

Keep The Change Msg 4
 Maintaining The Change
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
 Eagle Rock Baptist Church
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We've been in a series called "Keep The Change" – and the idea for the title of that series is that when we enter into a new year, we often make lists (resolutions) of things that we would like to change.

Changing can be difficult

Sometimes even more difficult is

"Keeping The Changes" that we make.

If you'd like a statistic that will discourage you, I've got one.

Particularly for those who have chosen weight loss as a change you'd like to make

This week I learned that people who set out to lose large amounts of weight - -

Whether that's through a crash diet, or surgery

The statistic I read was that **2/3s of those who lose an extreme amount of weight** - - 2/3s of them will put the weight back on.

Now if you're seeking to lose weight, **that statistic might discourage you** or it might encourage you.

Because if you're one of those "**The glass is half-full people**" then what you just heard me say is that 1/3 of the people who go through a drastic weight-loss plan will keep it off.

And that's true too.

But no matter how you slice it, changing is only half the battle.

Preparing for this weekend, I was thinking about the fact that most of us have changes we'd like to make, but **what if we're aiming at the wrong goals**.

In thinking about that I was reminded of a couple of quotes, so I've put them there on your notes.

The first one is by Thomas Merton and he said this . . .

"People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall." – Thomas Merton

And then Steven Covey, who wrote "**The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People**" has a companion quote.

He said . . .

"If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster." - Stephen Covey

All of which begs the question – "**How Do We Know?**"

We set goals, we make resolutions, we pursue change . . .

How do we know whether - - even if we're successful in making those changes - - that the success we've achieved is really worthwhile?

Because **God's definition of success is very different** than the world's.

The **world's definition** is based on **what you have**, but God's definition for success isn't based on what you have.

God's defines success as **what did you do, with what He's given you?**

At the end of our lives God will be looking at **whether or not we were faithful** with what he has given us.

Do you see the difference?

The world measures success, in large measure by the things that I have.

But God looks at our lives and **whether you have a lot**, or a little, **what did you do with what you were given?**

Were you faithful with what God gave you?

In the New Testament, **Jesus tells a parable** to illustrate what true success is in God's eyes.

And, the parable is found in Mathew Chapter 25.

It's too long for me to put the whole passage in your notes, so **let me summarize** the parable for you.

Jesus tells us that there was this business owner,

He had a successful business, but he had to go away on a long trip.

So, he picked three of his employees.

And, he put them in charge of his finances while he was away.

And, it says that he called three of them together, and **he gave the first one, five bags of silver.**

And then, he **called the second one**, and gave him **two bags of silver.**

And, the **third employee**, he gave **one bag of silver.**

And in many ways that is **sort of like it is in life.**

There's **some of us who get five bags**, some of us two bags, some of us just get one bag.

We **don't all get the same.**

We **get a different amount.**

But, as you see in Jesus story, it's not what you're given, it's how faithful you are with what you're given.

What do you do with what you've been given?

And so, **the business owner goes on his trip**, and he comes back.

And **when he comes back, he calls his employees together**, and has them **give an account of what they did** with what they had been given.

Now, **the guy who had been given the one bag**, he didn't do anything with it.

He **took it, and buried it**, so that he wouldn't lose anything.

And when the boss came back, he gave him back the one bag he'd been given.

Do you think the boss was happy?

No, not at all.

In fact, he **took that one bag away** from that employee.

Now, **the one that had been given five bags**, took those five bags, and invested them, and now he doubled it, and he had ten bags.

The **one who had two bags of silver**, he likewise took it, invested it.

He doubled his investment.

Now, he had four bags, and the **boss was very pleased with him.**

And if you look in your notes, here's what the boss, the master said to the two employees who doubled their investment.

Matthew 25:21,

"The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'"

Matthew 25:21

Why did he say those words?

"Well done, my good and faithful servant?"

He said it because **they had been faithful with what they had been given.**

And, that is **God's definition of success**, being faithful with the things that He has given you.

That was the difference between the **guys who doubled their investment**, and the **guy who just buried it**, and produced nothing.

Jesus is saying **true success in life, is not determined by how much you have**, but by how faithful you are with what God has given you.

At the end of our lives, each of us is going to stand before God.

And **like these employees**, we're gonna have to give an account of our lives to God.

And, **God is gonna say one of two things** to us.

He's gonna say, **"Well done, my good and faithful servant.** You took what little I gave you, and you produced so much. So, you know what, I'm gonna bless you with even more because you were faithful. Let's celebrate."

Or, He's gonna say, "Rick, I'm disappointed in you. I gave you all these things. And yes, you lived a successful life by the world's standards. And, you made a good life for yourself, but you could've done so much more. You could've been more faithful. You could've done so much more with what I gave you."

I think all of us want to hear "God's Well Done"

So this morning I want us to look **five things I believe we can do** in order to hear those words. . .

How To Hear "Well Done" From God

And, here's the first way.

To hear well done, from God,

1. I Maximize the Tools God's Given me

Write that down.

I maximize the tools God has given me.

All of us have been **gifted by God**, with tools to put to work in this life.

And when I say tools, it's a **combination of natural gifts** that God gives you when you're born, you know, that your **talents, your intelligence, your personality**.

And then, when you become a Christian, **God gives you even more tools, called spiritual gifts**, that He wants you to use to serve the church, and to serve Him; gifts like encouragement, and service, and hospitality, and discernment.

And, God gives you all these tools for a reason, and that is to serve Him.

Hebrews Chapter 13:21 says this,

First it says . . .

"May He equip you

What it's saying here is that God is the one who's given you all gifts, and your talents, and all the tools that you have.

So, He says,

"May He equip you with all you need for doing ...

What?

***". . . for doing His will."* Hebrews 13:21**

His will.

He **gives you gifts to do His will**.

And so, the question becomes, **how are you using the tools that God has given you?**

Are you using them **only to strive for success when it comes to the world's standards**, or are you using them to do God's will?

Are you using them just for yourself, or are you using them for others?

It's good to use the tools God has given you to **make a living**, to **make money**, to **provide for your family**.

Those are good things, but I want you to understand, **career success** is only a small part of an even larger, what I call, **life success**.

And so, the most important question is, how are you maximizing the tools God's given you, to serve Him?

For instance, God gives you the **TOOL OF PUBLIC SPEAKING**.

Right? You're a good public speaker.

You use it at work.

You use it to lead meetings, and to get ahead at work, and to get promotions, and other people start following you.

That's good.

But, how are you using your gift of public speaking for God?

How are you using it in the church?

You could your gift to serve in Erock Kids, so you can teach, and so, children come to understand about God.

Have you thought about using it to lead a LIFE group?

Or, maybe you've got the **GIFT OF LEADERSHIP**.

And, you use that gift at work, all the time.

You lead teams.

People follow you, and you've used that to advance your career.

And now, you're making a good salary.

You've used it for yourself, but are you using that gift of leadership for God?

I mean, could you use it on a team here, at the church, and help us reach even more people for Jesus Christ?

You see what I'm getting at, here?

ARE YOU MAXIMIZING TO TOOLS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU, or are you just using them for yourself?

You know, there's some people I talk to, who have what I call, **the one bag syndrome**.

And, they feel like the servant in Jesus's story, who only got one bag of silver.

And, they say, ***"Well, you know what? I don't have enough talent to make a difference.***

And, I don't have enough money, or education ... I don't have enough experience to have an impact.

You know what, I haven't been given enough opportunities in life to make a big difference."

And, you hear them say, I don't have this, and I don't have that, and if I just had more, then I'd use it for God.

Here's the truth when it comes to that.

God's not concerned with what you might do if you had more.

He's concerned with what you are doing with what you have.

He doesn't want you to wait until you have more or until tomorrow to use what you've got.

He wants you to use what you've got now.

I love the way the author of Ecclesiastes says this.

He says,

"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done." Ecclesiastes 11:4
(LB)

How many of you can relate to this verse, in your own life?

Because, you find yourself saying, ***"You know what, someday, I'm going to, Or "One of these days, I'll get around to using my gifts for God."***

No. Today is the day.

Now is when God wants you to move.

Today is the day to use the gifts that God has given you for His purposes.

That's the first way that I can be successful in God's eyes, and hear, well done, from God.

I maximize the tools God has already given me.

And then, here's the second way to hear well done, from God. Write this down.

2. I live and work in a Christ-Like manner

Now, as you write that down, if you've been around ERBC for any amount of time, you've heard the our vision is to see **MORE PEOPLE MORE LIKE JESUS**

MORE LIKE JESUS, in the way that you **ACT**, in the way that you **THINK**, in the way that you **TALK**, and **LIVE**.

But, what does that mean?

What does it mean to be MORE LIKE JESUS?

What does it mean to be Christlike?

It means to live a life of **CONSISTENCY**, and **INTEGRITY**, and **CHARACTER**.

It means that I strive to be honest, at all times.

And the truth is, sometimes, let's be honest, sometimes to be successful by the world's standards, it pays to shade the truth.

Right?

Sometimes, if we're gonna be successful in the ways that the world measures success, sometimes it helps to step on people, to be rude, to cut corners, to lie, to go back on your word, to use people, instead of help people.

But, you know what integrity says, integrity says the **HOW** is just as important as the **WHAT**.

When it comes to measuring success, and hearing well done, from God, **how you live your life, how you do your work, how you treat others**, is just as important as the what you do.

And so, whenever you're tempted to compromise your integrity in order to get ahead, or to be successful by the world's standards,

I want you to remember this next verse.

I want you to repeat it in your mind.

It's a challenge from the Apostle Paul to remember who you are really working for, who you really should be trying to please. Colossians 3:23, says . . .

"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." Colossians 3:23

Now that kind of work ethic will make a difference and it will be noticed.

If you do whatever you do as though your real boss is the LJC

So **I Maximize the Tools That God's Given Me**

And **I live and work in a Christ-Like manner**

And then third . . .

3. I openly Live Out my faith

Write that down.

I openly live out my faith.

Now, I wanna be clear about what I'm not saying here.

I'm not saying, beat people over the head with your faith.

I'm simply saying "Live It Out"

To live out your faith, you could start by simply spending time with your coworkers, and with your classmates.

Hang out with them, outside of work.

Be real with them.

Show them that you care about them.

Develop real friendships with them.

And, what's gonna happen is, in the midst of those friendships, you're gonna be able to take advantage of natural opportunities to simply let them know that you're a Christian.

That's what I wanna challenge you to do.

As you begin to build relationships with those people in your life that don't know Jesus, let them know that you're a follower of Jesus.

Let them know, you know, what'd you do this weekend?

Well, I went to my church.

Let me tell you what they talked about.

Let them know that you're going to a LIFE group on Wednesday night.

Let them know that you pray.

Let them see you pray before a meal.

Let them know that you read your Bible.

Don't hide your faith.

Jesus is very blunt about this in the New Testament, about not hiding your faith. Luke 9:26, these are the words of Jesus.

(Jesus) "If anyone is ashamed of me and my message,

In other words, if anyone of you hide your faith, look at what He says . . .

the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person..." Luke 9:26

Now, I don't want you to miss this.

You will never, and I mean never, be successful in God's eyes if you're ashamed of Jesus, if you hide your faith.

In fact, Jesus says, you may get into heaven, but instead of hearing well done, my good and faithful servant, what you're going to hear is ***"I'm ashamed of you."***

"I'm ashamed of the life that you live."

That's strong language coming from Jesus.

See, listen, most of the time, if you're a good friend, and you've lived with love and integrity, when you're open about your faith in a kind and natural way, people are going to respect you.

And when the time comes in their life, when they have a question, or they hit a tough time, they're gonna remember you, they're gonna turn to you for support, or prayer, or advise, or you're gonna be there to answer a question.

And when the opportunity presents itself, be ready to talk to them about your faith.

Tell them your story about what Jesus has done in your life.

Look at what 1 Peter 3:15 says.

Peter writes . . .

"You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer

Notice this last line. . . .

always be ready to explain it." 1 Peter 3:15

I believe that one of the most important things you can do, to be successful in God's eyes, is to help someone who doesn't know God, find God.

But to do this, you've also gotta keep your eyes open for the opportunities that God sends.

And that leads us to our fourth way of hearing well done, from God.

I openly live out my faith.

And then number four,

4. I look for Divine Moments

That's an interesting phrase, right?

What is a divine moment?

Well, a divine moment is when God interrupts your life, with an opportunity.

It wasn't planned.

It wasn't on your schedule.

But, God interrupts your life with an opportunity.

He puts a person in your path, who wasn't on your schedule, and provides you with an opportunity to make a difference in their life.

And, God does this every day.

So, we have to always be on the lookout for these divine moments to share our faith.

Because if we do the first three things we've talked about today, if . . .

1. I Maximize the tools God had given me,
2. I live and work in a Christlike manner,
3. I'm open in the way that I live out my faith,

God's going to provide opportunities, for me to help others get closer to Him.

And, that's why the Apostle Paul gives us this challenge in Colossians 4:5.

Paul says . . .

“Live wisely among those who are not believers,

And then again, underline this last phrase

and make the most of every opportunity.” Colossians 4:5

Make the most of every divine moment.

So, after you underline that, stay here, because I left you some space under that point in your notes. . .

There are three simple actions I believe you can take this week, to . . .

Make the most of every opportunity

That God brings into your life.

And so, I want you to jot these down.

The three simple actions you can take to make the most of these divine moments, this coming week.

Here's number one,

1. Pray for divine moments.

The first step, pray for divine moments.

Prayer is one of the most practical ways you can impact someone's life for God.

Begin praying for the people that you work with, or that you go to class with, those who don't know Jesus.

Now, they may not know that you're doing it, but I believe in the power of prayer.

And I believe, God will begin working in their lives.

And, He'll begin providing these divine moments for you to have an impact on their lives.

And, as a matter of fact, I want you to begin writing down some of these names.

We've put a space on your COMMITMENT CARD

As well as on the back of your message notes, and your connection card where you can share the names of three people you're praying for.

And if you share those names we'll pray for them too.

And even if they said no, to an invitation to come to church with you, you could at least start that process of praying for them and praying for those divine moments in their life.

And as I said, our staff, will be praying for every name you write down.

So, I hope you'll do that.

So, number one, **PRAY FOR DIVINE MOMENTS.**

Number two,

2. Watch for divine moments.

Now, how many times do we miss divine moments, because we weren't paying attention - - because we're not thinking about it.

You look back on your day and you think, “Man, we had this conversation, and you know what, I should've said something there. “

Oh, “I wish I would have said this.”

And, we're afraid we'll never get that opportunity again.

And, it's because we weren't ready.

We weren't looking for them.

So, you **PRAY FOR DIVINE MOMENTS**.

God's gonna give them, then **WATCH FOR DIVINE MOMENTS**.

And then, **number three,**

Be Willing To Be Interrupted By Divine Moments.

Be willing to be interrupted, to have God interrupt your life with divine moments.

You know the problem sometimes, is we're just too busy to allow God to interrupt our day, our plan, our calendar, with a mission, that maybe he's planned just for us.

Now listen, we're talking about the eternal implications of heaven and hell.

And so, we have to be willing to allow God to interrupt our lives, even if just for a moment, so that He can use us.

In fact, if you want to be successful in God's eyes, and hear, well done, here's a good prayer you can begin each day with. It's simply this ...

"God, I'm ready for a divine moment, today."

"God, I'm ready. I'm willing to be interrupted."

"God, I'm ready for a divine moment."

"My eyes are open, and I'm looking for those."

That's a prayer we should all be praying.

Is that a prayer that God really answers?

I'm living proof that it is.

Over 40 years ago, I was not a Christian.

I wasn't interested in the things of God.

But I was working down the street in a Department Store at the Eagle Rock Plaza.

And there were a number of Christians who worked in that same store where I worked.

They all came from this church.

And they were all PRAYING for me.

They invited me to come to this church.

And I did my best to politely tell them that I wasn't interested.

But they continued to pray.

And they did their best to **"live and work in a Christ-like manner"**

And I noticed there was **something different about them**, and the way they worked, and the attitude, and work ethic they brought to their job.

I don't think any one of them was looking for a career in retail, but they worked with the kind of commitment as if they were.

And they also did their best to **"make the most of every opportunity"**

When there was an opportunity they would invite me to come to their church.

And for a long time, I said "no" to every invitation they extended to come up to this church and check it out.

But after a lot of praying, and a lot of inviting, finally I said yes.

And that was 43 years ago.

As I tell the story, I like to say that back then I couldn't even SPELL Senior Pastor, and now I Are One.

All because they made the most of every opportunity.

All because they looked for divine moments.

One more thing we can do to hear those words from Jesus, well done.

5. I expect God to Help Me for His Glory

Let me explain.

You see, to find true success in life and work, you need God's help.

And, you can expect God is going to be with you, that He's going to help you, that He's going to bless your life and your endeavors.

But the key is, that only happens when you're living your life in such a way that brings glory to God, and not just to yourself.

When you live your life, and you're serving Him, and you're not just serving your own ego.

In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul challenges us to do just that. He writes these words.

He says,

“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

He says, no matter what you do, it doesn't matter what it is, do it all for the glory of God.

You see, ultimate success in God's eyes is, when everything you do at work, at school, at home, when everything you do brings glory to God, and points people to Him, when you're not a self-promoter, but you've become a God promoter, that's a key to success.

When you live your life no longer to just promote yourself, but you begin to promote God.

When you do that, God is going to be with you.

He's going to help you.

He's going to bless your life. Why?

Because, you're living your life for Him.

I was trying to think of an example of someone who has demonstrated that kind of faithfulness through the years.

And certainly there are a lot of people in this church that I could point to, but **the one I want to share about his morning, is our retiring teacher of the Clipper/Fellowship Sunday School Class Bert Fariss**

Today is Bert's last Sunday here at ERBC after being with us for 26 years.

Bert & his wife Bonnie began attending ERBC 26 years ago, and now Bonnie is battling cancer, and it's a time when Bert needs to be closer to home, and that's the reason we're saying goodbye to him today.

In terms of tenure, Bert is the longest reigning teacher of any of our Sunday School teachers.

And the story of how it was that Bert began to teach the Clipper/Fellowship class is an interesting one.

People find their way to our church in many ways.

We've been told that people have found us because they were driving by and saw a banner, or they found us online through a google search, or in any number of ways.

Bert's story is a little different.

He was raised in a Christian home by Christian parents

Al & Lois Fariss

And because of that, Bert had been a follower of Jesus Christ for many years before he ever began attending ERBC

It wasn't google or any of our community outreaches that brought Bert here.

He came here because of a promise made to a parent.

As I mentioned, Bert grew up in a Christian home.

For as long as he could remember mom and dad took him and the rest of the family to church.

And long after Bert and the other kids were grown and out of the house, mom and dad (Al & Lois) continued to go to church every Sunday.

We were blessed because some of those last years of Al & Lois' life were spent attending church here at ERBC.

Al & Lois had always attended church together.

And as Al neared the end of his life, he had no fear of death because he knew with certainty where he was going.

He knew that Jesus had a home waiting for him in heaven.

But one thing that did trouble Al was the thought of his wife Lois, having to go to church alone.

And it was to alleviate that fear, that Bert made his dad a promise.

He told him, ***“Don't worry dad, mom will never have to go to church alone.”***

And when Al Fariss went to be with the Lord, his son Bert began attending ERBC, so that he could keep that promise, to his dad – that ***“Mom will never have to go to church alone.”***

That was 26 years ago.

But Bert wasn't content to just come here and sit and soak.

He believed that whatever you do . . .

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

And Bert had a gift for teaching, and so three years after he got here, which is now 23 years ago, he began teaching the Clipper/Fellowship Sunday School class.

His mom Lois, has long since gone to join her husband Al in heaven.
 But Bert has continued to teach faithfully through the years.
 And I believe that when Bert's life is over, and he gets to heaven.
 There is going to be a "Well Done" waiting for him.
 And so this morning we say "Thank You" for your faithful service.
 The last verse on your notes reminds us that faithful service to the Lord may not always be easy.
 And you may not necessarily see the results you're hoping for on your timetable,
 But there is a promise there . . .

***"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."* Galatians 6:9**

At just the right time . . .

This week I was reading some statistics on change

And I don't think it will surprise you to learn that Nicotine is one of the hardest things to kick

And it's one of the things that we think of when it comes to New Year's resolutions.

People think ***"I want to quit smoking"***

And I was reading that **two out of three people who say they want to quit smoking have never tried.**

And that **nine out of ten who try will fail** and go back to it.

But here was what to me was the most interesting thing that I found.

Among the one out of ten who succeed . . .

Among the one out of ten who successfully quits smoking like they want to . . .

On average they **fail about six times first.**

You'll fail six times before you eventually kick it.

And on thing that that ought to tell you about **failure is**, that **it's necessary on the road to success.**

So I'd challenge you not give up trying to make changes, if you're trying to make them with God's help in ways that will make you more effective for him.

Don't label your failures as failures.

Label them as "Pre-success learning opportunities."

You know, at the end of your life, just like the three guys from Jesus's story, you will stand before God, and you will be asked. . .

"What did you do with what I gave you?"

And, this is the ultimate question of success.

Were you faithful with what God gave you?

How will you answer that question?

Now, today, I've shared five Biblical ways that you can be successful in God's eyes, because I want you to be faithful with what He's given you.

And more than anything else, at the end of your life, I want you to be able to hear those final words from Jesus himself,

The words we began with . . .

"Well done, my good and faithful servant."

I want Jesus to say this to you,

And **I want you to want Jesus to say this to you.**

"Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Would you bow your heads with me, right now.

And, **let's pray together.**