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.*

**Ash Wednesday**

Isaiah 59:12-20

Does it ever feel like the world just isn’t working right? We so often see success follow the wicked, and it seems like the only people who persevere are those who are willing to allow at least a little dishonesty into their lifestyle. We’re not the only ones who feel that way. Isaiah writes that the Lord looked at humanity and saw only our wickedness and injustice. He surely would have been just in destroying all of us, but instead he sent Jesus to pay for our sins and set us right with him. Now we live with the opportunity to let Christ’s light shine through us in the way we treat one another.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2

The apostle Paul makes it very clear that, thanks to all Jesus accomplished, we are “reconciled to God . . . now is the time of God’s favor, now is day of salvation.” Now is the time to be at God’s work with our lips, our lives, and our total commitment to the Lord’s church. May the management of our time and money reveal that we really believe in the urgency of getting the Lord’s work done now and not later.

Luke 18:9-14

The parable of the Pharisee and tax collector is really about us. We have the sinful nature of the Pharisee that wanted to take credit for words and actions that appear to be good on the outside even though motives are far from perfect. The Pharisee was full of pride. C.S. Lewis once said that “pride is the great sin.” Pride moves us to look down on everyone and doesn’t allow us to look up. The tax collector, on the other hand, teaches us to look up when our sins put us down. Not only is there forgiveness for our countless sins that the sinful nature likes to overlook, but we look up to Jesus as the one for whom we thankfully live and give and serve.

Psalm 51a

God is a holy judge but not an eager one. All of his holy court’s evidence points to only one possible verdict for me: guilty as charged. He is justified in that assessment of my life. But because of his startling love expressed to me in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, he also justifies the sentence of my life. Through Jesus I am clean! What a difference that makes in my desire to serve him. It’s not fear or guilt compelling me toward holy living; it is only gratitude spurring on my gifts of love. It is only thankfulness driving my acts of kindness to others. I can’t help what I am now; he has determined my innocence!

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

2 Corinthians 7:8-13a

Most people don’t like being corrected. When someone tells us we’re wrong, it’s so much easier to focus on finding reasons that it was wrong of the other person to correct us at all. “Who are you to judge? Is it really that big a deal?” As far as public awareness of Bible verses goes, Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged,” ranks nearly as high as John 3:16. As Christians, we must always remember that the ultimate goal of correction is repentance, and that from a life of repentance flows all sorts of gifts. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was no small rebuke, but it produced good results in them including a renewed attention to how they ought to be behaving. May we receive all our rebukes with an equally gracious attitude and a desire to see God’s will done.

**Lent 1**

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

It’s so easy sometimes to think of God in terms of “thou shall not,” a God of limits who keeps his followers from ever having a good time, but in Genesis 2 we see something different. We see a God who provides us with all kinds of trees “pleasing to the eye and good for food,” a God who recognizes that “it is not good for the man to be alone” and gives us companionship. Even when he commands us not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he does not do so without also giving us access to his tree of life. When we find ourselves frustrated that God doesn’t always give us what we want, let us take comfort in knowing that he does give us what we need: forgiveness of our sins and the promise of salvation in him.

Romans 5:12-19

When atomic bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945 to end World War II in the Pacific, the world changed. Within the first two to four months of the bombings, 90,000–166,000 people in Hiroshima and 60,000–80,000 in Nagasaki died, with roughly half of the deaths in each city occurring on the first day. On Christmas of 2004 an earthquake rocked the world off the coast of Indonesia that set off a tsunami that killed over 160,000 people and displaced another 500,000 people in Southeast Asia. Yet no disaster was as great as what took place in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Death came to all men. The nature of man was no longer in God’s image but in the sinful image of Adam. In stark contrast to all that tragedy stands the gift we are given in Christ. He changed the world even more. He forgave the world. He justifies, that is, declares humankind forgiven and righteous, which the formerly condemned receive through faith. He changed us to live as changed people. He changed us to live for him.

Matthew 4:1-11

It must have seemed ironic to Jesus that the devil would so generously offer him all the kingdoms of the world, as if they didn’t belong to him already! When we face temptation, it is important to remember that we belong to God, not to Satan. God will care for us and provide for us as he has since the dawn of creation. Satan would like us to doubt that, to worry, fret, and hoard what we have for ourselves. But since Satan didn’t give us anything, we shouldn’t let him tell us what to do with it! God sent his Son to be born and live and die as one of us—but without sin—and to rise again so that we can have eternal life with him. He will give us the strength to resist the devil and to use all that we are and have to serve him by serving others.

Psalm 130

Waiting for someone to arrive or for something to happen can seem like an incredible waste of time, yet that’s exactly what the inspired writer of Psalm 130 instructs us to do. When troubled by a recent tragedy or burdened by our countless sins, the Christian cries out to the Lord for help and forgiveness. The forgiveness is ours already by faith in Jesus. The Lord’s help may linger, but that’s not wasted time, for he has promised to help us in the way and at the time that is right according his plans, not ours.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Genesis 3:1-15

When talking about stewardship, we often focus on proper use of the time, talents, and treasure that God has given us for glorifying him and building up the body of Christ. The other side to this is that we must not use the gifts we’re given to sin. Adam and Eve were good stewards of the garden God placed them in up to a point, but when the opportunity presented itself, they broke the one law they’d been given. We too must guard ourselves against wasteful attitudes that, for example, prioritize entertainment over edification. Thankfully, our salvation does not depend on our success in these matters, but on knowing that we are Christ’s workmanship to do the works he prepared for us in advance. This gives us the motivation to make sure we are doing these works to the best of our ability.

**Lent 2**

Genesis 12:1-8

When the Lord told Abram to pack up and leave, Abram did just that even though it could not have been easy. We are often resistant to change, even when it is clearly God’s will. At times like this we should give thanks to God for providing us new avenues of service to him. Just as he cared for Abram and provided for his family on their journey, he will care for us as we deal with new challenges in our lives. Even if we aren’t going through major changes we need to always pray that God will help us recognize our gifts and use them in service to others, giving glory to him. God, who loved us enough to send his Son as a sacrifice for our sins, won’t abandon us as we strive to serve and obey him.

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

I once worked with a man who acted like he was doing me a favor every time he showed up for work on time and did his job the way he was expected to. Needless to say, he didn’t last at the company very long. Most of us probably have more sense when it comes to our own work, but how often do we imagine that we’re doing God a favor whenever we do something he commands? Indeed, in just the same way, our works for God are not a favor to him, but a debt we owe to him—and one that we have no hope of repaying. Thank God that through Christ this debt has been paid off, that our faith in him has instead been credited as righteousness and that we’re now free to do works motivated by the new heart he has created in us!

John 4:5-26

Have you ever shaken the hand of the president of the United States or a senator or even an important athlete? Most of us have probably had an encounter with someone of some noteworthiness. Do you think that VIP remembers that encounter? I doubt it. Yet look how Jesus reaches out individually to a Samaritan woman who, by her race and culture, would have considered herself Jesus’ enemy. Jesus loved her. He called her to repentance. He took time with her. He accepted her. He dealt with her as an individual. He even knew her life story and exactly what she needed. Jesus has the same kind of relationship with us. Yes, he knows our history but he also knows what we need and supplies it. We are baptized into his family. We come to the Lord’s Supper, and he gives us his body and blood to eat and drink and receive the blessing of forgiveness individually. In turn we, like the woman at the well, also invite our friends to come and see the man who knows who we are and what we really need—a relationship with him.

Psalm 121

Have you seen the signs in a neighbor’s yard? “This house protected by . . .” The sign warns thieves that a security system protects the house. Wouldn’t it be nice to put up a sign that lets everyone know, “This house protected by the LORD”? He doesn’t fall asleep. He’s always on the job and alert. He takes care of us and all that we have. What a comforting thought as we fall asleep. Whether I’m awake or asleep, coming or going, the LORD is taking care of me, my family, and everything I own!

**Lent 3**

Isaiah 42:14-21

In my hometown all the crosswalks have audible crossing signals to assist the blind with navigating the city. I’ve often imagined what it must be like to be blind and how welcoming it must be for a blind person in a strange city to find these sorts of guides. This is the same image Isaiah creates for us in this chapter: God leading us through lands we don’t know and making our paths safe before us. Just as he formerly led the Israelites with pillars of cloud and fire, he now leads us with his eternal Word so that, even though we were spiritually blind, we can trust that he is preserving us on our walk to heaven.

Ephesians 5:8-14

We can’t see in the dark. We can see in the light. It’s just basic common sense. In the dark, away from the love that God demonstrated by sending his Son as a human infant to live sinlessly and to suffer and die for our sins, we fumble around, holding tight to everything we own for fear we will be lost without it. In the light of Christ’s resurrection our eyes and our hearts are opened and we see that we possess nothing, that everything belongs to God. In the light can thank and praise him for all his gifts. In the light we can see the needs of others and respond in his love using the abilities and possessions with which he has blessed us. We can spread the news of his saving love and bring others into the light.

John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

Jesus did miracles for various reasons. In this reading Jesus healed the blind man “so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” While those who hated Jesus relentlessly kept coming back to the healed man to somehow intimidate him to say that Jesus was a sinner like the rest of us, his answer was unwavering, “I was blind but now I see.” We see too—with the eyes of faith. The one we see is the one who has given us the ability to see. The blind man was grateful to the healer. He wanted to worship. There is no difference with us. Spend time to worship him who gives you the ability to see.

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 to 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.

**Lent 4**

Hosea 5:15-6:3

When God allows us to endure suffering at the hands of our own sinful choices, he does so in order that we might see the cause and depth of the problem in our hearts and bring us to our knees in repentance. But we can be sure that God never abandons us, for the abandonment took place at the cross when he abandoned his Son. Knowing this soothing gospel love of our Savior, we are encouraged to press on in our struggle with selfishness and give our lives to the Lord’s service.

Romans 8:1-10

“Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God,” but it doesn’t take a lot of searching to find people who try. How often do we fool ourselves into thinking that we’re doing God a favor by abstaining from sin or attending to our earthly duties? Paul tells us that the mind of sinful man is death. All our best efforts, all our greatest attempts to try to set our own situation right, fail. But God sent his Son as a sin offering for us. Even though our bodies are subject to death because of sin, we know that the Spirit has given us new life in Christ.

Matthew 20:17-28

Even as Jesus moved toward the day of his crucifixion and his resurrection, he still had to deal with human pettiness. It is in our nature to put our wants ahead of others’ needs. Christ showed a new way: become great by serving others. God has provided us with everything we need for this kind of greatness. He gave us our lives and health, the world we live in and the work we do, money and food and clothing, and talents and abilities of all degrees. When we bring our offerings regularly and use our time and talents to serve in our congregations, we join with Christians all over the world in proclaiming the news of the gospel to the lost. When we humbly reach out in love to help our neighbors in whatever needs they may have, we demonstrate Christ’s love on a personal basis.

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 37:1-11

It’s not appropriate to blame Joseph for the way his brothers treated him—after all, can anyone force us to sin? But it’s worth meditating on the jealousy that Joseph’s fancy coat provoked among his brothers. Did Joseph wear his coat as a sign of vanity? Did he wear it to taunt his brothers at a time when he had just reported them for poor behavior? Did he share his dreams with them out of naiveté or out of arrogance? It’s worth considering in our own life: do we do the things we do to glorify God or do other selfish motivations creep in? May God help us as we work to conduct ourselves not only in ways that produce a good result but also with pure motives.

**Lent 5**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

True stewardship is not based on the question of “how much”—how much time, how much money, etc. Rather it is based on the gospel giving us life. Without the gospel our works are like dry bones. Through the gospel the Holy Spirit breathes life into us and enables us to please God with our stewardship.

Romans 8:11-19

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are obligated to practice good stewardship by that very faith the Spirit produced in us through the gospel. While the natural mind in us tries to compel us to use our possessions for selfish gain and pleasure, we are not controlled by it. We are the adopted sons of God who have life now and forever in glory.

John 11:17-45

If our faith convinces us of the truth of Scripture that God can work all things out to serve his purposes, then we can be good stewards even in the valleys of life. The people around Jesus were asking the question, “Couldn’t he have kept this man from dying?” Jesus pointed out this was the wrong question. Jesus said the question was, rather, “If you believe, won’t you see the glory of God?” In times of adversity, when our finances, our ability to use our talents, and the pressures of time make life hard to manage, Jesus asks the same question, “If you believe, won’t you see the glory of God?” Then God expects us to act in wisdom and seek the Spirit’s guidance in managing our adversity.

Psalm 116

The pattern of our relationship with God is this: The Lord gives and we respond with thankfulness. Because he has turned his ear to us we will call on his name forever! What great joy can be found in giving back. God blesses us again and again. He provides for our material needs as well as rescuing our souls. In response to his great blessings we thankfully call on his name, sing his praises, and offer a portion of that with which he has blessed us.

**Palm Sunday**

Zechariah 9:9-10

Could a prophecy made about 25 centuries ago about an event about 20 centuries ago change our lives? Absolutely. As the prophet here sees Jesus coming so humbly to save us, we learn what grace and our lives under God’s grace are all about. We’re not here to do whatever we want. Humble faith leads to humble willingness to do whatever God wants.

Philippians 2:5-11

On this Palm Sunday we ponder the humble entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, where he was welcomed with praise and respect by those who believed in him, his miracles, and his teachings, but rebuked by the Pharisees. We are told that our attitude “should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” who “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant . . . humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on the cross!” It is difficult for us to imagine ourselves being able to make the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made for us, to live the perfect life of Jesus in a world in which corruption is seen daily on television screens and newspapers and heard on radios. Selfishness seems to run rampant, and selflessness seems non-existent if we believe the media. How do we begin modeling our lives after that of Christ, our Servant Leader and King? The answers are found in God’s inspired Word and by managing our spiritual life through regularly reading and studying Scripture. We can walk the humble path of life just as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt on Palm Sunday so many years ago.

Matthew 21:1-11

“Jesus is a peculiar king. You do not seek him; he seeks you. You do not find him; he finds you. Your faith comes from him, not from you, and all that your faith works in you comes from him, not from you” (Martin Luther). As we see Jesus come humbly to Jerusalem on a colt, may we be reminded of this peculiar nature of our king who serves so that we might live for him.

Psalm 24

What makes something ours? Is it because it was handed down to us from our ancestors or because we received it after an investment of sweat and labor? David reminds us, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,” that the only one who can truly claim ownership of anything in this world is the one who “founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.” As we handle the possessions in our care, may we always remember who has entrusted them to us!

**Maundy Thursday**

Exodus 12:1-14

One of the interesting details of the celebration of the first Passover was the requirement for the children of Israel to give the best and finest of their lambs for slaughter. This was another one of those word pictures the Lord shared to remind the Israelites that he intended to give nothing but the best and finest for the sins of all mankind, namely his Son. What a wonderful example God and the Israelites have given us as we set our giving priorities. May the offerings we give to our God come from gracious hearts that intend to give only the best in gratitude for the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life.

1 Corinthians 11:23-28

We ought to examine ourselves. How have you reviewed the importance of your possessions compared to God? A true self-examination may reveal a weak kind of love for him. How difficult it is for us to put God first when it comes to our time, talents, and treasures. Therefore we accept our King’s invitation to approach his throne of grace in communion with deep humility, to be bold enough to touch him, and to receive from him the outstretched scepter of his forgiveness.

John 13:1-15, 34

What a beautiful picture of Jesus’ love—washing the feet of his disciples. For Jesus to humble himself made his disciples—Simon Peter in particular—uncomfortable. He was their leader and teacher—their Lord—not their servant. For him to remove the dust and dirt from their travel-worn feet seemed unnatural. But Jesus is the perfect example of servant leadership. He instructs his disciples, “Wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you . . . no servant is greater than his master.” May we live up to his call to serve selflessly at every opportunity.

Psalm 116

The pattern of our relationship with God is this: The Lord gives and we respond with thankfulness. Because he has turned his ear to us we will call on his name forever! What great joy can be found in giving back. God blesses us again and again. He provides for our material needs as well as rescuing our souls. In response to his great blessings we thankfully call on his name, sing his praises, and offer a portion of that with which he has blessed us.

**Good Friday**

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

In this prophecy of God’s great Servant, Jesus Christ, we take note how Jesus is pictured as a lamb who refused to do things to make his life more comfortable and desirable. We, on the other hand, are pictured as sheep who have turned to our own ways. What a contrast! May God’s great Servant-Lamb, who bears our iniquities, strengthen us to live for him.

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Today we come to God’s house with hearts filled with remorse and sadness. At the same time we know we will return Sunday morning with hearts filled with joy. We feel remorse because of what our sins required Jesus to experience. We have joy because Jesus went to that cross and rose triumphantly from the grave, therefore God the Father has accepted the payment Jesus made “once and for all.” Bringing our offerings to church every time a service is held is a very vivid way in which we say, “Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for being our perfect High Priest. Thank you for defeating our three arch enemies: sin, death, and the devil.”

John 19:17-30

He didn’t give us a tenth of what he had. God did not have 10 sons from whom he gave one to the world for its salvation. What motivates to such generous giving? It is love. Scripture says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” God’s love for us in turn creates a responsive love. Some people will be tempted to say, “To give all or even a large amount is not reasonable.” Whoever said that love is reasonable? Love does extravagant things. God has proven his love for you. He has proven himself trustworthy. He has gone all out for you. Can you respond in like measure? His will for you is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Look to him. Expect him to help you respond. For “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Psalm 22

The words of this psalm are so familiar on Good Friday, from the obvious foreshadowing of Christ’s crucifixion to the establishment of the words he later said on the cross. This psalm also highlights the role that evangelism plays as a response to our faith in Christ. We naturally tell one another of what Christ has done for us until all the ends of the earth remember and turn to the Lord. Lord, please support us and guide us as we look for ways to share the good news with others who have not heard it.

**Easter Dawn**

Isaiah 12:1-6

Isaiah foresaw the impact of Easter on God’s people. He foresaw this time of joy, thanksgiving, and praise that is expressed in our Easter decorations, liturgy, songs, and offerings. He foresaw the fulfillment of all prophecies of the Messiah. This Easter weekend we are celebrating just as Isaiah prophesied.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Jesus’ resurrection is what compels each of us to respond with our time, talents, and treasures to support the spread of the Easter message to the world. Jesus’ resurrection assures us the sting of death, namely sin, is only a passing thing. Today we celebrate our Savior’s victory over sin, death, and the devil. Death is simply the passageway we must travel to enter the new heaven and earth Jesus has prepared for us.

John 20:1-18

John shares with us the greatest event in the history of the world. Because the Lord has led us to believe in Jesus’ resurrection, we are like the women who just could not contain themselves. They had to get to the disciples as quickly as possible to share the good news. It’s also interesting to know the rest of the story regarding those present that first Easter morning. All of them spent the remainder of their lives sharing the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. May our lives reflect the same joy and faith in Jesus’ resurrection.

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 he 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.

**Easter**

Jonah 2:2-9

While it is true that God caused Jonah to be swallowed by a fish because of his sin, it was mainly to provide a prophetic picture of Christ’s resurrection. This resurrection of Christ assures us of our own resurrection and calls us to fix our eyes on him who is our life.

Colossians 3:1-4

It is the ultimate gift: eternal life with God! It cost the ultimate price: the death of Jesus Christ, who rose in victory on Easter morning! How can we hope to express our gratitude for a gift of such magnitude? We can let the Holy Spirit move in our hearts and minds, so that in all we do we try to bring glory to God. We can pray for insight as to how we can use the things we have in this earthly life—our income, possessions, abilities, time, and even our weaknesses—in serving others and thereby serving God. We can join with other Christians to bring the gospel to all people through missions. We can focus our minds on God, knowing that as we dedicate ourselves to serve and obey him, he will provide all we need for this life.

Matthew 28:1-10
What fear and joy must have filled these women as they were told that Jesus rose from the dead. Then, out of nowhere, Jesus appeared right in front of them. They were so captivated by his presence that they fell at his feet in worship. This, too, is the attitude of our faith in Christ. As sin vies within us to take away the proper stewardship that our faith desires to have, we can meet up with our risen Savior and be captivated by his presence.

Psalm 118

How many times have you spoken verse 1 of this psalm: “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever”? Some of us probably recite those words three times a day. We teach our children to say those very words in thankfulness for the food God provides. However, today on Easter those words take on an added meaning. We give thanks to our Almighty Lord whose faithful love endures forever. It is that faithful love that caused God to send Christ to be our substitute. His faithful love caused him to speak the first promise in the garden and to continue repeating that promise throughout generations until it was fulfilled in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Give thanks to your Lord, for his faithfulness endures forever!

**Easter 2**

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

David foresaw Christ’s resurrection. Peter and the disciples were witnesses of it. We, through the Spirit, believe in Christ’s resurrection. Like David, we live in hope in the confidence of our resurrection. Without this confidence, we are to be pitied more than all men, but with this confidence we have every reason to serve our Savior with our time, talents, and treasures.

1 Peter 1:3-9

Praise be to God! He has called us into a living hope, a hope centered in Jesus Christ. This is cause for us to rejoice. Even in the face of trial we have reason to rejoice as God can use that trial to purify the gift of faith in us as we stay connected to his Word. That is being a faithful steward of this gift.

John 20:19-31

As God’s stewards we respond to his grace by serving him. As we serve, we look for opportunities to use our resources where they are needed most. Jesus took the time to give special attention to calm the fears of his disciples and then, later, to provide the proof Thomas needed. One would not have expected less from Jesus, whose patient service did not end with the cross. Our regular response through our offerings of time, money, and abilities in service to our Lord’s church are supplemented by our attention to special needs. When the opportunity comes to provide specific support, may we be willing to do what is necessary to meet that need.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Acts 10:34a,36,39-43

God has blessed us with the task of being his witnesses. He has given us the duty of proclaiming the gospel to the world. It is in response to the joy he brings us personally that we undertake that task. In our words and actions we seek to proclaim the message of our risen Lord near and far. To us who have received such great blessings a fitting task has been assigned: to use our gifts to share Christ’s gospel.

**Easter 3**

Acts 2:14a, 36-47

As the media—news magazines, newspapers, television, radio, Internet—bombard us with what they describe as our needs, we find it difficult to do without what are really our greeds: cars, toys, computers, brand name clothing, snacks, drinks, appliances, psychic readings . . . How far we have come since the apostles first spread the Word of the risen Christ. We have so many distractions. Can you imagine selling all your possessions, giving them away to anyone who really needs them, focusing on sharing the gospel message of forgiveness with unbelievers, and joyfully observing the growing number of believers? Occasionally we do hear of a family that leaves a hectic and affluent life and decides to simplify. They may relinquish most of their possessions, relocate, change jobs, adopt a simpler lifestyle, give up credit cards, and otherwise take risks that most would not dare to attempt. What would need to happen in your life for you to consider such changes?

1 Peter 1:17-21

What is your faith based upon? Is it the riches of this world? Is it the things you hope to accomplish? It is to be, and to remain, based on the One who has saved us from our sins. Continue to call upon him always and in all situations, for he is our faith and hope. That is being a faithful steward of God’s call.

Luke 24:13-35

“It is true! The Lord has risen.” We can hear the excitement in the voices of these men who made this statement to their friends. These men had just spent an unforgettable time with the risen Lord. They could not keep this to themselves. Each time we worship in the house of the Lord it can be said we spend some unforgettable time with the Lord. How can we keep what we hear to ourselves? We can’t! We are moved to share our excitement over the risen Lord through our regular thank offerings, as well as through planned gifts in our estate plan, as such gifts support efforts to proclaim the gospel with as many as possible.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Acts 24:10-21

Paul knew what the outcome of his actions would be, but he did not let that deter him from carrying out this act of love and going to Jerusalem to deliver the offering that had been collected. Paul lived his faith in every regard. There was not any aspect of his life where he attempted to hide the fact that he was a follower of The Way. May it be our prayer that God grant us a measure of his Holy Spirit to give us such confidence. May we see the faith of Paul and be strengthened in our resolve to live lives that boldly confess our Savior.