In Praise of Doers, Matthew 25:14-30 Sunday, Nov. 15, 2026

Earl Fitz is a DOER. According to a recent article in CHRISTIANITY TODAY, ***Fitz is 81 years young and he has been the mayor of Iowa Falls, Iowa four times.*** But that's the easy part. In Earl's mid-fifties he left his teaching job and began a new career, selling Bibles. Earl bought 10,000 Bibles from a publisher who was going out of business, and sold them all. Today, Earl is the founder and president of Riverside Book and Bible House, which sold $33 million worth of books last year. He's succeeded with a lot of hard work and a commitment to get Bibles into the homes of America.
Earl began a new career when most people are preparing for retirement. He wasn't ready to buy into that classic American line, ***"I've done my time, I owe myself some easy livin'."*** And he's going strong nearly thirty years later.

I believe Jesus loves the Earl Fitz' of this world. That is the lesson of the <u>parable of the talents</u>. The man with five talents used his five talents and made five talents more and his master was exceedingly pleased with him. The man with two talents did likewise. But the man with one talent was fearful and hid his talent in the ground and had only the one talent to show for his stewardship when the master returned. ***"You wicked and slothful servant,"*** his master said angrily. ***"You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents, For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."***
We have here a very practical teaching from our Lord—ONE FROM WHICH WE CAN ALL PROFIT.

THE FIRST THING WE NEED TO NOTE IS THAT <u>LIFE IS A GIFT</u>. *It is so sad to see healthy, intelligent talented people adopt a gloom and doom attitude towards life. "Oh, I just have one talent," we whine. "Poor, poor me. What can I do?"*

The Reverend Don Emmitte tells of a Baptist pastor friend who had a man walk into his church one Sunday morning and sit on the front pew. During the sermon he listened intently. When the invitation time came, the pastor said, "How many of you are not saved but would like to be, and you want us to pray for you?" Will you raise your hand?" The visitor shot up his hand and waved it back and forth persistently until he was sure it had been seen. When the invitation was given the man bounded out of the pew and rushed to be received.

When it came time for his baptism an unusual thing happened. He went down into the water, and coming up he clapped his hands and shouted, **"Hot dog! Hot dog!"** The folks in the congregation roared with laughter. ***The pastor explained that this man had not been around the church and didn't know about, "Amen! Praise the Lord! or Hallelujah!" His word was "Hot dog!" and he was praising the Lord with the only vocabulary he knew.***

His religious vocabulary may have been lacking but his understanding of what was happening to him that day was impeccable. "Hot dog!" "Hallelujah!" Isn't it great to be alive and to know that we belong to God? **Life is a gift-- an inexpressibly wonderful gratuity bestowed by a benevolent Creator.**

I read about a man in Memphis who opened his car trunk one day and discovered a dusty package inside. He had bought a wastebasket for his wife as a Christmas gift but had forgotten to give it to her. Sheepishly he took the package home and presented it to his spouse. When she saw it, she burst into tears of joy. It was their wedding anniversary, and she was afraid he had forgotten. **We are imperfect givers. But God is a perfect giver and LIFE IS A GIFT. <u>That is the first thing we need to see.</u>**

THE SECOND IS THAT GOD HAS PLACED US IN A WORLD OF AMAZING OPPORTUNITIES.
As we approach the celebration of Thanksgiving, we SHOULD BE PITIED if we take for granted the blessing of living in this free and bountiful land ***where the sky is the limit.***

Most of you are familiar with the name Duncan Hines. Old timers know that the phrase ***"Duncan Hines ate here"*** was a household word long before the advent of instant cake mixes. When Duncan Hines was a Public Relations man travelling across America in the 1930s, some of the hole in the wall eateries could almost kill a man. Duncan loved to eat, so as he crisscrossed the country, he began to take notes on the best places to stop to eat along the way filling up notebooks. He would ask locals for their recommendations, sometimes eat as many as six meals a day and write

vigorously about the best stops. Before long he was publishing a book, and many callers each day would ring his home to find out where to eat on an upcoming trip.

In a short period of time, Duncan Hines became a household synonym for good eating. And that's why when a businessman wanted to introduce a new line of food products, he linked up with Duncan Hines. **The rest is history.**

Life is a gift. We live in a wonderful world of opportunity.

THE THIRD THING WE LEARN… IS THAT THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE LAW IN NATURE: *"What you do not use will be taken from you."*

An agnostic fellow of a socialist nature called Jesus CRUEL!!! He quoted this verse that comes at the end of the parable of the talents***: "For to everyone who has more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away..."***

Jesus was not being cruel. He was simply stating a LAW OF LIFE. ***If you use what you have, you will have more. If you do not use what you have, you will lose even that which you have.*** We see it all the time in aging. If you use your mind when you are twenty, thirty, forty and never lose your desire to learn, there is no reason why you should not be alert at sixty, seventy or eighty. It is a myth that the elderly diminish in mental capacity. Of course disease can be a factor, but that is probably the exception rather than the rule. **Great people generally get greater.** *Conversely, those who are satisfied with mediocrity lose even more ground.*

The person who has no energy at the age of (70) seventy, probably was not very ambitious at (30)thirty. That is the way life is. **The quaint little saying is true:** ***Use it or lose it!***

The great violinist Niccolo Paginini willed his violin to the city of his birth, Geno, Italy, with the condition that the violin never again be played. What a pity. The absence of use and handling resulted in the decay of the wood used in the instrument. Whereas a violin that is constantly used can be preserved and in some cases even grow richer in tone for hundreds of years, Paginini's wish had resulted in the crumbling of his precious violin in its case.

Earl Loomis, M.D. in his book, THE SELF IN PILGRIMAGE, writes, ***"Literature is full of stories of people who knew they had talent, yet failed to use it. The untold stories are those of millions of individuals who unconsciously disguise their virtues lest they be obliged to use them and lose the riches of true living in the process. In this sense, we human beings are akin to the battery in a flashlight; unused it corrodes.*** **What we do not use is wasted, what we do not share we cannot keep."**

A pastor was walking down the street when he came upon a group of kids. The group surrounded a dog. Concerned that the kids might be hurting the dog, he went over and asked***, "Hey guys what's going on?" One the kids replied, "This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want to take him home, but only one of us can. So we've decided that the one who can tell the biggest lie gets to keep the dog." Of course the pastor was taken aback. "You kids shouldn't be having a lie-telling contest!"*** He then launched into a ten minute sermon about lying. ***"Don't you kids know that lying breaks the eighth commandment, do not bear false witness. Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie." There was dead silence for about a minute***. Just when the pastor began to think that he'd gotten through to them, the smallest kid gave a deep sigh and said**,* **"All right, give him the dog."**

There is one final thing to be shared. IT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR THE DAY: *IF WE DO USE WHAT WE HAVE TO THE GLORY OF GOD*, HE WILL TAKE OUR MEAGER GIFTS, MULTIPLY THEM, AND USE THEM IN WAYS WE NEVER DREAMED POSSIBLE.

In our Gospel Reading today the servant who received (5) talents showed us that God can work with us and do just that**—Multiply what He blesses us with. And if we are willing to "TRUST IN GOD," amazing things will happen each day.**

Someone has said, ***"Our life is God's gift to us. What we make of our life is our gift to God."*** But that is not the end of the equation. **God takes what we offer and adds even more.**

Charles L. Allen once told about a composer named Rossini who would go out to some small village in Italy once which could not afford an opera and he would write an opera which the people of that village could perform. One summer, he auditioned all the talent in this small village, and the only woman who could possibly be a leading lady was limited to only one good note. **It was a middle B-flat.** Rossini was not discouraged; he went right ahead and wrote the opera in which the leading lady had only that one note to sing. Then he surrounded that middle B flat with such beautiful harmony that when she sang her one note, it was like an angel from heaven. **That is what happens when we offer our meager gifts to God.**

Of course there is a greater secret than that. If we bring our lives into line with God's overall purpose and design, we can be more effective than we ever imagined we could be. A recent magazine advertisement for an insurance/financial services firm shows a picture filled with materialistic goodies a new boat, a beautiful house, an expensive car. The caption boldly claims, **"If you can dream it, you can do it."** Then a sub-caption whispers, **"There's no limit to your ability." There's one problem with this ad. IT'S A LIE!! There is a limit to your ability**. And you can't do everything you dream about. How many of you Dads dreamed of being a pro ball player when you were young? Case closed. Nobody ever gets everything they dream**. That's where our faith comes in to correct the picture and bring the excitement the ad promises into life.**

IF GOD DREAMS IT, YOU CAN DO IT--Anything. There IS no limit to His ability. We need to expect that Our all-powerful God will fulfill His work in our lives, and we need to dream his dreams. That's positive thinking at its best thinking based on the power of God.

I AM CONVINCED THAT JESUS LOVES "DOERS." He was a doer and what he did made it possible for us to be reconciled to God once and forever. **"Hot dog—Hot dog!"** *It's great to be alive*. It's great to have the opportunity to make life count for so much. ***And it is good to know that if we use life as he intended, we will discover that he is a bountiful giver who takes what we GIVE AND GIVES BACK EVEN MORE.***

SO, TAKE THE GIFTS & THE TALENTS GOD HAS TRUSTED TO YOU AND USE THEM—MULTIPLY THEM AND SHARE THEM SO THOSE AROUND YOU CAN BENEFIT—AND REALIZE THAT YOUR MOST PROMISING GOAL WILL BE TO MAKE HIS KINGDOM KNOWN BY ALL!! Amen.