

Harvesting Eternal Rewards - Part 3

by Josef Tson

The sermon explores God's dual purpose for humanity: to reflect His image and to inherit His kingdom through faithfulness and character development.

Duration: 53:11

Scripture: Luke 24:45, Luke 24:47, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 Peter 1:10-12

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Stewardship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of being faithful and reliable in the little things that God has entrusted to us. He refers to the story of the steward in Luke 16 as an example of someone who wisely arranged his future. The preacher emphasizes that God tests our trustworthiness and reliability through these small tasks, and if we prove faithful in them, He will entrust us with bigger things. The sermon also highlights the significance of understanding the Scriptures, as Jesus opened the disciples' minds to comprehend the Scriptures in Luke 24. The preacher concludes by praying for God's grace and power to help us be faithful and pass the tests, ultimately giving glory to God.

Transcript

From Luke 24, that Easter day in the evening when Jesus appeared to the disciples for the first time, we read that beautiful, beautiful verse 45. And he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Now, before that event, that afternoon, two of Jesus' disciples were walking towards Emmaus.

Jesus approached them as a stranger, and he started to explain to him why he had to die on the cross. Verse 47, uh, 27. And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.

Jesus just went through the scriptures with them. Isn't that interesting that the Son of God doesn't say, well, because I am God, I can explain things to you straight away, directly, in my own words. No, he takes the scripture and he opens the scriptures to them and say, let me show you myself in the scriptures.

And he opens their minds so that they understand the scriptures. Now, I want to be like my master, and all my desire is just to go through all the scriptures with you and to tell you what is his plan for our lives. And my prayer, again, is that he opens our minds, that we understand the scriptures.

And whatever questions you will have, whatever problems you will have with my teaching, my reaction will be always, was I faithful to the scripture? You may have questions, you may have bewilderment. I will just say, if I was faithful to the scriptures in what I taught you, then you have to find your answers or the clarification to your questions. But faithfulness to the scriptures, that is my basic desire.

We are talking about harvest. There is a harvest of souls, and we are the harvesters. There is the end of the age when the angels will do the harvesting.

And there will be a harvest in heaven on the basis of Galatians 6, 7, and 8. Whatever you sow down here, that is what you are going to reap up there. And I told you that my main concern is with this third harvest. Because you will see, we will be able to understand the other two much better if we understand the final thing.

So last night I asked that basic question, what is God's final purpose with us? And we came to see something absolutely enthralling. Something that makes us just stand in awe. God's purpose is a double one.

First, his purpose is to make us in his own image. Second, his purpose is that we inherit with Christ all God's universe. And that we rule with Christ over all God's worlds.

Something greater than that cannot be imagined. Let's go again in a summary fashion over these two purposes of God with us. First purpose, that we be made in God's image.

Now, what does that mean? What does it mean that I have to become in the image of God? Well, theologically, there are two things that the theologians tell us that make the image of God in us. One is personality. The other is character.

Personality means that you have intellect, sentiments, and will. These are the three ingredients that make a personhood, a person, a personality. And that is what God is.

He has a mind, he has feelings, and he has the power to choose, to decide. He has a will. And when God made us in his image, he made us in that fashion.

To have our own mind, to have our own feelings, and to have our own will. And our capacity to choose and to determine. The second is character.

God's aim is that we be holy as he is holy. God's aim is that we be perfect as he is perfect. That's Matthew 5, 48.

You be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. The other one is in 1 Peter 1, verses, I think, 11 to 15. You be holy as he, your Father, is holy.

And all the other characteristics of God, because he is love, we have to be love. Because he is righteous, we have to be righteous. Whatever makes God's character has to be our character.

Now, this is speaking theologically. Speaking biblically. That means just picking up scriptures and showing it in the scripture.

Colossians 1, 15 tells us that Christ is the image of God. If you want to give the quickest definition, what is the image of God? Colossians 1, 15. Christ is the image of God.

Well, how do we understand that? God is spirit. He is invisible to our material eyes. But he wanted to become visible to us.

So he stooped down to our dimensions. And he became a man. And God lived a human life in a divine way.

He lived as God-man. And at the end of his human life, that last night, before crucifixion, John 14, 8, he tells Philip, Whoever saw me has seen the Father, has seen God. You want to see God? You've seen me for three years.

Don't you realize that you just saw God? That's the image of God. God become man. Now, God's purpose is that we become like Christ.

Let me give you the scriptures. Galatians 4, 19. Beloved for whom I am in birth pains until Christ is formed in you.

The purpose of every Christian minister, the purpose of every pastor, the purpose of every church should be this. The perfection of the saints, Ephesians 4, 11-15. Until we are all mature, until we are all like Jesus Christ.

Until Christ is formed in us. In other words, in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. We all look like in a mirror, and the mirror is the gospels.

And see the face of Christ. See Christ. And as we look at Christ, the Holy Spirit works in us and transforms us step by step and makes us like Christ.

The image of Christ is being made in us by the Holy Spirit as we look at Christ. And I would quote again, another quote, Philippians 2, 5. Where we are commanded to have the mind of Christ. To equip ourselves with the same type of thinking like Christ.

But I think one of the most comprehensive descriptions is in Colossians chapter 3. Starting with verse 9 we read, Do not lie to one another. Or let's start with 8. But now you also put them all aside. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old man with its evil practices. And have put on the new man who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him. Don't you understand, says Paul, that you are new creatures? And you are in a process of renewal according to the image of the one who created you? So anger, malice, wrath, wickedness, all these things have to go.

And you put on love, patience, kindness, goodness, self-giving, self-control. This is me being renewed and transformed in the image of the Creator. So this is God's purpose.

Number one, to create us in his image. The second purpose of God, as I told you last night, is to inherit with Christ all God's universe. And to rule with Christ over all God's creation.

I quoted Romans 8, 16, 17. If we are children, then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ of all things. But for me the greatest is there in Matthew 24, verse 47.

Truly I say to you, His Majesty the King will take that servant, will put him in charge over all his possessions. That is God's ultimate purpose with us. Now, I pointed out that that inheritance and that

ruling with Christ is conditioned.

That is something that will be given to us if we meet God's terms. And I emphasize that you distinguish between salvation and inheritance. Salvation, I repeat again, was worked out for us by Christ.

He won for us the right to go to heaven. He redeemed us, he bought us, he made us to belong to God. But inheritance is what we get in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of heaven.

It's called inheritance. It's also called rewards. It's also called ruling with Christ.

Now you see what I do, I combine all these notions together. Because they are combined, they overlap in the scripture. So I have the biblical right to say that all these things, rewards or inheritance or positions of authority, they are all the same thing.

And they are all what actually God wants you to have. They are already designated to you by God. The only question is, do you qualify for them? So we have to look again and with a closer look at the basic conditions.

We'll deal with conditions this morning, tonight, and tomorrow morning. This is so important, it's so basic. So we just start and we go back to Luke 16.

You remember, it's the story of that steward, that administrator who was wise enough to arrange his future. And then Jesus says, now the children of this world are wise enough to know how to arrange their future. Why don't you have the same kind of mind, the same kind of wisdom? Why don't you get concerned with your eternal future? Why don't you work for that future? And then in verse 10, 11, and 12, he gives us three basic principles on how that future is going to be for us.

First principle, he who is faithful in a very little thing, is faithful also in much. And he who is unrighteous in very little thing, is unrighteous also in much. Now, here is how we have to understand this.

God has entrusted us with little things here. They are not big, big things. They are little things.

But he tells us this principle. Watch for those little things. Because they prove your faithfulness or your trustworthiness as you have it in NIV version.

I love that. Trustworthiness. Or reliability.

These are the words that you can put there. If you prove reliable in little things, I will say, this person is reliable in big things also. So I can entrust this person with bigger things.

He is testing you down here for reliability. And this is the basic principle of the king. Your reliability in small things, that will go with you there.

And up there he might tell you, you are not reliable. I cannot entrust you with bigger things, because in small things you failed. You goofed it.

See? Now that is the principle that Christ gives us. It's his principle. Second principle.

Verse 11. Now how do we understand this? This is again a very basic principle. Divine principle.

All that we have here is perishable. It is there today. It won't be there tomorrow.

The rust will take care of it. The worms will take care of it. The fire will take care of it.

Or the thieves will take care of it. They are not lasting. So they are not really true riches.

What are the true riches? Well, the true riches is that new heaven and the new earth. That new creation which will have no more corruption. That is no more decomposition.

That will be eternally good and perfect and stable kingdom. They are the true riches. And to be entrusted with the true riches is to be told, Come, inherit the kingdom I have prepared for you from the beginning, from the foundation of the world.

That is the true riches. Now here is what God says. I give you some false riches.

Transitory riches. Trifle riches. And you foolish, you let your heart be stuck with them.

Conquered by them. And you become greedy. And as you say, they are mine.

I want them and I won't separate them. Don't you dare ask me to give them away. I will just say, you goofed it.

You failed my test. I cannot entrust you with riches. With the true riches.

Because you are not faithful over transitory riches. Now will you open please at Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5 starts with the command given to the children of God. It's obviously speaking to saved people.

Children of God. Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. It's clear.

It addresses us. Now listen to verse 5. For you know, you these children, know with certainty that no immoral or impure person or covetous man who is an idolater has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let's leave the immoral or impure aside.

Let's look at the covetous. No covetous man has an inheritance in the kingdom of God. It doesn't talk about salvation here.

It speaks to children of God. To people who are saved. But covetous.

People who want to have it good for themselves. Little selfish consuming creatures that want to have it all for themselves and don't mind the needs of the kingdom and the needs of God's poor people. And he looks to that greedy child of his and says, You are not faithful over untrue riches.

I will never give you an inheritance in my kingdom. I will never put you in charge of anything. Can you have clearer scriptures than this? Now let me tell you.

There are different, we are talking immediately about God testing us. This is the whole concept of testing. There are people who are tested in persecution in Soviet Union or in Romania or in China.

Their testing is total deprivation of everything. Poverty and renunciation and hardship and beatings and imprisonment and labor camps. Your testing is riches.

Now if you look in the parable of the sower, the thorns in Matthew 13, the thorns are either the cares or the worries of the world, that is troubles, or the riches and the pleasures of the world. Both of them can choke that person so that that person will never have fruit. But let me tell you, Chuck Swindoll got it from somewhere that for 95 people, out of 100 people who would be put to the two tests, persecution and poverty and deprivation, or the riches, when you put 100 people to the test of poverty and persecution, 95 of them will come out successful.

If you put that 100 people to the test of riches, 95% will fail. It's a worse test. It's a more difficult test.

You are entrusted with the king's riches for administration, for his purposes, and you say, well, he wants me to be rich and enjoy it. That is the most dangerous teaching that has come and is killing the Christianity of America. That is just helping the American Christians to fail the test.

No inheritance in the kingdom of Christ for covetous people. That's not me speaking, brothers and sisters. I am only going through the scriptures with you.

So that is the second principle. The third principle in verse 12, Luke 16. And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will entrust you with what is your own? Now, briefly I explained that in my first talk.

Here is again the principle. Nothing that we have here is our own. Here is where this King's Kids theology people go berserk.

They say, well, because we are the children of the king, all that the king has is ours. We are owners. We just claim it and have it.

Rubbish, biblically speaking. Because nothing here is our own. An heir is somebody who is going to get it.

Not yet. That's the essence of inheritance. It's something that is not yet here.

You have to qualify. So whatever we have here is entrusted to us on the basis of stewardship. We are administering the things of the king.

So don't hurry to say, I enter the wealth of the king because I am his child. No, no, no. You are an unworthy slave who was put in charge of the king's things.

And I would like to go again quickly over those four basic things that are not my own but were entrusted to me. My wife. I cannot emphasize enough that the man and the woman that get married are two artists that from that moment make the other person's character.

We are so wrong if we think that our character is made only in the first years of life and our character is already done by the time we marry. Oh no, the real workshop for us is marriage. And the two artists are the wife and the husband.

You know, I was a little peasant boy, very uncivilized and with rough manners. And Elizabeth was a town girl, a pastor's daughter. And she married this rough farmer, farmer boy.

She had to work a lot to civilize him. To put some good manners in him. But not only that.

As we decided to put our life on the altar and fight those battles for more religious rights in the 70s, from the moment she said, Lord, I give you Joseph for whatever job you have, including imprisonment and jail and even death. And from that moment when she said, Lord, and I am willing too to go the same way. After that, she was just watching me, if my acts are as good as my words.

And after I was beaten once there, fear went into my bones. You see, I was so scared when I saw their wickedness at work. A few months later, a major in the secret police, Bucharest, told me that he just got this new job in the secret police to deal with denominations.

And he studied my case and he made his mind to finish with me as a preacher. And he gave me time, he said, in a month's time we'll give you a secular job. And if you don't accept that job, there is a new law that was just voted in.

And according to this law, we can send you to a labor camp if you don't accept that. You see, they took away my license as a preacher. With that, they said, now you are unemployed.

If you stay pastor, you actually are in an illegal employment. We offer you a job, and if you reject it, you go to the labor camp. And I went home and I told Elizabeth, I said, no, there is no way out.

I'll just accept that job. But she said, Joseph, don't you see that you are the test case with the new law? If you are broken into obeying it, they will take the license from every other pastor and then give them secular jobs. You have to stand up and preach without license.

But Elizabeth, they will send me to the labor camp. And what? Elizabeth, they might kill me. Joseph, didn't we decide that we were ready for imprisonment or for being killed? Look, Joseph, I come with you.

I stand with you to be killed, but you go on preaching until you die. I wonder how many wives would do that. How many wives would say, why cannot you have a quiet life like everybody else? Why do you bring so much trouble on our family? You see, that was the other possibility.

Well, she realized she couldn't break through to me, so she called an older pastor she knew. That man had authority on my life because he proved himself in labor camp. She told him what was the problem without me knowing.

And that man came to me furious. Didn't know why. Didn't know why.

He knew everything. So, you see how wives are. And so he had me sit with him on that sofa and he looked to me like that.

Son, let me tell you what you did. One day you took a flag and you said to all of us, follow me. And we followed and it was great.

Now you got afraid. You put the flag in the ground and you got hidden in a bush. You at least have the courage to tell everybody the flag is there for the taking.

Maybe somebody else will have the courage to pick it up and will follow him. It was so vivid. I saw myself in the bush.

The flag there. And all of a sudden everything was turned upside down in me. And I said to him, I won't let that flag down.

But, daddy, I was calling that man daddy. Daddy, you touched the wound. I got afraid.

Now let me confess it. Because I have to flush it out in confession. And I confessed the whole fear that came into me and how I was so scared of going and confronting those people again.

And in confession and in prayer we got it all straight. And I went to that major and I told him, sir, I made my mind. I will stay preacher until I die.

And, sir, I made ready. I am ready to die. I know you will not be able to stand this kind of confrontation.

You will kill me. But, sir, I am ready. Whenever you want to kill me, I am here.

Everything is prepared. I've never seen in my life a man change like that. He was changed and he said, Mr. Zon, who talks about killing or dying? Nobody will kill you.

You will stay preacher. He made his mind that moment that a man who was ready to die for it should have it. And I was four years pastor of the largest Baptist church in Romania without a license.

There was no such case before. And now there are pastors like that all over Romania who get ordained and couldn't care less for the license because there was a precedent established that way. Now everybody would say, well, Joseph is a hero.

He's not. He was a coward. It was Elizabeth who made me stand like that and gave me the victory.

But I shudder. What if she was the other way? Why don't you find a way to live your life quiet? I am what I am because of Elizabeth. She made me stand.

I am her product. Now it is the same way she would tell you what I struggle, how I struggle to make her. To help her in her crises.

And with patience and gentleness to help her come out of her battles. So I am making her and she is making me. And step by step we are making each other.

Peter says in 1 Peter 3.7 to the husbands, Treat your wives as one who will inherit eternity with you. She will go with you and whatever you produced in her will be there at the judgment seat of Christ. And the Lord will say, now Joseph, I want to establish your reliability here.

I want to establish your position for eternity in my kingdom. Let me see what you produced out of Elizabeth. And Elizabeth, let me see what you produced out of Joseph.

That will tell me your trustworthiness, your reliability. Now this has an extraordinary consequence. You see, you may say, dear young wife, he is not what I expected.

He doesn't give me what I dreamed of in a husband. So I quit. Well, the issue is not if he gave you what you expected.

The issue is that God entrusted you with that man to make him. And if you quit, you just say to God, God, I refuse to make this man. And he will just say, well, you failed the test.

It's the question of reliability. And God is testing your faithfulness with the man he entrusted to you. Or with that impossible wife that he gave you.

You see? And it's the same with our children. However difficult they are, God gave that child to me to put a heavenly character in her. And believe me, she is 14 now, and she has to make her decisions.

I help her to make decisions. In so many areas, because she is in that rich, affluent city of Wheaton, Illinois. And DuPage County, where Wheaton is the capital, I think is the second richest county in America.

And to be in a Christian school there is to be in the worst. Because there are so many rich Christians there, and there are girls there who boast that they have an outfit for every day of the month. And I don't want my girl, my daughter, to go that way.

And she is struggling right now with quite a few other areas. Will she go the American way? Or the biblical way? And I try to help her to see the issues. And to emphasize, I don't impose on you.

I want you to choose. I am here only to tell you what are the issues and what the Bible says in this area. But I tremble, because still, somehow, her choices are my responsibility.

And so God will measure my reliability in eternity according to what Dorothy chooses. Isn't that scary? And it's the same in the area of my gifts and in the area of the administration of the money. You see, whenever I invest in something, or we buy something, I have to say, isn't this beyond the limit? God wants us to have a decent living.

But beyond that decent living, everything else has to go for his kingdom. Every penny of it. And he is looking if we are willing to give it away, invest it for his kingdom or not.

And let me emphasize, not just give it away. He will also judge you according to the wisdom of your investment. Let me tell you one of my biggest burdens.

It was in Christianity today, a few months ago, that all the money that they can raise to broadcast the gospel to Soviet Union is five million dollars per year. Five million dollars per year to broadcast the gospel in Soviet Union is nothing. But you see, in Soviet Union, every Russian who has a radio has a shortwave radio.

Every evening that Russian scans the scale to see if there is somebody there to speak in his language something else than the Moscow propaganda. You could cover Soviet Union with the gospel and that nation is open for the gospel as no other nation in the world. But tell me one great preacher of America.

I mean Americans. Because all the missions to Russia are Russian immigrants here. You don't have any great American having a mission to evangelize Soviet Union.

I could tell you more about that and why it's so. But if you beg for money to print books to train people in Romania or in Soviet Union, very few people respond. But if somebody wanted to build a Christian Disneyland, he was able to get more than a hundred million dollars per year.

Now is that a wise investment of God's money? There are billions of people who perish in the world and we build crazy entertainment places for Christians in America. I am afraid that the judgment of God will come over America because of this wasting God's resources on our own entertainment. A fun and entertainment oriented Christianity.

Instead of sacrificial investment for the salvation of the rest of the world. So this is God testing us. If you are not faithful over the things which were not your own, all your wealth is not your own.

It was given to you to administer for the king. If you are not reliable in that, who will entrust you with your own? You will go to heaven and all heaven is your own. But who will entrust you with your own? Nobody.

No covetous man has an inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ. So this is the biblical teaching on the conditions. Inheritance is conditioned.

Ruling with Christ is conditioned. Now you have already seen last night that there are degrees of authority. There are different jobs given to us.

And let me just share here a few insights. Most of you have that very popular book, *What the Bible is All About*, by Henrietta Mares. She was a teacher at Wheaton College.

Somewhere in one of her books I read something absolutely enthralling. She gives free reign to her imagination. And she imagines how it will be when she will go to heaven.

And she says that she will be given an angel to guide her, to show her all God's universe. Those constellations and galaxies and all that. And that she will go with that speed much, much greater than the speed of light.

And that she will be more and more in awe about the beauties of the universe. All the time she will ask the question, which portion of this kingdom will be mine to rule over? It's beautiful. Now, another great man of God was Isaac Watts.

Isaac Watts was the greatest Christian composer. Some of the greatest hymns we sing were composed by him. Isaac Watts said this, Whatever gifts God gave me here to develop, I go with them up there.

Whatever develops in my character, in my inward makeup, they are made to be brought to total fruition only up. So, because everything in me is music, I believe that I will be put in charge somewhere in the music compartment of the universe to compose heavenly musics. I wonder what style of music he will compose there.

I think these people of God got it very right. And I read about a Christian chemist who said, Because I am all given to create new substances, when I go up, he will put me in charge of creating new matter, new worlds, new types of existence. Now, that is serving God.

That is real vision of heaven. That is worth living for. That is worth thinking of.

Isn't it? Now, question. What are the things God looks for in us? What are the qualities he wants us to have in order for him to be able to say, I can put you in charge and I can give you positions of ruling? I already gave you basic answers. First of all, to people like Christ, and to be faithful over the things entrusted to you.

I will give you a much wider picture when we speak about Jesus' teaching on greatness. What are Christ's conditions for greatness in his kingdom? Today, in the very few minutes I still have, I will just want to emphasize this issue of testing. We are being tested all the time.

Romans 5, let's just read that scripture. Romans 5, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in the hope of the glory of God. This is salvation.

Now that we understand what Christ did for us, we received Christ by faith, we are reconciled with God, we are in this state of grace. Here we stand. Now we have hope of glory.

That is the inheritance, that is ruling with Christ, that is the hope of glory of God. Oh, it would be nice to be raptured immediately and taken there, but not in the Bible, because Paul says, And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, that hope of glory. So, we are saved.

We are saved with that in view, to obtain the glory, the inheritance, the ruling with Christ. But before that, we go through tribulations for testing. Because these tribulations, now the literal translation is this, for tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces testing.

We'll continue tonight about this issue of testing. I only want to give you now quickly all the scriptures for it. There are just two more.

One is in 1 Peter, chapter 1. 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Why were we born again? To obtain an inheritance which is unperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice.

And I wish it were period here. But exactly like in Paul, it's not period, because Peter says, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Praise, glory, and honor.

You have to be proved worthy of that by the testing of your faith. Now let's just two pages before that in James. James, chapter 1. Consider it all, verse 2. Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Verse 12. Blessed is a man who perseveres under testing, under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life.

You see how consistent the whole scripture is? Saved, oh yes. But after salvation comes the hardships, because through them your faithfulness has to be tested, and your character to be made. Let me briefly put it.

God is making us by testing us. That testing produces in you the character. And there are two things that God achieves through these tribulations.

One is creating that heavenly character in His image, in us, and the other is testing us for reliability in His kingdom. Let's bow our heads. We thank you, Lord, for helping us to understand in a new light our present existence.

Now we understand what you are up to. Through all these miseries, through all these tribulations, through all these trials, you are making our character in the image of Christ, and you are testing us for reliability. Oh, Lord, put in us the passion to please you and give us the grace and the power to be faithful and to pass the test, because it is through your power that we can pass the test.

And because it is through your power only, that is why at the end we shall still give you all the glory. Amen.

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