alone is worthy. But did you know that He is also revealed in the Bible as being a venture capitalist?

A venture capitalist is a wealthy person who invests in new businesses. He takes the risk of losing his investment if a new business in which he invests fails, but if it succeeds, he profits significantly. Jesus revealed Himself as being such an investor in His Parable of the Talents:

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, and 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 had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

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 were faithful with a few things, I will 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 were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

And the one also 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 scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received 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" (Matt. 25:14-30).

Obviously, the master in the parable represents Jesus, who has given us everything we own and before whom we must all one day appear to give an account (see 2 Cor. 5:10). The slaves represent followers of Christ, whom the Bible often refers as His bondservants (for example, Rev. 1:1). And the talents, each equivalent to two year's wages for an average workman in Christ's day, clearly represent everything that Jesus has entrusted to us to use for His purposes. They are thus considered by most commentators to

represent our opportunities, abilities and money, or, as it is often said, our time, talents and treasures.

Some commentators downplay our accountability in regard to one of those three, namely, our money. Surely, however, it would be unwise to conclude that the money in Jesus' parable symbolizes everything that He has entrusted to us besides money.

All of this is to say that Jesus is very much like a venture capitalist. He's entrusted to all of His servants different amounts of His money with which we are to do His business.

He expects a return on His investments, and one day we'll have to give an account. Those who have done well will be proportionately rewarded. Those who have been unfaithful will, like the third slave in Jesus' parable, forfeit everything.

That being so, we are wise to ask ourselves, Am I doing what Jesus expects of me with the money He has entrusted to me? Am I bringing Him a return on His investment? Is His kingdom being furthered because of my stewardship? Am I ready to stand before Him to give an account of my stewardship?

The answers to those questions reveal what our eternal future holds for us.

#### The Grave Consequences of Poor Stewardship

I must confess my profound concern that too many professing Christians are glossing over a very sobering message that this parable seeks to amplify. That concern constrains me not to hide what Jesus so clearly reveals, even if I risk losing some readers in this, our first chapter together. Please, I sincerely ask, open your heart and mind and read the remainder of this chapter thoughtfully and carefully. It lays a foundation upon which every other principle is built on the journey to becoming forever rich.

Take note that the third slave in Jesus' parable, whom his master referred to as being wicked, lazy and worthless, was punished for his unfaithfulness by being cast into the "outer darkness...where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30). That sounds very much like hell, doesn't it?

Because the third servant in Jesus' parable certainly appears to represent someone who, like the other two servants, had a relationship with God, some commentators, anxious to preserve a faulty understanding of God's grace, attempt to convince us that the "outer darkness" to which Jesus was referring is not hell. Rather, they claim that it is a reference to the alleged "outer fringes of heaven." There, unfaithful believers will purportedly weep and gnash their teeth in regret, realizing how their reward could have been so much greater had they been obedient. Some who espouse this particular theory even go so far as to claim that the weeping of those unfaithful saints will only be temporary, because Jesus "will wipe every tear from their eyes" and then release them from heaven's outer darkness to join those "on the inside."

If, however, we study every other instance in Matthew's Gospel where Jesus spoke of "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth," (see Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51), it becomes obvious that He was referring to hell and not to a place supposedly found in the "outer fringes" of heaven. Consider, for example, Jesus' explanation of His Parable of the Wheat and the Tares:

So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and

gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:41-43, emphasis added).

Note that the damned will weep and gnash their teeth in "the furnace of fire," a clear reference to hell. Are we to believe that some of the righteous in heaven (in the alleged "outer fringes") will react identically to the damned, weeping and gnashing their teeth? It would be just as logical to conclude--when we read scriptures about deceased people rejoicing and praising God--that we are reading about people in the "outer fringes" of hell who are glad that they aren't in the deeper domains of torment!

Consider also Jesus' Parable of the Dragnet:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:47-50, emphasis added).

Those who claim that the outer darkness mentioned by Jesus in His Parable of the Talents is a place in heaven might as well also claim that the "furnace of fire" mentioned by Jesus in His Parable of the Dragnet is also a place in heaven, because people there weep and gnash their teeth just as do those in the "outer darkness."

Moreover, does Jesus want us to believe that a person can be judged by an angry God as being "wicked" and "worthless"--as was the unfaithful servant in His Parable of the Talents--and still be a heaven-bound child of God who is safe in His grace? That same Jesus, in His Parable of the Dragnet, spoke of the "wicked" being cast into the "furnace of fire."

Another Unfaithful Servant

Let's consider just one more "weeping and gnashing of teeth" passage. At the same time and before the same audience to whom He told His Parable of the Talents, Jesus spoke about another unfaithful servant:

Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, "My master is not coming for a long time," and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:45-51, emphasis added).

Was Jesus trying to communicate that the unfaithful servant ultimately went to heaven, or to heaven's "outer fringes"? Surely not. Scripture solemnly warns that the litmus test of authentic salvation is one's love for God's servants (see 1 John 3:10, 14; 4:7-8, 20), yet the unfaithful slave was found beating his fellow slaves. Scripture also declares that no drunkard will inherit God's kingdom (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10), yet the unfaithful slave was eating and drinking with drunkards. We read that the unfaithful servant was ultimately "cut in pieces" and assigned "a place with the hypocrites" where "there will be weeping and gnashing their teeth." Clearly, that is hell.

All of this is to say that the unfaithful, wicked and worthless slave in Jesus' Parable of the Talents ended up in hell, and the reason is because he brought no return on his master's investment. If he would have only invested his single talent in the bank and gained some interest, that apparently could have saved him. But he buried his talent in the ground.

### More Theological Wiggling

Because it is logically undeniable that the unfaithful servant in Jesus' Parable of the Talents was cast into hell, some commentators claim that the third servant represents someone who was never born again, and the single talent that he received and buried represents his God-given opportunity to hear and believe the gospel, which he rejected.

Although it could be true that the unfaithful servant represents a person who was never saved, there is a major problem with that interpretation as well--the problem of context. When Jesus told His Parable of the Talents, He was speaking to a few of His closest, most devoted disciples. In Mark's Gospel, they are listed as being Peter, James, John and Andrew (see Mark 13:3). Sitting on the Mount of Olives, they had asked Jesus some questions about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and of His coming. His response is recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, what is known as the Olivet Discourse.

Within that discourse, Jesus repeatedly emphasized to those few disciples the importance of their being ready when He returned (see Matt. 24:33, 42, 44; 25:13). In fact, the importance of them being ready could be considered to be His primary theme throughout the entire discourse.

In order to be ready, they needed to be found doing His will when He returned. He underscored the importance of that by first telling them about an unfaithful servant who ended up in hell because he was not prepared for his master's return (see Matt. 24:45-51). Remember, He told them about the unfaithful servant to motivate them to be ready.

He then told them about five virgins who were refused entrance to a wedding feast because they were unprepared when the delayed bridegroom appeared (see Matt. 25:1-13). He ended that parable by telling Peter, Andrew, James and John, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13, emphasis added). That is, "Peter, Andrew, James and John, don't be like the five foolish virgins." Clearly, Jesus believed the possibility existed for them to become like the five foolish virgins; otherwise He would not have warned them.

Then He told them the Parable of the Talents, a story about yet another servant who went to hell because he was unprepared for his master's return (see Matt. 25:14-30). Again, Jesus told them that parable to motivate them to be ready.

Finally, He told those few from among His most devoted disciples about the future judgment of the sheep and the goats, when the goats will discover to their horror that they are unprepared to stand before the Lord because of their poor stewardship. They will consequently be cast into hell (see Matt. 25:31-46). Again, Jesus told some of His disciples about that future judgment to motivate them to be ready.

Although Peter, Andrew, James and John may have later told unsaved people about Jesus' warnings and of the consequences of not being ready, there isn't any doubt that they understood that His words applied primarily to themselves (and to any followers of Christ who want to make sure they are ready when He returns). All of them knew that they could potentially make the same error as the unfaithful servant. Like

him, they could miscalculate their master's return, backslide, be unprepared, and share his fate. Any of them could become like the five foolish virgins, who were initially prepared for the bridegroom's coming but became unprepared, and who consequently were locked out of the wedding feast. Any of them could become like the goats if they ignored the pressing needs of the "least of these" (Matt. 25:45). And any of them could become like the unfaithful servant who buried his talent, and who consequently was cast into hell.

I encourage you to read all of Matthew 24 and 25 to convince yourself that what I am saying is undeniably true. How tragic it is that these clear facts are ignored or denied by so many professing Christians who have turned "the grace of our God into licentiousness" (Jude 4), a heresy that is as old as the New Testament.

(And here is a more thorough list of scriptures that all indicate or imply that it is possible for a genuine Christian to forfeit salvation: Matt. 18:21-35; 24:4-5, 11-13, 23-26, 42-51; 25:1-30; Luke 8:11-15; 11:24-26; 12:42-46; John 6:66-71; 8:31-32, 51; 15:1-6; Acts 11:21-23; 14:21-22; Rom. 6:11-23; 8:12-14, 17; 11:20-22; 1 Cor. 9:23-27; 10:1-21; 11:29-32; 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:24; 11:2-4; 12:21-13:5; Gal. 5:1-4; 6:7-9; Phil. 2:12-16; 3:17-4:1; Col. 1:21-23; 2:4-8, 18-19; 1 Thes. 3:1-8; 1 Tim. 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-16; 5:5-6, 11-15, 6:9-12, 17-19, 20-21; 2 Tim. 2:11-18; 3:13-15; Heb. 2:1-3; 3:6-19; 4:1-16; 5:8-9; 6:4-9, 10-20; 10:19-39; 12:1-17, 25-29; Jas. 1:12-16; 4:4-10; 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2:1-22; 3:16-17; 1 John 2:15-2:28; 5:16; 2 John 6-9; Jude 20-21; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17-26; 3:4-5, 8-12, 14-22; 21:7-8; 22:18-19.)

Suffice it to say that, after hearing Jesus' clear warnings, Peter, Andrew, James and John--who were certainly saved, heaven-bound individuals when He spoke to them that day on the Mount of Olives--all understood that they could potentially forfeit salvation and be cast into hell if they were poor stewards of their time, talents and treasures.

And if that was true for them, who among us can claim that it is not also true for us? Thus we see the grave consequences of poor stewardship.

Again, many professing Christians scoff at any theology that affirms the biblical truth that faith without works is dead, useless and cannot save (see Jas. 2:14-24), or that God's grace does not mitigate the necessity of holiness, but rather instructs "us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12). Like the goats Jesus spoke of in His foretelling of the judgment of the sheep and goats, they will be shocked when they stand before Him and are condemned by the One whom they thought was their Savior.

And that brings me back to my original thought. Jesus is like a venture capitalist. Yet the rewards for doing well with what He has entrusted to us are much greater than any earthly venture capitalist could offer. Similarly, the consequences for not bringing some return to Him are potentially much more severe than what one would experience dealing with any earthly venture capitalist.

The Bible repeatedly teaches us that God endeavors to motivate people through rewards and punishments, and the Parable of the Talents emphasizes both. Wise readers will take note and determine to please the One who "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6b, KJV). Then, we don't have to fear punishment, but can look forward to rewards.

The First Lesson

This is the foundation for becoming forever rich: God is the owner of everything. He entrusts some of His wealth to each of us. One day we will each have to give an account of our stewardship and be proportionately rewarded or punished. We want to avoid punishment at all costs and pursue the greatest rewards.

If we embrace those truths, it will be reflected in our actions and lifestyles. Our belief will then become a basis for diligence, thrift, contentment, integrity, investment, sacrifice and generosity, all subjects of later chapters.

Every blessing, David

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