

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 B 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 6**

Lamentations 3:22-33

Jeremiah wrote his lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people. Despite these terrible events, he testifies that God still shows his love for his faithful people. Instead of being consumed in the anger of God, we receive new blessings every morning from our faithful God. He always stands ready to forgive and restore us when we repent of our sins. As we observe the Lord’s faithfulness to his promises, we are also moved to be faithful in our love for him.

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14

What does it mean to be rich? Today’s reading is a classic Scripture lesson on giving. But before we can be about the business of giving, we must be good at receiving, and we don’t always do that very well. The Macedonians, held up as an example by Paul, understood the depth of God’s love for them. They recognized their riches through Christ. Now he reminds the Corinthians of what Jesus did for them: “For your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.” When we consider what Christ gave up to come to earth, and what he suffered for us on the cross, God’s love becomes evident. In receiving this love, we become rich beyond measure, for there is no price we can put on the gift of eternal life. In response to such generous giving, we also learn to give generously.

Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

Life often presents us with major problems. None is larger than the problem that faced Jairus. His 12-year-old daughter was so sick that he sent for Jesus. His daughter died before Jesus arrived. Jesus said only three things in the account. He told Jairus, “Don't be afraid; just believe.” He told those mourning for this girl, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” He told the dead girl, “Talitha koum! Little girl, I say to you, get up!” When we have problems in life, we know that Jesus has a solution for them, that with Jesus our problems are not as big as they seem, and that we need to heed his invitation, “Don't be afraid; just believe.” Only faith in Jesus can take away our fears in our Christian lives, including our fears to give generously and to serve faithfully. When you face major problems, listen to Jesus when he says, “Don't be afraid; just believe.”

Psalm 30

How did the temple in Jerusalem come to be? God made the mountain on which it stood and every atom of material that went into its construction, but God used it as an opportunity for his people to contribute their talents and treasures. God presents each of us with daily opportunities to use our gifts and abilities in his service, whether it’s a matter of telling a friend about Jesus, contributing to a church need, or volunteering to support a congregational event. Thank you, Lord, for giving us both the opportunity and ability to serve you in our lives.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

2 Samuel 12:11-25

What is the thing you treasure most on earth? I would hope you would answer “my family.” King David felt that way. However, his love for God was tested when a member of his family, his son, died. What made it even more tragic was that David’s sin caused the demise of his son. God did not leave David without hope. He sent the prophet Nathan to lead David to repentance. His grace led Nathan to share with David words so special we still use them today: “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.” When we sin, we want to feel the same sorrow over sin and comforting words of release.

**Pentecost 7**

Ezekiel 2:1-5

God makes sure that his Word is proclaimed even when his people stubbornly refuse to listen. Ezekiel, who had been humbled by his vision of the glory of God, is now raised up to his feet by the Spirit. The Savior then tells him to go preach the Word whether or not the people listen. Ezekiel’s task was to make sure that God’s people knew a prophet was among them. Our task remains to be such stewards of the mysteries of God, faithful stewards of the gospel who let all people know that there are spokesmen for God among them.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

When we think of the apostle Paul, we think of his conversion on the road to Damascus, his mission trips, the new churches he started, the lives he touched, his teachings, and his sound practical advice. We sometimes forget he did all these things despite “a thorn in the flesh.” Paul saw this thorn in the flesh as an obstacle for serving the Lord. He said it was from the devil and it tormented him. He prayed for healing more than once. God answered Paul’s prayer in words of strength for Paul and us. The Lord reminded Paul that he only needed God’s grace to carry out his ministry. What’s your thorn in the flesh—a lingering illness, a longtime physical problem, the impact of age? The Lord reminds us that, even with a thorn in the flesh, we can serve him powerfully and effectively—by the grace of God.

Mark 6:1-6

“We can’t do that!” may be a reaction in some congregations to establishing new ministries or planning for an expansion of facilities. We look to the past and say, “We tried that before and failed, so why try again?” As stewards of God’s gifts, we sometimes need to develop trust that God can work miracles of faith through us. We must not let the naysayers discourage us when God places a challenge before us but trust him to provide the leadership and the resources to accomplish what he has for us to do. God’s promise of support for proclaiming his message of salvation should be encouraging to us. As stewards of the gospel, let us place our trust in the Lord and go in the direction he sets.

Psalm 143

It is peculiar from a human perspective just how discontented we are with our environment. We always see something that we want to change or something that makes us uncomfortable. This dissatisfaction is closely coupled with an awareness that things are supposed to be better, that things just aren’t working the way they should. Faith in Christ provides us with an explanation for this intuition. As Paul wrote, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.” Even in the depths of despair, David praises God knowing that he will provide rescue and direction on a safe path. Ultimately, this is our only true hope: not what we can hope to possess or how well we can plan our own life but knowing that God has prepared a place for us with him in heaven.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

Every seminary graduate sees those Greek words everyday: “Preach the Word.” Without the Word, we’re just open mic lounge lizards spouting our philosophy of life. Like our reading says, some like and want that. Yet God’s Word stands supreme—no rivals, no usurpers, no competition. Grace stands unchallenged and unchanged. Stand firm in it!

**Pentecost 8**

Amos 7:10-15

Jeroboam II of Israel followed in the sins of Jeroboam I even though he lived a century and a half later. Chief among those sins was golden calf worship at Bethel and Dan. God sent Amos to preach the downfall of Israel and Jeroboam II because of such sins. Amaziah, prophet at the false altar in Bethel, ordered Amos out of Israel and back to Judah. Amaziah wanted Amos to “earn his bread” there and “prophesy” there. It is interesting that the false prophet begrudged God’s true prophet the money he made as a prophet as much as he begrudged the message of Amos. We do not begrudge the money given to those who preach God’s Word. We gladly give our offerings to support the proclamation of the gospel among us.

Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul sings a song of salvation for us. He covers what God did for us in the eternity past in electing us. He adds what God does for us during the course of history in sending Jesus to shed his blood as a payment for sin and in calling us to faith. He points to what God will do for us in the eternity to come when he will glorify us. The good news is that he tells us, “You were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth.” These are words we like to hear: you are included. What a strong motivation for working, giving, and praying for the gospel ministry among us! We are not outsiders looking into the things of God. We are included! We are insiders who live in the things of God.

Mark 6:7-13

Imagine sending a child off on a trip to Europe with these instructions: “Take no luggage. Don’t pack any emergency food. Don’t take any money with you.” Preposterous! Yet Jesus sends out his disciples with instructions just like those. To leave on a journey to a faraway place with no provisions is either foolish or shows a great deal of trust that somehow everything will be provided. If we were to strike out on our own with little or no planning, the risk of failure would be high. But striking out in faith with God’s assurance of support is a good risk. The evangelists were probably shocked at Jesus’ instructions until they remembered who it was who was sending them out. Then trust kicked in. As stewards in God’s world, some of the things God challenges us to do seem risky. We look around and see no resources. But when it is God who says, “Move!” we can be sure he will provide the resources necessary. “If it is of men, it will fail,” the officials noted of the activity of early Christians in Acts, “but if it is of God, no one can stop it.” When God sends you, strike out in trust that he will also provide the resources.

Psalm 78

As we grow older, we begin to think about what kind of legacy we will leave. How will people remember us? Perhaps the community will remember us for some wonderful cause that we supported, or our children will be supported by the wealth we leave behind to them. All these things are fine. What greater legacy can there be than to leave behind a history of sharing God’s Word with the next generation? All other legacies will be forgotten through the fog of time. Inheritance money eventually dries up. However, do not hide the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, and you leave behind a legacy that lasts into eternity. They will know of their Savior God, and they will tell the next generation, and the next, and the next . . . Do not be stingy with your vocal, public, pointed praise for your God and his great deeds. Do not neglect the blessed opportunities to support such proclamation with the gifts God has given to you. Pass it on. Leave a lasting legacy.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

1 Timothy 3:1-7

“Here is a trustworthy saying.” We might say, “You can take it to the bank.” What is worth our trust? God, his Word, his grace. Each pastor, teacher, staff minister, and believer has been called to be worthy of our trust in Christian living and in handling God’s Word. We are different because grace made us different. Learn it, live it, love it.

**Pentecost 9**

Jeremiah 23:1-6

God’s solution for the false shepherds who scattered the sheep is to punish them and send new shepherds who are faithful to him and his Word. Chief among those new shepherds is his Son, the Good Shepherd. Jesus will gather his scattered people around his cross and will be our righteousness. Robed in Jesus’ righteousness, we are safe and secure in our faith and united together in our mission to preach the gospel as he gives us opportunities and means.

Ephesians 2:13-22

It is curious that a small wound in the body can cause death. A lead slug only a few millimeters in diameter can enter the body and the person dies. A knife wound only a few inches deep and confined to a small percentage of the total body is lethal. We all know the reason—the body works together as a unit. There is a relationship between every part and every other part. In the body of the church, you are an important part. The body may be able to live without you, but it certainly won’t be as strong. The church needs every member. Each congregation needs everyone to participate in using God’s gifts in support of the mission of the congregation. Your time, your abilities, and your finances, if missing, will be noticeable. Continue to be active in doing your part as a steward of God’s blessings in the church.

Mark 6:30-34

For a Christian, “down time” is never “down time.” The 12 disciples had returned from their mission trip. The execution of John the Baptist weighed heavily on Jesus. The Savior invited his disciples to some “down time” across the Sea of Galilee. However, the crowds still came. Despite of the “down time,” Jesus’ compassion on these shepherdless people was stronger than his need for some rest and relaxation. So Jesus used his “down time” for preaching God’s Word to those who both needed it and desired it. Our compassion and faithful witness to the shepherdless does not end when vacation begins, when days off come around, or when we relax after work. We are always ready to do the Lord’s work, even during our “down time.”

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Hebrews 13:7, 8, 17-21

Pro-basketball player Charles Barkley famously said, “I don’t want to be no role model.” Whether he wanted to be one or not, he was. Pastors and elders are the same. When grace reigns, they are positive ones. When the old Adam rules, they are negative ones. Encourage them, pray for them, support them as a messenger of our Lord.

**Pentecost 10**

Exodus 24:3-11

Fellowship with God is a wonderful thing. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the 70 elders experienced this fellowship by eating and drinking in God’s presence. Talk about a reason to now serve God with joyful hearts! As New Testament believers we understand that sacrificial system used in the Old Testament was one of many pictures pointing ahead to the perfect fellowship Jesus accomplished by his death. Because of Jesus, we too have an intimate fellowship with God. This means we also have every reason and motivation to serve God with joy-filled hearts.

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

The diversity of the church—the variety of the gifts the Lord bestows on its members—has one purpose: to build up the body of Christ. Full-time professionals and part-time volunteers all make proper use of time, talents, and treasures as they grow the church.

John 6:1-15

Your gifts to the church can be multiplied in service to the Lord. Often this takes the form of “matching funds.” A donor, a foundation, or an insurance company may step forward and challenge congregation members to support a cause with their gifts, and then matching funds are used to increase the final total. But look what happens when Jesus gets involved: the gifts are multiplied beyond anyone’s expectation. A boy’s lunch feeds thousands. How can this be? It’s God’s math. We like to subtract and divide. We seem to look at only what is left, or how it is going to be divided to support so many needs. But God likes to add and multiply. He takes meager resources and, in his miraculous way, adds his blessing and multiplies their effect. What your gift may accomplish is in the hands of the Lord.

Psalm 84

How blessed we are to dwell in the Lord’s house and to enjoy his favor! With him as our “sun and shield” we have nothing to fear as we make use of the blessings he heaps upon us. Since he withholds “no good thing” from those who follow him, may we also withhold “no good thing” as we thank him through our time, talents, and treasures.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

2 Kings 4:42-44

A pastor shared that they have a potluck every Sunday after church. Nearly every Sunday they have a concern that there might not be enough, but somehow there always is enough. With the Lord, “They will eat and have some left over.” God always provides. God gives us what he wants us to have—nothing more, nothing less. Trust in him, lean on him, and give him your best as he has given to you.

**Pentecost 11**

Exodus 16:2-15

At a buffet restaurant each customer chooses an appropriately sized serving so that there is no leftover food to pick up from the tables. If there are lots of leftovers it means the customer demonstrated a lack of control and bad judgment. When God gave the Israelites manna for food, he promised to provide all the manna each person needed, but some doubted. They saw the delicate nature of the manna and how it appeared like frost. They came to the logical conclusion that such light nourishment would not be enough, so some gathered more than they could eat. The excess manna spoiled, became insect-infested, and smelled horrible. God promises to give us “all that we need to support this body and life” (Martin Luther’s explanation to the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed). If we trust God’s Word, we can be satisfied in having what we need. “Take all you need,” says God, “but use all you take in service to my world.”

Ephesians 4:17-24

The world’s viewpoint and the child of God’s viewpoint of everything that God gives us are the exact opposite. The world sees wealth as a tool to indulge in any and every thing it wants. Such thinking will only lead to dead-end living—eternally. Conversely, the child of God has a completely different attitude. God’s children recognize the need to put off such a useless thought process and instead honor God with all that they possess, including his material gifts.

Ephesians 4:17-24

Do people who have known us for years see us as “new and improved”? Being a member of God’s family means we are not to blend in with the rest of the world, including how we view his gift of money. As God’s children we have the new self, which also gives us a new attitude in how we use all that we have at our disposal, including our income.

John 6:24-35

“The squeaky wheel gets the grease” is a phrase in our culture that defines importance. How do you determine what is important? Is it the same way that God determines what is important? How attuned are we as God’s children to knowing and acting on what God considers important? In our reading, the crowds were seeking Jesus according to their own definition of what was important. They followed him for his miracles and because he fed them. When you give your time and finances to the church, is it for the right reason? In the Old Testament, when people brought sacrifices to the Lord’s altar, their attitude was that they brought them with no strings attached. They simply turned the offerings over to the Lord for his use. Some were burned; some went to feed the priests and the Levites. When we bring our offerings to the Lord, are we willing to let them go and be used in service as the Lord directs, or do we want to keep some control over their use? In the right attitude, let God determine the priority in the use of our gifts. Then we will be giving for the right reasons.

Psalm 145

We are stewards of the mysteries of God. Note, however, that doesn’t mean we keep God’s Word to ourselves. We need to tell the next generation the mighty acts of God’s love, because if we don’t there is grave danger of losing the precious gift of the gospel. God help us to be good stewards of the sacred Scriptures so that many more may call on him in truth.

**Pentecost 12**

1 Kings 19:3-8

It has been said, “When God lets us stumble; he does so that we may fall into his arms.” He does this that we might lose faith in our strength and employ his. All that we are, all that we have, and all that we accomplish is for the Lord and because of his strength. “We give thee but thine own, whate’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust O Lord from thee. And we believe thy Word, though dim our faith may be: whate’er for thine we do, O Lord, we do it unto thee” (Christian Worship 485:1,6).

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

There’s nothing like money to cause arguments, and this threat is even possible within a congregation. A wealthy member dies and leaves a large estate to the church resulting in wrangling over how to spend or invest the money. An expansion of facilities is proposed and the discussion over the cost and how to gather needed funds nearly dooms the project. Times are tight, and the budget is not met, so discussions over priorities and where to cut become heated. God does not bless the church to cause divisions. Just as we give out of love, let us work together in love, prayerfully asking God to guide us in the use of these gifts within his Church.

John 6:41-51

The manna God’s people ate in the desert lasted only one day (two days over the Sabbath). God’s people needed to rely on him for their daily bread. Still this manna did not sustain them forever. They all eventually died. Jesus invites us to invest our time in “eating bread” that will last forever. Eating this bread is nothing more than believing in Jesus. It also means we will never be spiritually hungry again.

Psalm 34

The sacrifices of God are indeed a broken heart and a crushed spirit. When we present these to God in confession and faith, he gives in return redemption and salvation. The great comfort for believers is that we will not be condemned. In response, we can do no better than sing, “Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.”

**Pentecost 13**

Proverbs 9:1-6

The Scriptures make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We make our lives busy with many things—especially in the summer—but through all the noise of this world, Wisdom invites us to walk in the way of understanding. As a new school year begins, most churches will be offering a full plate of spiritual food for members in the form of Bible studies and other educational opportunities. May we use these opportunities to not only serve ourselves and our families but, like the maids in this reading, also invite others to come to God’s feast.

Ephesians 5:15-20

Society has always been at odds with the church. What the world wants is not in harmony with what the church teaches. If we think our society is anti-Christian, we only need to look back into history or to other places in the world to find societies and situations where the church suffers even more persecution. Yet we do not drop out of society to fulfill Christ’s mission. We manage our lives and our church in a way that gives a positive witness to society of what we believe. We can encourage one another in worship, in our meeting together to study the Word, in our fellowship. Our corporate witness is in how every member gives of self to support the common goals of the congregation: “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything.”

John 6:51-58

Saving faith is not merely a matter of believing in Jesus Christ as our highest moral example—taking hold of his ethics and applying them to one’s self. Saving faith is not trusting in Jesus as a leader. Saving faith is looking to the cross and seeing the flesh and blood offering Jesus made once for all so that forgiveness might be secured. Christ gave his all for us. As we walk in newness of life, so we will put this faith into action. We will feast on the Bread of Life. We will make use of all the resources God has put at our disposal to share that Bread of Life with others so that they may realize that only Jesus offers the Living Bread that leads to eternal life.

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 presents two responses to God’s Word. On the one hand are those who love the Word and make use of it constantly. They are called blessed. On the other hand are those who mock God’s truth. They are called wicked and their way will perish. May God’s Word be our delight—both learning it ourselves and helping others hear the life-giving message as we support gospel ministry.

**Pentecost 14**

Joshua 24:1-2, 14-18

When Joshua gave God’s people the choice of their lives, they responded with a beautiful confession of faith (paraphrased): “The LORD is our faithful God; far be it from us to be unfaithful to the One who will never let us down!” Yet, at the same time they were still holding on to the gods their forefathers worshiped (cf. vs. 14)! Such is the ongoing struggle for every child of God: to be faithful to him who saves or to that which cannot. Our confessions of faith are real, but so is our struggle. Let us remember the faithfulness of our Savior-God. He has proven himself in the past and will continue his faithfulness in the future. It is only by his promise that we remain faithful to him and faithful with his gifts.

Ephesians 5:21-31

Whenever we attend a Christian wedding we are likely reminded of Christ’s commitment to us, his Church. He truly was a steward of his entire life as he died for us, his bride. May God give all who are married or preparing for marriage the proper attitude to understand and fulfill his roles in their married life—that husbands love like Christ loves and wives submit as the Church submits to Christ.

John 6:60-69

Computer compression files are amazing. One little word can be the key to open compressed files that contain text, pictures, animation, and other wonders. But our computers cannot hold a candle to what can be compressed into one Word of God. One Word of God spoken or remembered can unlock the entire counsel of the Holy Spirit. There are no frivolous words of God. Each has extraordinary power and can give and sustain our spirit and life. Just the one word, “Jesus,” unlocks the file of all he has done for you. A holy birth, a perfect life, an undeserved death on the cross for your sake—all wrapped up in a word, a name. As God’s stewards it is important that we make the best use of this wonderful gift, the Word of God. Hear it, be in it, use it, and proclaim it often.

Psalm 71

The Advent season emphasizes our great need for help. Without a Savior, we would be forever lost in the darkness of sin and despair. Left to ourselves we wouldn’t have any direction or certain hope. We need God’s help. The psalmist cries out, “In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me.” The psalmist then helps us see God’s response to our cries by saying, “you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once more.” Our Savior has lifted us out of the dark depths of sin and given us a place of honor. What an astounding change! What undeserved generosity! What honor is due us? None—but God gives us a place of honor in his kingdom. Inspired by God’s generosity, we are inspired to support the sharing of this good news of honor and comfort with earnest prayers and generous offerings.