Stewardship by the Lectionary

*The Bible has plenty to say on stewardship. Enough, in fact, for stewardship-themed lessons every week based on readings from the lectionary. The following lessons tied to Year A of the three-year series can be incorporated into sermons, bulletin inserts, newsletters, prayers, or devotions. Each year a lesson is written for a different reading. All lessons available so far are included for each week.*

**Pentecost 4**

Exodus 19:2-8a

At Mt. Sinai we are privileged to see stewardship from God’s viewpoint. After he rescued Israel from Egypt, he tells them that they are his “treasured possession.” Even though all things belong to him, he gives his people the high honor of being for him “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” He has set his people apart for his use. Peter applies that to all of God’s people. Since we are “a royal priesthood” and “a holy nation,” we are faithful stewards in return. We “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” This response is stewardship from our viewpoint.

Romans 5:6-11

What great love the Father has shown us in Jesus Christ! We have been “justified by his blood” and “saved from God’s wrath through him.” Our only response is to rejoice in God. We joyfully keep God’s commands, support God’s church, and love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves as our way of showing our thanks.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

“Freely you have received, freely give,” were among the words that Jesus spoke to his 12 disciples as he sent them out to minister to the deepest needs of people. God is so lavish in his giving of good things to his people. His intent is that we be wise managers of these gifts, using them in a way that provides blessings and benefits to many people, not just to the privileged ones who have received those gifts. Christian stewards are to be like conduits of God’s blessings, gratefully receiving them and allowing them to flow through our words and actions to bring rich benefits to family members, friends, and others whose lives we touch. The disciples were given the authority to drive out evil spirits and heal every disease and sickness in addition to sharing the good news of the kingdom. What a powerful reminder to us as Christian stewards to pay attention not only to the spiritual needs of people, but to their physical needs as well.

Psalm 100

Worship the Lord with gladness. Why? Because he is good and his love endures forever. Give him thanks and praise every day. Let your life be one long joyful song as you worship the Lord with your clock and calendar, your wallet and checkbook, your energy and abilities.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Numbers 27:15-23

Every pastor feels the grace of God in his call. He serves faithfully and fully. So did Moses. Yet, because of sin, all of us will have the same final chapter in our book of earthly life: and then he died. Moses’ successor was a man named Joshua. Joshua, like Moses and each believer, is not left to his own devices. The Lord is with us. The Lord guided Joshua’s leading Israel in and out. He did it through the priest Eleazar. Each believer must have the same attitude: We are God’s; we are his people; we serve him in thanks because we of that great love. So many people are worried about our world, the crazy political leaders in various countries, and personal peril. Then we hear these words: Be still and know that I am God. That’s why Joshua would be strong and courageous in the Lord. God has laid his hands on us. Rejoice and serve.

**Pentecost 5**

Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jeremiah suffered so much for preaching God’s Word. It brought him “insult and reproach all day long.” Not preaching God’s Word was worse. It burned like a fire in his heart and in his bones. His strength for doing the Lord’s work was the Lord himself. “The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior.” We find strength and encouragement in the Lord to carry out his work. So we rejoice with Jeremiah, “Give praise to the Lord!”

Romans 5:12-15

The heart of the Scriptures is sin and grace. We know what Adam did. He sinned and brought sin and death to all of us. We know what Jesus did. He showed undeserved love for us by dying as our substitute to give us the gifts of forgiveness and life. Placed on the balance scales, Jesus’ grace does not equally counterbalance our sin. Rather, as Paul says, “How much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” There is “more” grace than there is sin. As God’s children, we live in God’s grace. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). In love we give our offerings, set aside our time, and use our talents to lovingly serve the God of our salvation.

Matthew 10:24-33

Fear for one’s life and well-being is something that plagues even God’s people. Don’t we all from time to time fret and stew about life, health, and all those things that pertain to the wants and needs of this body and life? Jesus’ words from Matthew 10 remind us of the truth that the same God and Father of us all, who knows when an insignificant sparrow falls to the ground and how many hairs are on our heads, will also provide us with all that we truly need to support this body and life. Our challenge as God’s stewards, or managers, is to “spend” our life and resources in acts of Christ-like love. By spending our lives and resources in doing the Lord’s work we will be building up treasures in heaven that cannot be lost!

Psalm 31

The “theologian” Charlie Brown made this telling comment: “Most people are always one cookie short of being happy.” How accurate that is of the human heart in its natural state. Only when we, through the Holy Spirit’s work, see God, know God, and receive God’s love, can we be happy. David showed that in his psalms. He was being chased by his foes. He could be dismayed and downcast, but he knew God’s grace. God chose him out of nowhere to defeat Goliath, to be called as the future King of Israel, to be the standard bearer for Christian living. In Psalm 31, David pours out his heart to God, asking for God’s help and distance from his enemies. God the mighty fortress answers. David concludes: “Love the LORD, all his saints! . . . Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.” Since we have the same confidence, we see God’s grace and respond with service to him.

**Pentecost 6**

Jeremiah 28:5-9

In his explanation of the Second Commandment, Luther reminds us to not “lie and deceive by God’s name.” Lying and deceiving by God’s name is misquoting or misrepresenting God. Jeremiah caught Hananiah lying and deceiving by God’s name. Hananiah was prophesying that God would bring back the king, the exiles, and the temple furnishings from Babylon within two years. Jeremiah points out that this is in direct contradiction to what God had said. He reminds the people that Hananiah, or any prophet, would be recognized as coming from the Lord, only if his prophecy comes true. We speak the truth. As such, we will use God’s name only to call upon in trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. This is our reasonable service to the God who speaks the truth about his promises of forgiveness and life.

Romans 6:1-11

To pass from death to life is the greatest miracle that any of us can imagine. That’s what makes Easter such a festive event! Easter celebrates the victory of Christ over death and the grave. St. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15 that Christ is the “firstfruits” of those who sleep, assuring us as God’s people that we will rise again from death and the grave. The words of St. Paul in Romans 6 remind us of the important truth that we have already experienced a type of resurrection because of our baptisms. “We were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” That new life for us as God’s stewards includes a fresh perspective on managing all of life for God’s purposes.

Matthew 10:34-42

Jesus is always divisive despite the truths that he died for all and wants all to be saved. His divisiveness may be as close as our immediate family. There is no harmony between faith in Jesus and unbelief. We follow Jesus at all costs, even if it means losing our worldly lives. God’s promise is greater than what we may lose by following Jesus. His promise is life, now and forever.

Psalm 89

In this psalm we sing of the Lord’s great love forever. In this life we have the privilege of praising our God not only with our voices, but also with our time, talents, and treasures. By the grace of giving, God gives us a foretaste of the joy of heaven.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Exodus 32:15-29

We have all heard the saying, “Your pocketbook follows where your heart leads.” Such was true of the Israelites. Their collective hearts were not in love with God, but with a gleaming, glowing golden calf. They brought their jewelry to be melted to make this blasphemous bull. Moses, after breaking the Ten Commandments by angrily throwing them down, showed the people they had broken them spiritually. They paid for their foolishness and faults. If only they had not abandoned the God who made the heavens and the earth. He had led them out of Egypt. He had heard their cry. He had blessed them as his people. Have we continued to follow the Lord with our finances? Have we let modern calves like cars, toys, and gizmos deflate our wallets while offering plates only collect the remnants? Even believers can be led away and astray. Put God first and everything else takes care of itself.

**Pentecost 7**

Exodus 33:12-23

After the golden calf incident, the Lord said his visible Presence, namely the pillar of fire and cloud, would no longer go with Israel. Moses prayed for the people. God forgave them and promised that his Presence would go with them. Jesus has told us, “I am with you always” as we carry out the Great Commission. Like Moses, we could not carry out the Lord’s work without his presence. Be encouraged! God is with us!

Romans 7:15-25a

We all know what we *should* do. I know I *should* give the first portion of my income to God, but sometimes a payment just *has* to be mailed or shopping just *has* to be done! I know I *should* give generously of my time to serve others, but I have a job and a family, and I just run out of time and energy! I know I *should* share *all* my possessions freely, not counting the cost, but certain things are just too special to loan or give away! We *want* to be good stewards of all God has given us, but the devil shows us excuses and rationalizations, and we don’t do the things we know we should. I praise God that he sent his Son to die for my sins and be raised again on the third day, so that I have a reason to try again to serve and glorify him!

Matthew 11:25-30

We sometimes talk about yokes and burdens but we seldom talk about yokes being easy and

burdens being light. But the Savior gives rest to those who live their wearisome and burdened lives with childlike faith. What burden is there in hearing that our sins are forgiven? What yoke is there in hearing the good news of salvation? What is tiring about hearing that we are heirs of heaven? Living a life of faith is neither a yoke nor a burden. Who is burdened by giving the firstfruits of their blessings to the Lord? What Christian views hearing a sermon and receiving the Sacrament a yoke? When do we think of living in the Lord as tiring? Our gentle and humble Savior has revealed our Father to us as anyone but a taskmaster. His gospel makes it easy and light to serve our God.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Joshua 23:1-11

If you go online and search the words, “Photo – St Paul’s – WWII,” you’ll see a picture of St. Paul’s church in London. It was just after a severe German bombing raid. Every building in sight is a smoking ruin of rubble – every building except St Paul’s. That picture rallied the spirits of the British people throughout the rest of the war. In our society, it often feels as if we Christians are simply enduring one long attack. Everything we believe seems to be under a bombing attack. Everything we hold dear seems to be a target. Yes, Christianity is under attack, as it has always been. And yes, the forces of Satan and sin have turned much of our society into a smoking ruin of rubble. But above the dust and debris of a fallen world there still stands the enduring temple of our God. It endures because that temple is the Lamb of God himself. Joshua was ending his career. He warned the Israelites to avoid getting involved with the peoples around them that did not follow the Lord. God did so much for them, how could they even think about polluting themselves with the worldly lures. God wants to use us as people who stand out from the world. We stand in front of the cross. Be very careful. Wise words then; even wiser words now.

**Pentecost 8**

Isaiah 55:10-11

The Word of God is still the powerful force it always has been. God is not stingy with his grace. As the rain and snow come down from heaven and water the earth, so God’s Word always accomplishes its purpose. Compelled by the love of Christ we will manage our possessions so that this precious Word of God might water the souls of all.

Romans 8:18-25

God’s stewards live with an awareness of the present and future, of time and eternity. There is a delicate balance in living this way. It is easy to become so occupied with the here and now that we lose sight of the there and then. As wise stewards and managers of life and life’s resources we will make the most of each opportunity as it comes our way, but we will also live with an awareness of eternity. This means, among other things, that what we do as Christian stewards has not only an immediate but also an eternal impact. Paul reminds us that it is this hope in the eternal that enables us to rise above the varied circumstances of life and maintain an optimistic outlook. Because Christ lives and because our hope is founded in him alone, we can afford to give ourselves away in his service. That’s good stewardship!

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Using the parable of the sower, the Lord teaches us to rejoice with those who produce the fruits of faith as they live for God. Every act of faith is a work of service to the Lord as we live for God and manage his gifts accordingly*.*

Psalm 65

Praise the Lord who provides all that we need for body and life. As we plant seeds in our gardens or fields this spring, we do so trusting that the Lord will provide the rain and warmth for growth. We look forward to the fall when we will harvest the vegetables and other crops. All this is due to the Lord’s loving blessing. Our songs of joy and our offerings of thanks are for the God who takes care of us.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Acts 18:1-11

Behind the scenes. What does that mean to you? Can it—or does it—apply to you? Christians who usher, fold bulletins, clean buildings, or make it possible for those called as pastors and teachers to serve through their offerings, are imitators of Aquila and Priscilla. Paul stayed with them, joining with them in making a few tents. They gave him a home base to reason in the synagogue with Jews and Greeks about Jesus. He was able to share the Good News of Christ with Titius Justus and Crispus and their households. These became believers through the Holy Spirit’s work in them. Because some were willing to work behind the scenes and give of themselves, heaven’s shelves were more full. Pray for God to use you. Look for opportunities to serve behind the scenes. Serve the Lord with gladness.

**Pentecost 9**

Joel 3:12-16

The prophet clearly explains that God’s love is not tolerant and indulgent love. God’s love moves him to rescue his own dear believers and to visit those who spurn his love with divine justice. Compelled by the love of Christ we will manage our possessions so that as many as possible hear how God’s love is awesome in its judgment and mighty in its safekeeping.

Romans 8:26-27

The Lord promises that the Holy Spirit will help us in our inadequacy in knowing what to pray for and how to ask for it. As we consider all that the Lord has showered upon us, we ask God, by the Spirit’s help, to use his gifts properly as we await our future glory.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

When Jesus taught his disciples and the crowds he often used illustrations from everyday life. When he told the parable of the weeds and wheat, his hearers could relate to the details of his story. They knew that good seed would produce a good harvest and that weed seeds would produce a mess. We as Christian stewards are “God’s sowing.” We are like the good seed because of our faith relationship in Jesus Christ. As good seed, it naturally follows that what we produce, namely, our words and actions—our total life of stewardship—should reflect that which is good and godly. As God’s stewards we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and equipped to do those good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do. Such Christian living will result in a rich harvest in heaven where all the righteous will shine like the sun.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

1 Peter 4:1-8

The world questions the stewardship of Christians. Peter gives us a whole list of things the world is more than willing to spend time, money, and energy doing. And then the world wonders why Christians don’t want to join such activity. Instead we will strive to use the blessings we have received from God to love one another deeply from the heart!

**Pentecost 10**

1 Kings 3:5-12

Solomon was presented by God with what we might call a “golden opportunity.” Solomon was instructed to ask for whatever he wanted God to give him as king. How would most people respond to such an offer? How would you respond? Some might ask for financial security, a good family, long life, or a position of power and prestige. Solomon asked for wisdom, for a discerning heart, so that he could govern God’s people well. What a great choice! A discerning heart is also a great blessing for Christian stewards. It is a great blessing because it helps the wise stewards to recognize that all of life and its resources really do belong to God and are to be used for his purposes.

Romans 8:28-30

Looking at God’s plan of salvation is like looking at a beautiful stained glass window. We can stand back and allow the sunlight to make the window come to life, or we can step up close, examine the artistry, and be amazed by the glorious detail. Compelled by the love of Christ we will manage our possessions so that others might focus on the glorious details of God’s plan of salvation.

Matthew 13:44-52

Life here on earth is often measured in terms of fame and fortune. Believers know that these gifts from God last only as long as we live. Our most treasured possession is Jesus, through whom we have forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. Out of thankfulness for him, we will use his earthly gifts to us for his glory.

Psalm 119b

We have so many choices when it comes to how we serve God. In this psalm we certainly pray that God would give us the understanding we need to follow his direction and will for our lives—even when it comes to the choices of how we spend our time and treasures. Sometimes that will mean turning our eyes away from things that are worthless.

**Pentecost 11**

Isaiah 55:1-5

We have come a long way from just getting by with the basics! All we need to do to prove it is look in our cupboards and closets or at our credit card bills. It’s hard to resist the temptation to buy more or newer or “better” things. Why do we buy more than we need or even want? Why do we spend so much time and energy on projects that make us tired and stressed? If we put God first in our lives and turn our budgets and schedules over to him, we can trust him to show us how and where he wants us to serve him. We can trust him to give us the energy, ideas, and tools we need for the task. We need to be in prayer and in the Word and open our hearts to his guidance toward being good stewards of all the blessings he has given us.

Romans 8:35-39

Christ’s love relentlessly pursues our best interests, even when we would happily settle for less. God gave us his best in the person of his Son, our Savior. By faith we know of his victory over sin, death, and the devil. He who gave us his Son truly gives us all we need for this world and the next.

Matthew 14:13-21

Jesus fed over five thousand people. First, though, he fed their souls with the bread of life. This miracle reminds us that the greatest need is the feeding of souls. The One who fed this great crowd with a meager supply of food is the One who still says, “I am the bread of life.” Compelled by the love of Christ we will manage our possessions to feed the souls of many.

Psalms 42-43

Malnourished bodies beg for nutritional attention—so do thirsty souls! But the only attention that quenches our spiritual craving is the living water of God’s holy Word. His “light and truth” of forgiveness in Jesus are the only answers to the natural darkness in our souls and the daily deceptions in our hearts. Our only true hope rests in Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin. And God’s singular hope is that we respond the same way anyone would respond when someone is kind enough to offer them a drink. Our joy-filled, firstfruit gifts of love are the thank yous he thrills to see.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Genesis 41:41-49

Pharaoh needed a wise steward to prepare for the years of famine that would come in eight years. He picked Joseph to be that manager. Joseph saved food during the years of plenty to be prepared for the years of famine. Part of our Christians stewardship should also include setting aside funds for times when there are emergencies. Such practice doesn’t mean we don’t trust God, rather it means we are using sound Christian judgment as Joseph did.

**Pentecost 12**

1 Kings 19:9-18

Elijah was discouraged and depressed thinking his service to the LORD was all in vain. God spoke to him in the still, small voice and encouraged his servant to serve his people with the Word. Compelled by the love of Christ we will manage our possessions in amazement that God gives us his gifts and graciously equips us to serve him and the needs of others.

Romans 9:1-5

We marvel at Paul’s love for the lost—even for those who had the truth but rejected it! He expresses a desire similar to Moses’ in Exodus 32: that he be cut off from Christ if it meant someone else might be joined to Christ. Moses and Paul desired something they could not do, nor was it necessary for them to do. Christ has done it. May the One who was cut off from his Father for us fill us with his same love, that we might use all that we are and have to seek the salvation of the lost—even for those who have tasted the truth and rejected it!

Matthew 14:22-33

Stress has become one of today’s common problems. More daily illness and perhaps even serious health concerns can be traced to stress. In today’s reading, Jesus dismisses the crowd and goes off to pray. As managers of all God gives to us, one of the things we manage least well is our time. The demands of our families and our jobs and the expectations others impose on us all add to potential stress. Mismanagement of time can also affect how we manage our money and talents. Faithful stewards seek a balance in their lives that helps reduce stress. Like Jesus, dropping out of the hectic pace regularly to communicate with our Father in heaven will make the rest of our time less stressful and more efficient.

Psalm 73

How often have we been like Asaph in this psalm, envious of the prosperity of the wicked? How many times have we suffered for doing the right thing or prospered from casting a blind eye to God’s law? To our human eyes, this is indeed a great mystery. But thanks be to God that he uses this to lead us to trust in him ever more greatly and to provide us with opportunities to use our talents in God-pleasing ways.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Exodus 14:10-31

God wanted the nation of Israel to trust him and his Word. This was especially difficult when Pharaoh’s army was nipping at their heels. Sometimes, especially during financial difficulty, it can also be challenging to take God’s promises to provide for all our needs to heart. New Testament stewards, like his Old Testament believers, experience great spiritual blessings when we take God at his Word and trust his promises.