

Being a Faithful Steward

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[0:00] Let's turn to God's Word as it's found in Luke chapter 12 tonight. And I'll begin reading at verse 42 and read through verse 48.

! Verse 41, Peter asks, Lord, are you telling this parable to us or to everyone? The Lord answered, Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master put in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?

It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth. He will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose the servant says to himself, My master is taking a long time in coming. And then he begins to beat the men's servants and maid's servants and to eat and drink and get drunk.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him. And an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

[1:10] That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.

But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.

And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 4.

1 Corinthians 4. Have you ever been driving a car that wasn't yours and had an accident?

Maybe just a little thing in a parking lot. You park too close to the car next to you and you sort of rake the side of the car on the bumper. Maybe somebody here knows something about that with their parents' van.

[2:17] I did that once. Maybe it's just backing into a post. Maybe you have a fender bender while you're driving down the road. But something enough to do some damage to the car that you're driving.

That's a sick feeling when it's your own car. That's an even sicker feeling when it's somebody else's. Someone entrusted their vehicle to you and you proved an unworthy recipient of their trust. On my wife's side of the family, she's got six sisters. And two different suitors for those sisters have wrecked her dad's cars.

I'm not one of them. Not yet. And I'm not a suitor anymore. I'm here to stay. But so far I've avoided that. You talk about a sick feeling in your stomach. Talk about making a great impression on your potential father-in-law.

Not such a good plan. Why is it that we feel so bad when we damage something that belongs to someone else? Maybe it's spilling something on someone's clothes that you've borrowed. Your sisters or somebody in your family or a friend.

[3:22] And you've stained them. There could be many ways we fail to take care of someone else's belongings. One of the reasons for that sinking feeling is that it's not ours.

You were a steward of that property and you failed in your stewardship. Your friend or your family trusted you to take it, to use it, and to return it as you found it. Or as my dad taught me, better than you found it.

It's possible. And you failed to do that. Now your friends, your family, probably very understanding, very forgiving people, but we still feel badly when we fail in our stewardship. We understand that principle of stewardship.

Taking something that belongs to someone else and using it well and wisely and as they desire from everyday life. The dictionary says that stewardship is especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

We just don't want to talk about everyday stewardship tonight. As Christians, we believe that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. Psalm 24 and verse 1.

[4:30] If that's true, and of course it is, then nothing we possess is really our own. Everything that we have is the Lord's. And so everything that we have is something of which we are stewards.

We want to take some time tonight to examine the biblical principle of stewardship and then apply it to particular areas of our lives. What does the Bible teach about being a faithful steward?

And secondly, are you a faithful steward? What is a faithful steward? First of all, it's one who receives.

A steward is someone who has received something. Since stewardship is the management of another's property, you have to receive something from them before you can be a steward of it. Or you say, good.

No problem. I don't ever borrow anything from anybody. Nobody's ever given me anything. I've never taken anything they've tried to give me. It's all mine. I own everything I have. And so I can tune you out. Don't have to listen to a message about stewardship tonight.

[5:34] Don't forget Psalm 24 and verse 1. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. Or Paul's words to the Corinthians here. We want to read the first seven verses together.

And listen if you can see anything about stewardship in these verses. 1 Corinthians 4, verses 1-7. See if you see anything about receiving in these verses. So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I carry very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I do not even judge myself.

My conscience is clear. But that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

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. Now brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, do not go beyond what is written.

[6:41] Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

In these verses, Paul uses himself as an example. He's received something. He has been entrusted with the mysteries of God. And it's his job to faithfully deliver those truths, the mystery of God, to those all around him.

That's why he could care less of what people think about him. He's carrying out his divine responsibility. His divine stewardship. God has given him this task and he's going to do it regardless of what other people think or say about him.

And he's explaining these things for the benefit of the Corinthians. How is it to their benefit? Well, they're like Paul. Paul didn't call himself to be an apostle. He didn't give himself the truth.

God gave him these things. And in the same way, the Corinthians have received something from God as well. You have received something from God as well. And not just something.

[7:48] Everything you have, you have received from God. So your claim that stewardship doesn't really apply to you because you own everything and you don't borrow anything is a bogus claim.

What's true for Paul and the Corinthians is true for us. Everything you have, even the things to which you can rightly claim ownership on this earth.

This is my suit. It's mine. I didn't borrow it. I paid for it. I own this. But in a sense, it's the Lord's. Because he is the one who has provided it for me.

Everything we have, God claims ownership to. And Paul hammers this point home in verse 7. He repeats that word receive three times. What do you have that you did not receive? If you received it, why do you boast as though you had not received?

He's strongly rebuking our notion that says I own everything. And so I need not be concerned with stewardship. But if we're receiving, someone must be doing the giving.

[8:52] And we've already said that it's God. It's our creator, sustainer. He's the one who gives us everything. James 1.17 Every good and perfect gift is from above. Coming down from the Father of lights.

Heavenly lights. Who does not change like the shifting shadows. What is it that we sing in the doxology? Praise God from whom all blessings flow. It comes from Him. From His hand. The money that you work so hard to earn is from Him since He gave you the ability. Your gifts and the ability to work and the ability of your employer to pay you for the work that you do.

Your roof over your head. The food in your stomach. The clothes on your body. Your body itself are His provision for you. The gifts. The talents that you have.

You might work very hard at, but God is the one who's given you these abilities. And that means that in some ways everyone here and everyone anywhere is the same. The rich man and the poor man have both received everything they have.

[9:51] Who is it that makes you to differ? It's God that makes us to differ. He gives us different things and different places in life and different gifts and different abilities. But it's all things that we've received.

And that means you can't look down your nose at those who aren't as gifted as you or as wealthy as you as though you're something special. You've received it. And so Paul says there's no room for boasting because you've received it.

Well, what's expected of a steward, of one who has received? Paul states it clearly for us in verse 2 of 1 Corinthians 4. It is required, it is expected that those who have been given a trust, and that's the word for stewardship, those who are stewards must prove faithful.

A good steward, a faithful steward is one who is doing with whatever's been given to him what the person who does the giving expects. God expects us to use what He gives us in a particular way. And a faithful steward will use what God has given as God has ordained. They do what God requires with what they've been given. We read earlier from Luke 12. And Jesus is telling a parable about stewardship.

[11:05] And He says in verse 42, the Lord answered, Who then is the faithful and wise manager? That's our word. Steward. Who is the faithful and wise steward? Same word Paul uses here in verse 1 and verse 2 of 1 Corinthians 4.

The faithful steward whom the Master puts in charge of His servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time. You see, the Master gave them a task. And He expected that that task would be carried out.

That it would be fulfilled. And the servant's performance was based on whether or not they carried out that task as instructed. And the servant who didn't is cut into pieces.

And it's cast out. So if we're given a task, expected will do it. If we're put in charge of someone's property, expected will make proper use of it.

That's what was expected of Paul. He was given the mysteries of the Gospel. And he stewarded it. That was an extra. He stewarded the mysteries of the Gospel.

[12:04] He administered them faithfully. He used the gifts of apostleship that the Lord gave him. And the truth that the Lord gave him and proclaimed it to the ends of the earth. The New Testament bears witness to the fact that Paul is a faithful steward of the mysteries of God.

Of the gifts that God gave him. Think of Joseph in the Old Testament who was entrusted with the fortunes of Egypt and proved faithful in storing up during the seven years of plenty and then distributing during the seven years of want.

He didn't hoard for himself or mismanage during those 14 years. His conduct as a steward is the definition of faithful. It describes him perfectly because he carried out the responsibility given to him. But an unfaithful servant doesn't do what's expected of him. You think of Judas who was given the job of handling the money for the disciples and distributing it to the poor but instead he's skimming off the top.

He's taking for himself what's not rightfully his. He's not a faithful steward of what he's received. And all of us are stewards tonight because we've all received.

[13:14] The question is are we good stewards or are we bad stewards? The wise will acknowledge this to be true that we've received everything and will seek to be faithful in their use of everything they've received.

The foolish believe they've attained these things by their own strength and can use them however they see fit. They're stewards but they're not good stewards. Not faithful stewards.

And so, we ask the second question tonight. We've seen something briefly from the Scriptures of what is a faithful steward. But the question for us is are you a faithful steward?

That's not using things as we see fit but as God requires. As God expects of us. We'll flesh out these principles a little bit more as we apply them to particular areas.

But let's consider that question. Are you a faithful steward? And we'll ask it of particular things. Are you a faithful steward of our new building?

[14 : 15] Since this is the first day in our new building perhaps an obvious area for us to consider is the building that God has given to us. We've received a marvelous gift and we must be faithful caretakers of it.

Since it's something we've received we can't let it become an object of pride. Oh, look at us and our beautiful building. How great we are. All the hard work we did to accomplish this. So much better than these other churches who don't have a building like this.

Who didn't work hard like we did. No. Who makes us any different? We've received this from God so why should we boast as though we haven't received it?

Well, we shouldn't. May God keep us humble in our use of this building. Faithful stewardship of this building will involve taking care of it physically. It's a beautiful building.

Let's do everything in our power to keep it that way. Keeping it clean. Not tearing through the halls and climbing and destroying classrooms. I don't see too many adults tearing through the halls.

[15 : 15] But for you children, you can be a good steward of this building by not bouncing off the walls. Not climbing up the walls. I know that you try these things. I've seen you. I've seen my own children do these things.

That's not being a faithful steward. It's not using well what God has given us. By keeping food where it belongs. By picking up after yourself. Did you know that it's your job to pick up your candy wrappers and tissues after the service?

Not someone else's. Be aware of your surroundings. Maintain them. I asked my wife who cleans the bathrooms how we can be faithful stewards of the building.

That part of the building in particular. The bathrooms. And most of what she said isn't really appropriate material for a sermon. But I can say I'll summarize like this.

It's really not. You can ask her later. But please be careful and considerate when you use the bathrooms in the rest of the building.

[16 : 19] And so be a good steward of what God has given us. The better care we take of this, the longer it lasts. And so we can be faithful users of what God has given to us.

But more important than being good stewards of this physical aspect of our building is making use of it for God's glory. What we spoke of this morning. Dedicating it.

That it might be a place where He is honored. That we might use it in the way that He requires of it. As He sees fit. We must use this place to further His kingdom and to build up His church.

That is the people. The living stones. Let's invite others into this building where they can hear the Gospel and believe and call upon the Lord and be saved. Let's make sure we come and listen and put into practice the things that we hear preached here.

Let's make this church building a headquarters from which missionaries and support for missionaries goes out all over the world so that the Gospel is spread to the ends of the earth and we'll be being good stewards of what God has given to us.

[17 : 19] Let's make it a place where the next generation coming up will carry on in the faith of their fathers and be found faithful themselves. May this be a place where God's name is exalted, where Christ is central, where His truth is preached and then we will be faithful stewards of the place He has given us to worship.

Let's make certain this is a place where you can come and fellowship with God's people sharing in their lives their burdens, their joys, their sorrows. It must be a place where we can cultivate good and godly and profitable relationships and friendships.

What a sad thing it would be if we failed in our stewardship of this place. And in 20 years we found that it still stands but now it's filled with people who don't really care about God's Word, who don't really care about one another, who are having their ears tickled with whatever fluff they want to hear.

Where no one cares for the spread of the Gospel. People are self-centered and care nothing for bringing others in to hear the truth. If that's what happens, either we or the next generation will have

failed in being faithful stewards of the place that God has given us to worship.

May God keep us from such. May He preserve us from such. May He make us faithful stewards of the building He's given to us. There are other areas of stewardship we can think about tonight.

[18:37] What else have you received with which you must be proved faithful? Are you a faithful steward of your money? Maybe this is the first thing you think of when you think of stewardship. God has given this to you.

What are you doing with it? What does God expect you to do with your finances? And are you doing it? Do you know of anything what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 6.20, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

That's how God expects us to use our treasure, our money. What's your priority with your money? With your income? Is it kingdom related? Remember, you can't say, look, I've worked hard for money.

I'm going to spend it however I want. That's a gift from God. As He sees fit, we are to use it. Your ability to work and the profit it brings you are gifts.

And so giving back to God some of the money He gives you is a reminder that everything you have has been given to you, that everything is the Lord's. And so faithful stewardship of your finances involves giving to God and to His work through the church.

[19:45] Faithful stewardship of your money will involve caring for your family, providing for their needs. They too are gifts from God. Heads of household, you'll be accountable for how you provided for your families. 1 Timothy 5.8, if anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he is denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Men who blow their paychecks on gambling and alcohol and women to the neglect of their families are not being faithful stewards and are bringing condemnation on their own heads.

People who are consumed with things and buying more things and who care nothing for the kingdom of God are not storing up treasure in heaven and not being faithful administrators of what God has given.

Faithful stewards of what He's entrusted to us. And what about those things? Are you faithful stewards of your possessions? The things that you own? The things that you buy with the money that God has given you?

You take care of them so they can last and be used for a long time so your money can go other places. Do you use your possessions for God's glory? Your home, for example, is one of your possessions?

[20:59] Is it a place where your family hears the truth of God's Word? Is it a place where others are invited in to share in the abundance of what God has given to you? Is it a place of hospitality? God has entrusted you with your things, your possessions.

It's expected that you'll be faithful in your use of them. Are you a faithful gift or a steward of your gifts, your skills, your talents? 1 Peter 4 and verse 10.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. Literally, it says, as each has received a gift, serve one another as good stewards.

The word is there in that verse. Good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Here we're explicitly told to be good stewards of the gifts that God has given to us to use them for the good of the body. If you read in the context there in 1 Peter 4, it even speaks of offering hospitality without grumbling. It's expected that we'll be faithful with what we've received.

[22:04] Your gifts. If you have a talent, what are you doing with it? A gift that God has given to you. Are you developing it? Seeking to increase it? Are you using it for God's glory or for your own glory?

Do you play football or play the piano or preach so that you can hear other people say how wonderful you are? So that God might be glorified. To desire the praise of men.

It's what we're warned of in the adult Sunday school class about pleasing people. It's the way of the fool. What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you had not? Your gifts are not cause for boasting.

They're to be used in the service of the Lord and bringing praise to His name. Don't keep those gifts that you have that are useful to the body. Don't keep those to yourselves. That's not faithful

stewardship. Use them for the good of the body.

Whether you have an uncanny ability to listen and to sympathize with people. Or you're able to converse with anybody. Even a complete stranger or a gift of teaching or music or preaching.

[23:07] Use those talents. Bring them and use them for God's people and for God's glory. You remember the other parable Jesus told about the Master that gave His servants different amounts of talents.

Now that was money, but He gave it to them and He expected them to do something with it. And the one with ten, He got ten more. And the one with five, He got five more. And the one with one, buried it. Stuck in the ground. He didn't do anything with it.

And what happened to that one? He's cast out to where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Don't be guilty of doing nothing with your gifts. And so prove to be an unworthy servant and unfaithful steward.

What sort of steward are you of your body? The body God has given you. You know your body is a gift from God. Are you presenting your members of your body to God as members of righteousness?

Are you doing things with your body that are pleasing to Him? Are you presenting the members of your body as instruments of wickedness? Remember what Paul said later to the Corinthians in chapter 6, verses 18-20.

[24:09] Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God?

You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body. It's because something brings you physical pleasure doesn't mean it's good or right.

And the things you do with your body and the way you take care of it, you are to honor God with it. It's a valuable possession that's been given to you. It's the only one you ever have. And other things wear out and you can get a new one.

You can get a new car when it wears out. You can get a new clothes when they wear out. You can get a new house if it wears out. Your body wears out. You don't get a new one. So we should be good stewards of that which God has given to us.

What about your time? Be a faithful steward of your time that God has given to you. He gives us 24 hours each day, seven days each week, 52 weeks each year.

[25:13] How do you spend it? Convicting to think about this. It's so easy to let the hours slip away only to find you've wasted so much time in games and TV and books and movies and entertainment and sports.

All legitimate pursuits. But when they distract us from our duty and take up the time that should be spent from fulfilling our duty, we're far from good stewards of our time that God has given to us. Ephesians 5, 15 and 16. Be very careful then how you live. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.

You're making the most of the time, the opportunities. They are evil days. The time is slipping away. We're using that time well for God's glory. Speaking of opportunities, are you a faithful steward of the opportunities you have to spread the good news of the Gospel?

God provides those opportunities. Do you use them? Colossians 4, 5. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity.

[26:26] Another reference to time, but here in the context of always speaking with grace on our lips. We're to be careful how we act towards outsiders. Those who aren't part of the body of Christ.

Those who aren't believers. Are you taking advantage of those opportunities? When's the last time you spoke a word of the Gospel to an unbeliever who crossed your path? When's the last time you invited such a one to church so that they might hear the Gospel preached here?

Are you using those opportunities? When they come, are you making those opportunities? Are you a good steward of the truth? Later in Jesus' parable, Luke 12, that we saw in verse 47, it says, that servant who knows his Master's will, he knows.

He knows his Master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his Master wants, will be beaten with many blows. those. You all here tonight know the truth.

You've been entrusted with the truth. You know your Master's will. Have you been a faithful steward of the great light that you've received? What will you do with this message that you're hearing

tonight?

[27:37] You're being given truth. Will you be a faithful steward of it? Will you take it home and put it into practice in your life? Will I?

Will I go home and say, I need to better structure my time so that I use it more wisely and don't waste so much? Am I going to go home and I'm going to put it into practice? I've been given truth. What am I going to do with it now?

Or will we prove unfaithful? What have you done with the Gospel message? The truth of Christ crucified. He's been freely offered to you time and again.

You heard the glorious message of Christ, the cornerstone, the one in whom you can be added to the church this morning. What are you doing with that truth? You know the truth. And remember what Jesus says.

The one who knows his Master's will and does not get ready, does not do what his Master wants, will be beaten with many blows. The Master wants you to come. He wants you to come to Christ.

[28:36] He wants you to come tonight. Now, well, today is the day of salvation. You know the way of salvation. You've heard it time and again. You know that if you call upon the name of the Lord, you will be saved.

And still you don't call. And every time you hear that call and reject it, you're adding responsibility. You've seen more light and you've rejected it again.

You've turned it away. You've been a poor steward of the truth. And you'll be punished the more severely, more severely than your wicked friends at school that never heard the Gospel or maybe only heard it once in their life because you did nothing with that knowledge.

God, help you to come to Him to be a good steward of that truth, that call that you've received.

Come to Jesus tonight. You're being called again. You know the truth. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to be a good, faithful steward of it?

Or will you reject it again? Principles stated at the end of Jesus' prayer in Luke 12 is fitting for us to consider as we conclude our thoughts on the matter.

[29:45] From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. We summarize it by saying, to whom much is given, much will be required.

And dear people, we have been given much. far more than we deserve. Why was I made to hear your voice? And then while there's room, whether it's the call of the gospel that we received or a new building or the clothes on our back or the comparative wealth that we enjoy or the possessions that we have or the friendships and the relationships that we have.

Are you good stewards of those? Of all of these things, our talents, our bodies, our time, all of these things, we are rich people. We are rich beyond imagination.

The kids may be complaining. We don't have enough stuff. We don't have enough of this. Enough of that. If only you knew how rich you were. You've received so much. I've received so much.

It's unfathomable. And much is to be required of us. What are we doing with what we've received? Where we've fallen short in stewardship in any of these areas, it's not just a little misstep.

[31:00] It's unfaithfulness. We must repent of our poor stewardship and seek God's help and strength to enable us to use that which He has given us for His glory. We can do these things, but only through Him who strengthens us.

Our reliance must be upon Him. And then all the glory must go to God. 1 Chronicles 29.11 says, Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor for everything in heaven and earth is Yours.

Everything is God's and therefore, all glory goes to Him. And after 1 Peter 4.10 where we're exhorted to be faithful stewards of our gifts, Peter concludes, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory and power forever and ever. Amen. The goal of our good stewardship isn't glory to us. Look at what good stewards we are of all this good we've received. Not going to boast because we've been given, but what good stewards we are.

No, no. What a glorious God is God to give us these things and to enable us to use them for His glory. Praise be to God. Can it be said of you that you've been found faithful with what's been entrusted to you?

[32 : 13] Does it give you an equally sinking feeling when you think about how you failed in your stewardship of these things that we've spoken tonight just as much as it would if you wrecked somebody else's car? Does it make you just as sick to your stomach to think about how you've wrecked what God has given you?

How He's been, how we've not used what He's given us in a way that's pleasing to Him? May God make us faithful stewards. May He make us faithful servants that use all that He's given us for His glory.

Let's pray together. Father, our Father, we thank You for all that You have given us. You have given us far beyond what we deserve. You've richly blessed us.

You've given us great light and truth. You've given us everything that we have and so we pray that You would humble us before You forgive us for our pride. We pray that You would forgive us for our mismanagement of what You've given us.

We know that much will be expected of us for much has been given to us and so we pray that You would make us faithful stewards. We pray that You would give us grace to take that which You have given us and to use it carefully and to use it for Your honor and for Your glory that You might be praised in the earth for all things are Yours and therefore all glory is due to Your name.

[33 : 31] Give us grace to live in such a manner that brings glory to Your name for You are worthy. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.