



SOPC Leaflet, Wednesday, October 22, 2025

A Message from Pastor Jim:

Reaching Our Full Potential - Matthew 25:14-30

Roy L. Smith once told the odd case of an Australian youth who suffered a concussion while serving with the armed forces in Korea. At the time of his injury the young man was 5 feet 4 ½ inches tall. The blow started strange reactions within this soldier's body so that he began to grow. Today, he stands 6 feet 3 ½ inches high!

"The case of the Australian soldier is very strange," says Roy Smith. "But there are innumerable instances of people who never grow to reach their full intellectual and spiritual stature until after they suffer some terrible blow." (1)

Here is the question for the day: *Are you reaching your full potential as a follower of Jesus Christ?* Whether you are growing because of some blow you have suffered or simply because you long in your heart to be more like Jesus, are you moving forward in your spiritual life?

In Matthew 25, Jesus warns his followers that the kingdom of heaven, the fulfillment of God's plan for humanity, will come upon them suddenly, at a time when they least expect it. And then he gives them a number of parables, or word pictures, of what this kingdom in heaven will be like.

In Matthew 25: 14-30, Jesus says, "What will the kingdom of heaven be like? A man going on a journey who leaves his servants in charge of his property. To the first, he gives five talents, to the next two talents, and to the next servant he gives one talent--each according to his ability. Then he leaves. The servant with five talents 'goes at once' and puts his money to work, doubling it. The servant with two talents invests his and earns two talents more. The servant with one talent digs a hole in the ground and hides his master's money. 'After a long time' the master returns. He asks the servants to give an account of their stewardship. He is pleased with the first servant. *'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*"

The man with the two talents receives the same response. But the man with one talent makes excuses, accusing the master of being a hard and unpredictable man. Out of fear, he hid his one talent and has not multiplied it. Instead of moving toward his potential, he is cowering in the shadows. This makes his master angry. He takes this man's one talent away and gives it to the servant who has ten talents. And he throws the lazy servant out into the darkness *"where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

What is Jesus saying here? How are we to apply this ancient parable to our lives today?

Herman Cain, who was CEO and president of Godfather's Pizza, Inc., was an African-American man who was raised in poverty. He credits his hard-working father for his success in life. Throughout Herman's life, his father worked three or four jobs at a time in order to support his family. In addition to his father, Herman Cain also found inspiration from Dr.

Benjamin Elijah Mays, a former president of Morehouse College. Dr. Mays taught Herman a poem that has guided him through the ups and downs of life. It is as follows:

"Life is just a minute
Only sixty seconds in it,
Forced upon you, can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,

But it's up to you to use it.
You must suffer if you lose it,
Give an account if you abuse it,
Just a tiny little minute,
But eternity is in it." (2)

This catchy little poem perfectly captures our first point for today.

1. According to Jesus' parable of the kingdom, **we will be held accountable for our "Stewardship" of our lives.**

Most of us connect the word "stewardship" to the wise management of our money or our time. But God has blessed us with infinitely more resources than just our time and money. We are called to be wise and generous stewards of our health, our intellect, our compassion, our wisdom and life experience, our influence, our relationships. In this parable, we are called to invest our lives in such a way that we see a rich return.

2. Jesus is encouraging us to **dream great dreams—to make our lives count for something.**

Some of us would prefer not to have great dreams. A man once said, "It is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows by the cultivation of an insignificant life." (3) That's true. You can escape much pain and trouble if you never take a risk, never give of yourself freely, never step out in faith. But you will be missing so much of the abundant life that Jesus promises to his followers.

Are you cultivating an insignificant life? The best way to answer that question is to examine your motives. Are you working at your job to bring glory to God, or to get a paycheck? Are you using your paycheck in a wise and generous manner—taking care of your family and contributing to the Lord's work? Or are you using your money to indulge in more stuff or more status symbols to impress your neighbors?

How do you use your time? Do you submit your time to God first, before you ever fill out your Day-Timer? What about your relationships? Do you work to build others up, or tear others down? Must your needs always come first? Do you care about others for themselves, or for what they can do for you? Do you take more than you give? Do you look for the opportunity to share your faith with others?

Famed baseball player Mickey Mantle died at age sixty-three of alcohol-related liver disease. Not long before his death, Mantle said to someone, "You talk about a role model? This is a role model: Don't be like me . . . God gave me the ability to play baseball and I wasted it. I was given so much, and I blew it. I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to make it up. I want to start giving something back." (4)

How sad it is to discover at the end of your days that you have been cultivating an insignificant life! No amount of money or fame or status can make up for a life that was spent in self-centeredness and vanity.

3. The next point of this parable is that **our view of God affects our stewardship of life.**

The first and second servants trusted their master's commands. Even when he was gone, they proved trustworthy and wise in their handling of the master's property. And in the end, they earned the master's trust and fellowship.

But the third servant viewed his master as a hard, unpredictable man and acted accordingly. How do you view God? Do you see God as an absentee parent, a vague abstraction, a cosmic police officer? Do you see God as a hard-to-please

taskmaster who piles on more expectations than you can possibly fulfill? Do you skip over those verses that speak of God as kind, gentle, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love? It is vitally important to examine your view of God, because your view of God will affect your ability to step out in faith.

Pastor Michael Yaconelli used to play an unusual game of hide-and-seek with his two young sons. Yaconelli would hide while his sons looked for him. Just moments before the boys found him, Yaconelli would jump out of his hiding place with a loud shout. Naturally, his two boys would run off screaming in the other direction. But one time, the boys turned the table on their father. Just as he popped out of his hiding place, the older boy announced, "Hey! He isn't a monster. It's our dad! Attack!" And the two boys pounced on their father with giggles and hugs.

Pastor Yaconelli likens this moment to the moment when we come face to face with God, our Heavenly Father. At first, we may feel immobilizing fear. At the same time, we cannot help but acknowledge that this incredible Presence is also our loving Father. (5)

When you trust God's leading, you will be able to follow. When you trust God's provision, you can give of your resources generously. When you trust God's love and mercy, you can share that love and mercy with others. Everything starts with your view of God.

4. Finally, Jesus is teaching us through this parable that **what we do here in life has eternal significance.**

Our influence stretches on for many generations, long after we are gone. One life has an immeasurable impact on this world. And when we invest our lives in glorifying God, God will honor that investment by multiplying it far beyond anything we could do with simple human effort.

There is a beautiful prayer by John Piper that expresses the desire to let God work through us for His glory. Piper prays daily, "**Lord, let me make a difference for You that is utterly disproportionate to who I am.**" (6) That is the prayer of a man who is an obedient servant of God.

Lois Cheney in her book, *God Is No Fool*, tells a revealing parable about a man who was touched by God. God gave this man a priceless gift--the capacity for love.

The man was grateful and humble, and he knew what an extraordinary thing had happened to him. He carried this capacity for love like a jewel, and he walked tall, with purpose. From time to time, he would show this gift to others, and they would smile and stroke his jewel. But it seemed that they had also dirtied it up a little. Now, this was no way to treat such a precious thing, so the man built a box to protect his jewel. And he decided to show it only to those who would treat it with respect and meet it with a reverent love of their own. Even that did not work, for some tried to break into the box. So, the man built a bigger, stronger box--one that no one could get into--and he felt good. At last, he was protecting the jewel as it should be.

Upon occasion, when he decided that someone had earned the right to see it, he would show it proudly. But they sometimes refused, or perhaps they smudged it, or just glanced at it disinterestedly. Much time went by, and then only occasionally would someone pass by the aging man. He would pat his box and say, "I have the loveliest of jewels in here." Once or twice, he opened the box and offered it saying, "Look and see. I want you to." And the passerby would look and look, and look. And then he would back away from the old man, shaking his head.

The man died, and he went to God, and he said, "You gave me a precious gift many years ago, and I've kept it safe, and it is as lovely as the day you gave it to me." And he opened the box and held it out to God. God glanced in the box, and in it was a lizard--an ugly, laughing lizard. And God walked away from him too. Love guarded and unexposed. A jewel turned into an ugly lizard. A servant cast into the outer darkness.

Friend, life is not to be hoarded. It is to be lived fully, abundantly, without reservation. It is to be invested in love, in hope, in faith so that a wonderful harvest of lasting influence will be reaped.

So, how about it? Are you reaching your full potential as a follower of Jesus Christ?

When you face the Lord, will you have the joy of hearing these words, "*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*"?

Amen.

1. "Let's Think Thanks" by Roy L. Smith.
2. Robert Schuller, *Power Thoughts* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), pp. 112-116.
3. John Henry Jowett.
4. *The Magic of Teamwork* by Pat Williams, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1997, p. 215.
5. Michael Yaconelli. *Dangerous Wonder* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), pp. 109-110.
6. Bruce Wilkinson. *Secrets of the Vine* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishing, 2001), p. 85.
7. Pages 33-34. Found on the Internet.

*****Stewardship packets and pledge cards were mailed out (or placed in office boxes/ the choir room) last week. Please prayerfully consider how God is calling you to use your time, talents, treasures, service, and witness in recognition and gratitude of them being given to you by God. We will dedicate these pledges to God's service via SOPC on 11/9/25, Commitment Sunday. If you have any questions, please contact a Stewardship Committee member. They are listed in the brochure included in the packet. Extra packets are available in the Narthex and in the church office.*****



October is Clergy Appreciation Month. If you feel so led, be sure to let Pastor Jim know what he means to this church and to you personally! Also, let's be sure that we let Rev. Bob Brearley know how thankful we are that he is sharing The Word with us during Pastor Jim's recuperation. For ideas about clergy appreciation from our Synod of South Atlantic, please visit: <https://www.synodofsouthatlantic.org/post/october-is-clergy-appreciation-month>.

- ❖ **This Sunday's Guest Preacher: Rev. Bob Brearley**
- ❖ **This Sunday's sermon: *Praying the Distance Away***
- ❖ **This Sunday's Scripture: Luke 18:9-14**



It's time to order poinsettias to adorn our sanctuary during the 2025 Advent & Christmas seasons!

The cost is \$14 per plant, payable to SOPC, due by Sunday, November 9th.

Please place this form with your payment in the offering boxes in the Narthex or return it to the church office. If you pay online, please select "Other," type in, "Poinsettia Order," and opt to cover the credit card processing charges. Thanks!

Your Name: _____

Your Email Address: _____

Your Phone Number: _____

Number of Poinsettias: _____ x \$14 = \$ _____ Total

In Honor / Memory of: _____





- ❖ Our Missions Ministry is partnering with Ashland UMC to help provide CANDY for Seven Oaks Elementary School's community outreach Trunk-or-Treat on October 30th. If you are able and feel led to provide a bag of individually wrapped candy, or two, please bring your donations by the church office or to the large baskets in the narthex on either side of the entrance to the sanctuary **NO LATER THAN THIS MONDAY, 10/27/25.**



- ❖ THANK YOU to all those who contributed to the SOPC YOUTH fleece blanket project! ♥ Last night our youth signed cards to each potential recipient and we all prayed over them. Each person will find an inspirational note tucked into their blanket. THIS SUNDAY, OCT 26, we have a field trip to the corn maze 🍁 at Sease Farms. The cost is \$18 per person. Please let the Bussells know asap if you can attend. We should probably meet at 3:00 either at church or there. (More info to come about where to meet!) We need to know if YOUTH NEED A RIDE! Have a blessed week! ♥ 🙏

❖ Notes of Thanks:

1. "I want to thank everyone for the calls and cards that were sent for the passing of my sister Kate. This has been a difficult time and your thoughts and prayers have really helped. Love, Marion and Mark [Wishart]"
2. "Dear [Grenadier Neighbor], thank you so much for inviting us to the [SOPC] Fall Festival. You were right, my boys had a wonderful time. It was lovely to meet some of your church members and to thank them for all their efforts in

organizing such a great event. The boys especially loved the petting zoo!
...Sincerely, Genia Dillon”

- ❖ **From the Administration Ministry:** Thank you for keeping your pledge up to date, as this helps us plan and fulfill the programs of the church! Last month’s offering and the year-to-date information are shown below:

	Giving	Budgeted	Difference
September	\$ 23,969	\$ 18,250	\$5,719
YTD 2025	\$166,979	\$164,250	\$2,729

Total revenue for the first 9 months of 2025 (including other income such as rent) and total expenses are shown below.

Total Revenue through September	\$208,866
Total Expenses through September	<u>\$207,202</u>
Revenues in Excess of Expenses	\$ 1,664





- ❖ Our SOPC Book Group is currently reading *The Tears of Things* by Richard Rohr. They will meet to discuss it at Loveland Coffee shop on Carlisle St. in Irmo on TOMORROW, 10/23/25, at 3 pm. Next, they will read *The Woman They Could Not Silence* by Kate Moore and meet to discuss it on 11/20/25--same time and place.



- ❖ All Saints' Sunday: NEXT Sunday, November 2nd, we will honor those who have gone before us to join the Church Triumphant in the past year. Please submit the names and years-of-life of loved ones who have passed since last year's service so that we can include them in the bulletin. Thank you.
- ❖ Our Small Town Adventures group will travel to Edgefield, SC TOMORROW, 10/23/25. Please call Marion Wishart, Kathy Keane, or Julie/Ernie Bussells for more information or to let them know that you plan to attend!



- ❖ Let's go to the movies! This trip = *Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere* on Tuesday, October 28th at 12:45 pm at AMC. Tickets are \$6.00. This is a drama based on Warren Zanes' book about the time in Springsteen's life when he crafted his 1982 album *Nebraska*, which emerged as he recorded *Born in the USA* with the E Street Band. Please let us know if you are coming by calling or texting Sue

Kesterson at (803) 727-8165. Ron will purchase a block of tickets. He can be reimbursed when you arrive for the movie. All are welcome, including friends!



- ❖ **Advent Devotions:** If you cherish SOPC's annual Advent Devotionals like many do, would you prayerfully consider volunteering to head up the project this year? Pastor Jim will help out with ideas and Scripture passages, but we need someone to organize our writers and compile the booklet. Annah headed up the effort last year and just doesn't have the time to be the main person this year. Although, she is available for computer support and distribution support if needed! Contact the church office if you are willing to volunteer.



- ❖ We will collect our annual Thornwell Offering on Sunday, 11/23rd. For more information about Thornwell, visit: <https://thornwell.org/> or reach out to SOPC's Missions Ministry Chair, Tish Lowe.
- ❖ **From our Disciple Care Ministry:** Westminster PC is hosting a workshop on November 9th for those experiencing **grief, including strategies for navigating the Holidays**. Please see the flyer below. Pre-registration is appreciated, and the link to register is: <https://www.griefshare.org/events/276847>. If anyone has questions, have them contact Andrea Paschal at Westminster. Her contact information is on the flyer.

Grieving a loss? Know someone who is?

GriefShare

Surviving the *Holidays*

Encouragement, support, and valuable tools to
navigate the challenges of the season.

Join us for this holiday seminar

Location	Date & time	Contact info
Westminster Presbyterian 1715 Broad River Rd Columbia, SC	Sunday, November 9 4:00 - 6:00 pm	Andrea Paschal andrea@westminsterpres.org (803) 772-1338

griefshare.org/holidays

- ❖ SOPC will host a meeting of Trinity Presbytery on Tuesday, November 18th. VOLUNTEERS are needed to greet, direct parking, serve lunch, etc. Contact Sharon Staton if you are available to help.
- ❖ Our next churchwide Fellowship Meal will be Sunday, November 16th! Stay tuned for more details!
- ❖ If you would like to volunteer in the sanctuary's sound booth occasionally, please contact the church office. Training provided!
- ❖ Parents of Young Children: Please grab a "Wiggle Bag" from the coat rack just inside the sanctuary entrance doors before worship starts and

remember that the little ones go to the Children's Corner after the Children's Message during the service. Thanks!

- ❖ **We're Collecting:** These items may be placed in the large baskets in the narthex or brought to the church office.
 - **Bags of individually wrapped candy for Seven Oaks Elementary School's community Trunk-or-Treat.**
 - **Travel-size toiletries** to hand out from our Clothing Closet weekly. Travel size are best for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability. We can always use small soaps, shampoos, lotions, conditioners, deodorants, toothpastes, and pocket packs of Kleenex. We have plenty of toothbrushes, disposable razors, combs, feminine hygiene products, and incontinence products for now. **If you travel, please save the hotels' provided individual toiletries for us! Thanks!!**
 - We collect **used crayons** in the church office for www.thecrayoninitiative.org. They sort them, melt them down, and make them into free, ergonomic crayons for pediatric hospital patients. We have collected **397 pounds** so far!
 - Please save your cans' **pop tops** and bring them to the church office. So far, we have donated **4 gallon-sized Ziploc bags FULL** of pop tops to the Ronald McDonald House in Columbia.
- ❖ **Save the Date:**
 - **THIS SUNDAY, October 26:** Reformation Sunday; SOPW Fall Gathering
 - **NEXT SUNDAY, November 2:** All Saints' Sunday
 - **November 9:** Commitment Sunday
 - **November 16:** Churchwide Fellowship Meal
 - **November 18:** SOPC will host the meeting of Trinity Presbytery.
 - **November 23:** Thornwell Offering
 - **December 7:** Christmas Music in Worship
- ❖ **If you have information to go out to our church family in the weekly Leaflet newsletter,** please get it to Annah in the church office by Tuesday of the week you want it to go out. Thanks!