

British photographer Oliver Curtis is known for capturing the perfect picture at a perfect moment. He took some breathtaking pictures like the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Taj Mahal in India, wailing Wall in Jerusalem focusing camera on the scenery around these famous places and monuments. He wanted to gain a new perspective—a perspective gained by focusing on its setting. And, as a consequence he saw things most people never notice.

Generally, we follow the crowd. We fit in with our peers and our cultural expectations. We rarely question our priorities or our choices. What would take for you to make a complete reversal in your choices, ideas, or priorities? What if, you could see your life from God's perspective? That is the question that comes back often as we try to understand the parable of today's gospel lesson.

A man who went on a journey entrusted his wealth to his servants. The man obviously represents God, we are the servants and the wealth—well, we'll get to that in a minute. But there are two key words to understand this parable and apply it to our lives: **ENTRUSTED** and **AFRAID**.

The man entrusted his wealth to his three servants. He presented them with a big responsibility and a big opportunity. **The man obviously had great faith in his servants. He saw great potential in them, great opportunities around them.** He saw them as God sees us—great potential and great opportunities to excel in life. Why else would the master have entrusted his wealth to them?

The first and the second invested the wealth as their master hoped they would. When the master returned, they presented his money with a considerable profit. And the master praised their efforts and offered a partnership.

But the third servant hid his master's wealth and did nothing with it. Why? Because **he was afraid**. He was afraid of his master. He was afraid of his opportunity. He was afraid of his responsibility. When the master returned, this one dug up the wealth and gave it back to the master. No returns. Just one big lost opportunity. And the master condemned this servant for letting his fear override his responsibility.

Let us begin here: **The saddest and least productive emotion in life is fear.** That's the first thing that strikes me in this passage. It is the least fruitful emotion. **Fear's only fruit is regret and lost opportunities and an increased focus on one's self and one's security.**

He was afraid and hoarded his master's money. Why? Because he didn't trust his master's character or goodness or priorities. Just like us, he had a few heartbreaks and setbacks in life. So, he decided **to focus on his own security**. No risk, no reward.

Think of all the things in life we miss out on because we are afraid. We don't trust God's goodness and God's promises. Think of all the opportunities we could harvest with our God-given talents and opportunities if we are just bold enough to base our goals and priorities on God's promises instead on our own security.

Think about 365 times scripture saying, “Don’t be afraid.” Opposite to faith is not unbelief but fear. That command—to live without fear -- isn’t linked to some promise that nothing bad will ever happen to you. It isn’t linked to what Paul in Romans Ch. 5 said, “Everything will work for good for those who love God” The command is linked, however to the promise that God will be with you through every challenge.

Let me tell you about a young woman who found help with her fear. On Palm Sunday 1987, near the end of church service, this young woman suffered horrific brain aneurysm. In the hospital, doctors told the young woman needs a risky surgery to remove it. Chances are 50 -50. She chose to put her life in God’s hands and have the surgery. As the days came closer, she experienced moments of overwhelming fear. One sleepless night, she found an answer when she opened the Bible from Joshua Ch. 1: 9: **“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”**

She copied that verse down on a piece of paper. She kept it with her and read it several times until she memorized. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” On the day of her surgery, she handed that piece of paper to the nurse. The nurse assured her that she would get the verse back after the surgery.

Many hours later when the young woman awoke from surgery, she found the worn piece of paper with the verse from Joshua taped to her palm. What a source of comfort it had become: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Think about 365 times Bible says, “Do not be afraid.” Fear not only makes us miserable, but it robs us in many ways including, possibly, the ability for healing to take place in our bodies and minds. Remember the example of the three servants. Two of them invested their master’s wealth which yielded a tidy profit. The other man lost out because of fear.

Remember the two words: **Entrusted and afraid.** God has entrusted you with great wealth of life talents, energy, and intellect. God can’t use them if you are afraid of investing your life in good works for the glory of God. So now is the time to ask yourself, **what do you want to hear at the end of your life?** What will take to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with the few things. Come and share your master’s happiness.”

Christian life is not for sissies. It is for people willing to live with boldness, seeking to be where God wants them to be, and living as God wants them to live. Do you see yourself in that role? Why settle for less?