



Sermon Text: Matthew 25:14-30

Use It or Lose It

Sermon Materials Needed

Game system controller and console, three different amounts of money, pictures of knives, large pieces of paper and markers for students, and an easel or some other large format writing display if you choose to do verbal feedback.

Importance of using the gifts God has given.

Prior to the start of the evening select a student volunteer. At the opening of the message have the student come forward and present the student with a nicely-wrapped gift. Select a gift that comes in pairs but is more useful with the counterpart (I. e. headphones, game controller, watch-band, etc.). Have the student talk about how nice the gift is and how much he/she appreciates it, but they must hold the gift in their hand the entire time. Never place or actually do anything with the gift. Be sure to talk about how the student isn't using the gift, just looking at it, or setting it aside. After the student has adored the gift for a few minutes and you have interviewed them about the gift and how much they like it and what they can use it for, pull out the complimentary piece—the ipod, x-Box 360, watch face, etc.—and tell the student that this was the gift you had waiting for them but since they never used the gift they were given, this one will never be presented.

Introduction

Remember the anticipation of Christmas? Your list of gifts, the shaking and guessing about what's under the tree? On Christmas day you rip into the presents frantically looking for "that one" gift you've been waiting for. What if one year you didn't get any gifts? How would you feel? What if after not getting any gifts you asked "why?" and the response was, "I gave you ten gifts last year and you only used one for a month, so I figured you really didn't want any more." Or maybe you see the gifts in the corner with your name on them, but they won't present them to you because of the same reason.

How many of you would dig up those gifts and start using them?

Did you know that's how the kingdom of God is? The gifts, talents, responsibilities that we all have are from God. They are given, not based on what God wants us to have, but rather on how we've used what He's already given.

He gives according to our abilities not his personal preference.

Read through the first part of the story about giving the talents and emphasize how the master gave according to the abilities not how much he liked one over the other.

The problem is we compare what we have or don't have with others and either become prideful or feel sorry for ourselves. We must realize God has given us all talents. It's up to us to use them in an individual fashion.



Illustration: (story, quote, drama, etc.): You can illustrate this point with a talk about sharp objects. You wouldn't give a two year old a hunting knife or machete. Why? It's not in their ability to use it properly.

We invest our gifts according to how we know His heart.

The heart of this passage is that all three knew they would not have the talent without the master, and they had been given a responsibility with the talent. Two chose to invest the talent in the same fashion they thought the master would. The last thought he knew what the master would have done, but chose to do something else with it.

If Jesus had your talent today, how do you think He would be using it?

This can be illustrated by calling up three volunteers, giving each a portion of money, explaining that it's your money, but they have been given oversight of it. Then interview each one to see what they would do. Those who choose to spend it how you would should be rewarded, while those who spend it on things contrary to your wishes should not be rewarded. If they are going to use the gift properly, they must know the heart of the master.

What gifts have you been given, and where can you begin investing?

Have your students begin to write a list of gifts they or others have. Read through them and encourage dialogue that stretches our understanding of gifts. Immediately, you'll get singing, art, etc., but let's encourage them to see that people who have giftings in math and science can use them in accordance with God's heart, as well. Here's some you may want to suggest if it's not written down: history, knowledge about computers, programming, photography, video, the arts, gift of encouragement, giving, helping, volunteering, decision-making, servitude, gift of optimism, high standards, etc. Once you've done that, ask them to help you think of places where those gifts can be useful and they can become involved NOW with those gifts.

Closing Challenge

This week I want you to keep a daily journal of how you have used a God-given gift to help others.

There's more that He wants to give, but it's up to us to use what we have been given. We must use it or lost it.

Altar Response

The message today is really questions of "Do you know the talents God has given you?" and "How have you been investing the master's talent?" Everything we have is a gift from God; we must use it all according to his heart.