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Sermon Notes

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Well-Done, Good and Faithful Servant!

Matthew 25:21, 23

On July 15, 1815, the defeated Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, boarded the British warship, the HMS Bellerophon, and was being sent to his final earthly destination... exiled to the tiny volcanic island of St. Helena in the exact middle of the South Atlantic, over 700 miles from the nearest island. This man had thrown the world into turmoil for twenty years... he had led armies of over 600,000 men; he had won battles in Egypt, and throughout Europe; he at one point controlled most of Continental Europe; the Napoleonic Wars resulted in the deaths of as many as 6 million human beings

His soldiers were fanatically loyal to him, and were willing to trudge through the snows of Russia in order to establish his glory

As Napoleon was talking with the captain of the Bellerophon, the ship that would carry him to St. Helena... he was in a pensive and ironic mood. He reflected back over his amazing military career, and the immense sacrifices his soldiers made to win him an empire. He then uttered these famous words:

"A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon"

Medals of honor, medals of valor, medals of glory, medals of achievement, medals of bravery, medals of service...

Napoleon said these motivate men more than just about anything

Why? It is because inside each of us is a yearning for glory and recognition, for honor and praise.

It is essentially idolatrous in the non-Christian, because it is not connected in any way to faith in Christ.

But what then should we do with this... every Christian yearns to hear one statement from Christ on Judgment Day:

Matthew 25:21 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

Is it WRONG to yearn for praise and honor and commendation from Christ, our Master? Amazingly, not only is it not wrong, it is sinful NOT to live for this and yearn for it:

Romans 2:7-8 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

Paul describes the life of those who go to heaven... by PERSISTENCE IN DOING GOOD, they are seeking GLORY, HONOR, and IMMORTALITY

This and this alone is the way to live your whole life!

A life that God will richly reward by grace on Judgment Day

Today, we are going to zero in on the concept of eternal rewards... heavenly rewards.

The context is the parable of the Talents

I. The Parable Explained: Faithful and Faithless Stewards

A. Stewardship Initiated (vs. 14-15)

Matthew 25:14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

1. Elements of stewardship all here
 - a. A Master: authority, owner
 - b. Servants: owned by the master, accountable to him
 - c. A journey: the Master is to be ABSENT for a key time
 - d. His property... throughout the account, it's understood that everything belongs to him
 - e. Property entrusted (committed) to the servants to be MANAGED in His absence
 - f. Accountability: at the end, the servants have to give their master an account
2. This concept of stewardship is vital in our relationship with Christ; shows up again and again in His parables

B. Good Stewardship Displayed (vs. 16-17)

Matthew 25:16-17 *The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more.¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.*

No Procrastination... Hard Work... Total Focus... Skill and Foresight...
Fruitfulness

C. Bad Stewardship Exposed (vs. 18)

Matthew 25:18 *But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

D. The Master Settles Accounts (vs. 19)

Matthew 25:19 *After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.*

E. Rewards for Faithful Servants (vs. 20-23)

Matthew 25:20-23 *The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'²¹ 'His master replied, '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!'²² 'The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'²³ 'His master replied, '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!'*

F. Punishments for a Faithless Servant (vs. 24-30)

Matthew 25:24-30 *"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'²⁶ 'His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.²⁸ "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

II. The Doctrine of Rewards for Faithful Service

A. Justified by Faith Alone Apart from Works

1. We can never stop reminding ourselves of this one fact: WE ARE JUSTIFIED IN GOD'S SIGHT BY FAITH IN Christ ALONE... apart from any good works we can do
2. Simply put: our good works can never be used to pay for our sins
3. Our good works apart from faith in Christ are themselves SINS, needing redemption and forgiveness
 - a. Our good works apart from faith in Christ are actually corrupt, because they were not done for the glory of God but rather for the glory of man

Romans 14:23 everything that does not come from faith is sin

- b. Our good works are generally motivated by pride and a self-focus: "I feel good about myself when I help the poor and needy"... etc.

Luke 18:11-12 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

- c. Therefore, the famous assessment in Isaiah of good works holds true especially of the unbeliever... all their work with United Way, and Unicef, and Habitat for Humanity, and Walk for Hunger, and Cerebral Palsy...

Isaiah 64:6 all our righteous acts are like filthy rags

- d. And therefore also we have NO GOOD WORKS apart from Christ

Romans 3:12 there is no one who does good, not even one.

4. An unregenerate person cannot improve his or her status in God's sight one fraction of an inch by good works
5. Not a single human being can be saved by good works...

HOWEVER... we will be ASSESSED by our works

B. Assessed by Works

1. Simple principle given by the Judge of all the Earth:

Matthew 7:16-20 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 12:33 *"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.*

2. Clear statements make it obvious: our works will IDENTIFY US, not SAVE US

John 5:28-29 *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

Revelation 20:12-13 *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.**

Romans 2:6-10 *God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷ *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ *But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ *There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ *but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*****

3. So also in the Sheep and the Goats:

- a. The righteous SHEEP identified by good works

Matthew 25:34-36 *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'***

- b. The unrighteous goats identified by FAILURE to do good works

Matthew 25:41-43 *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² *For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ *I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'***

So... though no one will be SAVED by GOOD WORKS, rather they will be IDENTIFIED AS BELIEVERS IN Christ by good works... James tells us how:

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

C. Rewarded for Works

1. We've just been describing the relationship between our GOOD WORKS and our SINFULNESS in the sight of God... God works CAN NEVER pay for sin; only faith in the blood of Jesus can; but genuine saving faith ALWAYS results in good works... and that faith saves us and enables us to go to heaven
2. But the Bible goes beyond this on the issue of works
3. Amazingly... God also says He will REWARD US for our good works, done in service to Him, for His glory, by our faith in Christ
4. Multiple statements on this theme:
 - a. First time in the Bible...

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

- b. New Testament mentions rewards 28 times!!!!

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 6 mentions rewards multiple times:

Matthew 6:1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:2-4 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus says this same thing more times:

About prayer:

Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

About fasting:

Matthew 6:17-18 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

He gives us also the indication that we can store up treasure in heaven. What could this be other than our heavenly rewards?

Matthew 6:20-21 store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Even tiny, simple things in everyday life will be rewarded by God:

Matthew 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

5. God actually makes THREE VERY STRONG statements about rewards, all in the Book of Hebrews
 - a. We MUST believe in rewards

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

- b. We must DESIRE the rewards God has said He will give us

Hebrews 11:26 [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

- c. God would be UNJUST not to reward us

Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

D. Rewards are Given by Grace

Luke 17:7-10 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and

drink'? ⁹ Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

1. Can any of us not be simply STAGGERED by the grace of God to us sinners?
2. Not only does He cover our sins by faith in the blood of Christ
3. BUT He also gives us a fruitful life of service to Him that He uses to accomplish His eternal purposes
4. AND He prepares good works in advance for us to walk in
5. AND He prepares US to do those good works
6. AND He moves in us by faith and by the Holy Spirit to ACCOMPLISH those planned out good works
7. AND then He REWARDS us for doing His will!!!

III. The Three-Fold Reward for Faithful Service

ESV *Matthew 25:21* His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

- 1) PRAISE FROM GOD
- 2) GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FROM GOD
- 3) JOY IN GOD

A. Praise from God

"Well done, you good and faithful servant!"

"You have been faithful over a little..."

1. The first aspect of our eternal reward is a staggering concept... that God will actually PRAISE US for our radiant character and our faith-filled service to Him
2. Difficult for a mature Bible student to accept!!!
3. All our biblical training and the whole bent of our salvation is to teach us to PRAISE HIM... to give Him glory for His attributes
 - a. The essence of heavenly life is praise and worship focused on Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

- b. All the direction of the heavenly beings as depicted in Scripture is totally God-ward, God-centered, God-focused, God-glorifying
- 4. Part of that is to make little of the creature... to realize how infinitely small and insignificant we are when compared to the perfection of God
- 5. The essence of sin has been idolatry... clearly defined in Romans 1

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

- a. Idolatry is giving WORSHIP to a created thing...
- b. Worship is a whole-hearted commitment to celebrate the attributes and value of something... to give yourself to it... to elevate it to the highest place in your own estimation
- c. God is jealous of this capacity in all his sentient beings... angels and men are to reserve this for Him alone
- 6. However, God is no idolater... He can celebrate the attributes of one of His created beings without worshiping that being

Many times in Scripture, God celebrates and praises the attributes of one of His creation with unbridled joy:

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning-- the sixth day.

Job 39:19-29 "Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? ²⁰ Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? ²¹ He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. ²² He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. ²³ The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. ²⁴ In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. ²⁵ At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, 'Aha!' He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry. ²⁶ "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? ²⁷ Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? ²⁸ He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold. ²⁹ From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar.

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

- 7. Praise can be given to a created being without it being worship... we know this because God says He will do it for His servants who serve Him by faith

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

John 12:42-43 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

John 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

8. Praise from God is an immensely valuable reward:

- a. God is no idolater
- b. God is no flatterer
- c. God only give His praise wisely and perfectly
- d. He makes no mistakes
- e. His praise will not puff us up or go to our heads or do us any damage at all
- f. His praise means He is pleased with us, and with our service... it is the consummation of the very thing we should be seeking all along... to please our Master

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work

Ephesians 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

When God says "Well done, you good and faithful servant!" He is saying "I am pleased with you and with your offering!"

9. Our entire lives should be lived to gain the honor and glory that God will give to faithful servants

10. It is like the honor that is given to champion athletes... the highest podium, the victor's crown... but infinitely superior to that
- a. The value of an Olympic gold medal is the symbolism of the achievement
 - b. The medal itself means little other than the gold in it
 - c. If the factory that made the Olympic medals for the Beijing games made some extra medals and sold them at cost (\$500), they would be completely stripped of the HONOR that goes with them... any normal person would feel foolish, if not ashamed to wear such a medal around his neck, though it would be exactly the same as the athletes won for their respective events
 - d. The real value of the Olympic medal is the HONOR that it symbolizes... the immense effort and achievement that went into earning it
 - e. And the prize of God's esteem is infinitely better than the adulation that would come from an Olympic gold medal

1 Corinthians 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

11. Detailed praise from God for EACH GOOD WORK DONE!!!

Matthew 6:3-4 when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:6 when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:17-18 when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

- a. I believe each act of spiritual self-denial, each act of love shown to a needy person, each prayer offered for a brother or sister or for a missionary or a pastor or a family member will be subject to the same reward: PRAISE FROM GOD
- b. God will commend EACH ONE in His own glorious way!
- c. Therefore, it behooves us to store up as many good works as possible:

Matthew 6:20-21 store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

B. Greater Responsibility Entrusted by God

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.'

1. The implication of this is STAGGERING... our lives on earth are extended auditions for eternal responsibilities in the New Heaven and New Earth
2. The more faithful with the LITTLE THINGS God gives us on earth, the more HEAVENLY responsibilities He will give us in the next world

Luke 16:10-12 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

3. This same concept is taught OPENLY in the Parable of the Ten Minas...
 - a. In that parable (a parallel one to this one), the reward for fruitfulness is more responsibility... responsibility in proportion to fruitfulness

Luke 19:15-19 Then [the king] sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. ¹⁶ "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ¹⁷ "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' ¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' ¹⁹ "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

- b. The idea is powerful... the more faithful we were in this world, the more responsibility we will have in the next world
4. What kind of world are we entering?
 - a. Randy Alcorn's book *Heaven* argues for hundreds of pages against the concept that heaven will be some boring place where we spend eternity sitting on some fluffy cloud strumming a harp
 - b. Instead it picks up on passages like these and argues that the New Heaven and the New Earth will be bustling, busy, productive, fascinating places in which there is growth and increase and development and authority structures and responsibility

Revelation 21:23-26 The city [the New Jerusalem] does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

- c. To say more than that is to indulge freely in speculation... but it is clear that one aspect of our reward will be responsibilities in the New Heaven and New Earth

C. Entering Into the Joy of God

“Enter into the joy of your master”

1. JOY... the third reward is an experience of JOY
 - a. Joy is a powerful word...
 - b. In the HAPPINESS family, but beyond mere happiness
 - c. Joy is a profound happiness, a delight that is very difficult to capture in words
2. Notice the invitation: ENTER
 - a. Come into...
 - b. You were on the outside... now I'm inviting you to come inside
 - c. This is going to be a FULL IMMERSION in joy
 - d. Like diving into an endless sea of joy
 - e. To have joy underneath you, all around you, buoying you up

Illus. Dense salt lake in the Karakoram Mountains of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan... the salt content in that mountainous lake was extreme... as a result, it made the human body exceptionally buoyant... you couldn't sink if you tried... it was like huge cork chunks were strapped to your chest

What would it be like to be swimming in a sea of heavenly joy??

3. Not just ANY joy... this is the joy of our MASTER
 - a. The Joy of the One we have lived to serve
 - b. The Joy of the One we were thinking of the whole time...
 - c. This is the Joy of GOD Himself

4. Joy #1: God's joy in the specific acts of service

Many sons express a deep desire for one thing... their father's approval

To have your father put his arm around you after the game, win or lose, look you in the eye and say "Son, I was proud of you today!" is the highest joy a soon could have

I remember watching an interview with tennis great Pete Sampras, and he was talking about his last Championship at Wimbledon... he said what made it special was that his father was there to watch him win a Grand Slam title in person for the very first time

As soon as he won, he turned and looked up at his father; then he actually went up into the stands to hug his father and mother and receive their approval.

In the interview, Sampras choked up and couldn't continue telling the story... that's how emotional it was for him to have his parents there, and especially his father's praise

HOW MUCH MORE will it be for you to have God open up HIS HEART to you, and have you ENTER INTO the joy He had in each of your good works??!!!

- a. God enjoyed each action you did by faith... He enjoyed it at that time; He loved seeing you give money secretly to a poor brother or sister in Christ... your right hand didn't know what your left hand was doing; but God saw what was done in secret, and now He will reward you by SHARING HIS PERSONAL JOY in that specific act of kindness to a poor person;
 - b. so also God saw your prayer life, how often you went into the room, closed the door and prayed to your Father in heaven; He knows how many times you wept for a lost son or daughter, or a lost parent or friend or neighbor; Psalm 56:8 says God has collected all your righteous tears in a bottle, and recorded them in His book... on Judgment Day, He will reward you with INTIMACY with Him... He will share with you the joy He had in each righteous tear that fell... it will be your shared treasure together, you and God
 - c. God will invite you into a shared experience of JOY that He had over every action prompted by faith, every sacrifice made out of love for Christ... every time you got scared and shared the gospel with some intimidating person... God REJOICED in that action of faith, and He will invite you into His joy
 - d. Therefore, it will behoove you to have as many shared moments of the joy of your Master in your good works as possible
5. Joy #2: God's joy in general... He the expert in joy, and heaven is a world of joy

Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

a. There is no being in the universe so happy as God

i) God is supremely happy in WHO HE IS... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

1 Timothy 1:11 the glorious gospel of the blessed God... [the glorious good news of the happy God]

John Piper: "It is good news that God is gloriously happy. No one would want to spend eternity with an unhappy God. If God is unhappy then the goal of the gospel is not a happy goal, and that means it would be no gospel at all. But, in fact, Jesus invites us to spend eternity with a happy God when he says, 'Enter into the joy of your master' (Matthew 25:23). Jesus lived and died that *his* joy-God's joy-might be in us and our joy might be full (John 15:11; 17:13). Therefore the gospel is 'the gospel of the glory of the happy God.'"

ii) God the Father is especially delighted in God the Son

Matthew 3:17 "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

iii) God is supremely happy in everything He does

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

iv) God is supremely happy with His sovereign plan, and all the things He does to make it come about

v) God is a perfectly happy being...

b. SO... "Enter into the joy of your Master" also means, "Let me take away all your misery and teach you how to be a perfectly joyful being as well"

c. We will get ETERNAL LESSONS on joy from the Master of joy, God Himself

d. Every day, our joy will expand and increase as we learn more about God

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end

e. That expansion and increase will never end... heaven will be a place of dynamic GROWTH, of constant lessons in heavenly joy, focused on the perfect

f. Our joy will be perfect when we see God face to face every day and grow in our knowledge of Him

6. Joy #3: God's joy in specifics... He will teach us and train us in joy forever and ever

- a. God will share His joy over other believers... their salvation, their achievements, their glory... **JEALOUSY WILL BE BANISHED**... you will rejoice in your brothers and sisters, in their good works, in their progress in the faith, in their glorification, in their radiant glory in heaven... because it all came from God, you will enjoy it just as much as if it were your own
 - i) You will celebrate the courage of the martyrs as if you shared in their glory yourself... **WHY?** Because God rejoices in it, and so will you!
 - ii) You will celebrate the generosity of the widow who put in more money than anyone else... you will celebrate her honor and glory as the most generous woman in the bible! **Why?** Because God has invited you to enter into His joy in her achievement, not just in **YOURS!**
 - iii) You will celebrate the fruitfulness of great evangelists like George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, and Billy Graham.... **Why?** Because God is delighted in what they achieved, and He is inviting you into His joy over their fruitfulness
- b. God will share His joy over the New Heaven and New Earth... God **ENJOYS** what He's made... He delights in the radiant beauty of the earth... He looked over everything He made, and behold, it was very good; how much more will He delight in the New Heaven and New Earth
 - i) God will teach you to rejoice over every radiant beam of glory in the new universe, because it is really His own glory through Christ that is shining
 - ii) But God will take you by the hand and teach you to rejoice in the new creation as He does... delighting in the transparent gold, the radiant gems, the river of the water of life, the tree of life, the gates of the New Jerusalem, the glorious luxurious beauty of the perfect earth... **why?** Because **GOD DELIGHTS IN ALL THESE THINGS**, and He is inviting you into His joy.

IV. Applications

A. Come to Christ

1. I yearn to spend eternity with each one of you!
2. How grievous would it be for us to know now how many sitting in this very sanctuary will never have God welcome them into His joy
3. How glorious will our joy be when we see some who are sitting here right now in a tragic, unsaved state, come into a genuine faith in Christ

4. Christ died for sins... shed His blood that sinners like us might be redeemed
5. Come to Christ!!

B. Embrace the Doctrine of Rewards

1. Believe that God will reward each person for whatever good he does
2. Believe that God Himself will craft these specific rewards, and that they will be worth having
3. Yearn for them!! Long to gain as much glory as possible for yourself in the next world

C. Meditate on the Three Aspects of the Rewards of Matthew 25

1. Praise from God... so strive to decrease how addicted you are to human praise
2. Responsibilities from God... so realized you are being interviewed RIGHT NOW for the job you will have in heaven
3. Joy from God... long for the day when the greatest joy-master in the universe—God Himself—will invite you to enter into His joy... and stop mourning over earthly issues that will mean nothing on that day

D. Resolve to Live like Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards' 22nd resolution:

Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power; might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of.

In other words: I am willing to fight, and claw, and struggle and suffer, and strive, and study, and sacrifice, and hurt, and wear myself out... to turn my back on any pleasure, to embrace any hardship... to do anything whatsoever I can do to MAXIMIZE MY HEAVENLY HAPPINESS

And the essence of that heavenly happiness is this:

“Enter into the joy of your Master”