

I recognize that I’m treading on dangerous ground here by even mentioning the election that took place twelve days ago. Some of us voted this way, and some voted that way. Our feelings and opinions about the vote-counting process are not all the same. Several members of our church have been directly involved as poll workers and election officials, and they’ve worked hard for our community, while most of us just voted. Many are just tired of the post-election news, while many are still fired up about it.

But it’s my prayer that every one of us in this church, and everyone in our nation, when all the vote counting is over, can let go of the animosity and bitterness that seems to be pulling our country farther and farther apart.

We’re learning a difficult lesson once again. Even in a democracy, tallying the ballots and settling the accounts is not an easy, simple process; but it’s a necessary part of the imperfect civil realm in which we live.

Our parable for today talks about settling accounts in the spiritual realm. There are no provisional ballots or overseas/military ballots to account for in Jesus’ parable. But there’s some very important accounting going on in this story. And there’s some highly consequential accountability required in our lives, as Christians.

Jesus tells this story. It’s one of his many teaching stories about the kingdom of God. “The kingdom of God,” Jesus proclaims, “works like this, in your lives. A man goes on a journey. He entrusts his property to three servants. He gives a huge sum of money to one, a large amount to another, and a healthy amount to the last one – expecting them to take good care of it. Then, when he returns from his journey, the

man settles accounts with them. He requires accountability. The servants have to tell their boss what they did with his property, how they used it, what they accomplished with what was entrusted to them.”

Let's focus today on this topic of accountability: settling accounts. In God's kingdom, Jesus is teaching us, there will be a settling of accounts. You and I are, in the end, accountable to God. We're forgiven and saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ; but we still have to account to God for the way we live in this life.

See, God has entrusted some of his property to each of us. He hasn't given us each a pile of gold or silver coins, like in the parable. But God gives each of us a certain share of wealth, possessions, life experiences, education, personality, relationships, intelligence, emotional strengths, mental faculties, physical capacities, really great hair or not so great hair, vocations, interests, talents.

God provides all of that. God enables all of that. Our God is ultimately the creator of all things in this world, the owner of everything, the giver of all the good things in our lives. He's the man in the story, who entrusts what is his to us.

So the Christian life, Jesus teaches us, is a life of stewardship. We're stewards, custodians, managers for God. We like to think we're owners and titleholders; but we're only really caretakers of the things God puts into our hands.

The man in the parable entrusts his property to his servants. God entrusts what is his to you and me. And, just like in the story, there's a reckoning, a counting up, a settling of accounts. The Bible says it in about a thousand ways; but also here, in this parable, Jesus reminds us that we are accountable to God. We're supposed to use everything that's been entrusted to us not selfishly, but in God-pleasing

ways: giving him glory, benefiting our neighbor, advancing God's kingdom.

Will this settling of accounts happen at the end of time? When we meet our Maker? On Judgment Day? The Bible says, yes, it will. Will you be ready on that day to account to God for the use you've made of your God-given time, talents, and treasures?

What about this day? None of us knows when that day of final accounting will come. But let's learn from this parable about our life with God here on earth, the life you're living with God this very day.

First of all, we have to be honest. We all struggle with accountability to God, don't we? For most of us, it's hard enough to be accountable to bosses, parents, spouses, teachers, HOA's, and the government that's in authority over us. But we really struggle to be accountable, day-to-day, to God. We may enjoy believing in God, praying to God, and worshipping God. But when it comes to making decisions about how to manage our time, where to allocate our resources, and how to set our priorities, most of us do our own thing. God's not necessarily involved. We call the shots.

And maybe it's not that we consciously reject our responsibility to God. We just leave God out of so much of our daily living. As if we're somehow not accountable to our Maker, to our Master, to the Lord of our lives.

Today is November 15. It's not Judgment Day, not yet. But today is a day to start settling accounts with God. Take a good, honest look at your life. Ask yourself these questions.

1. Am I sincerely thankful to God for all that I have (and especially for the free gift of salvation)?
2. Do I recognize that everything I have, and all that I am, comes from God?

3. Can I admit that I'm coming up short when it comes to living for God?
4. Am I sorry for that?
5. Is there one part of my life this week where I can be a better steward?
6. Can I ask God for help with this?
7. Will God forgive me when I fail?

We all struggle with accountability to God. Today's parable convicts us all, to some degree, doesn't it? We all need help, when it comes to accountability to God.

So let's be honest about the truth of this parable, each of us in our own lives. But let's be thankful, all of us, because we are blessed to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He came for us. He came for self-absorbed, stubborn, low-accountability sinners like you and me. He came to redeem and forgive us; but Jesus came, also, to get us right with God, to make us better, to change our way of living from self-centered to God-centered.

Let's pray to the Lord Jesus about these questions together.