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.*

**Lent 3**

Exodus 20:1-17

How often does a review of God’s commands cause us to bow our head in shame? Rightly so! Yet hear again God’s opening, “I am the LORD your God,” and lift up your head! God is our God because he chose us, not because we chose him. He rescued us from the bondage of our slavery to sin and gave us new life here on earth and with him in heaven. These words are our gospel motivation to follow all his commands in thankful response for all he has done for us.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

God’s wisdom is found in the cross. It leads to the eternal. It gives hope. Man’s wisdom leads to the trivial and trite. It leads to death. God’s wisdom found in the cross gives us a future; man’s wisdom desires only the here and now.

John 2:13-22

Do you feel passionate about anything in your life? Your job, your family, your friends, your hobbies, your house, your belongings, your faith in God—all could spark that passion. Hopefully, you know how passion feels, and how it can motivate you to respond with love. When Jesus saw the temple courts filled with merchants and money changers, his passion caused him to react openly with emotion and immediate action. In his absolute respect for the sanctity of the temple, he “made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.” Most people never consider that there might be such a thing as “stewardship of conviction.” Faithfulness to conviction, when rooted in the Word, is part of managing the life God gives.

Psalm 19

On this Sunday God instructs us to count the cost of following him. Just as a developer evaluates his assets before building a tower and a king counts his troops before marching to battle, Jesus tells us to consider the hardships and losses we will face as we follow him. This isn’t meant as a deterrent from a God who’s interested in leaving us poorer. Psalm 19 reminds us that all the comparative tinsel we might lose in following Jesus is replaced by only pure gold. Count not only the cost of what you leave behind; count the value of what you gain.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Psalm 69

Everyone feels alone sometimes, but imagine feeling alone, stuck, hopeless, and doomed to destruction. Imagine doing that when you know your own actions have played a role in this situation. That’s the situation David finds himself in, but rather than lashing out at God or even simply begging for mercy, he prays that God use him as an instrument to solve these problems. Let this be a reminder to all of us that even in our times of greatest despair, God can still provide opportunities for us to use our gifts for his purposes.

**Lent 4**

Numbers 21:4-9

God’s children did not lack what they needed. They simply didn’t have what they wanted! God’s holy anger burned, and there were painful consequences. Yet see his undeserved love in providing a remedy. All who turned away from their sin and turned to the remedy God provided were healed. May God move our hearts and eyes away from all that would harm, and turn our hearts and eyes to Jesus, who was lifted up on the cross so that all who believe in him might live.

Ephesians 2:4-10

A prescription for saving grace—faith—is God’s gift. No matter what we do, our works cannot save us. God’s grace is “expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus,” freely, unconditionally with ultimate, unchangeable, omnipotent love. Christians often hear the epistle reading for this fourth Sunday in Lent, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” But how often do we hear verse 10? “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” The works themselves are from God. The specific gifts we need to do his work are known by him “in advance,” even before we know what they are. We need to discover those God-given gifts and use them to his glory, without expectation of results or acclaim. Respond in service and sacrifice to his boundless love!

John 3:14-21

Jesus loved us with all his heart. As Moses lifted up the bronze snake, Jesus was lifted up for us all. This is the truth we need. This is the truth that the world needs to hear. This is the truth that we need to share with the world.

Psalm 38

Repentance is such a necessary Lenten theme. At the heart of our repentance is a confident trust in God’s mercy. Being sorry for sorry’s sake isn’t repentance. Promising to amend our sinful failure isn’t repentance either. Repentance is acknowledging our sin before a holy God, then completely relying on his love to make amends for us. It was Jesus’ life of perfection and his divine rejection that makes us right with our God. Our gifts of love come too late in this relationship to impress God or earn his favor. They come at the very end in grateful recognition of our Lord’s amazing mercy!

**Lent 5**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“You keep your end of the deal. I’ll keep mine.” That’s what God had told Israel, but they could not do it. The sin that prevented them from being faithful is the same sinful nature that keeps us from ever keeping up our end of any deal with the holy God. Rejoice and live in the new covenant he made—a new and binding promise to forgive our wickedness and forget our sins, all because the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son and our Savior, has purified us from all sin.

Hebrews 5:7-9

Jesus the God-man walked in our shoes. He understands our predicaments—he lived them. He prayed to his Father for help. If Jesus prayed, how much more do we need to approach the throne of the Father in heaven?

John 12:20-33

We are to produce many seeds, not isolate ourselves, as we glory in receiving the grace of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. As stewards, we are commanded to share the Good News with others and continue planting seeds with the Lord always by our side. We are to care for those seeds, plant, cultivate, feed, nurture, and harvest them, and then plant again. We are managers of all of God’s gifts including the spiritual ones. The guidelines for caretaking are in the Word.

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*

Psalm 115

Have you ever found yourself being criticized by someone with no standing to criticize anyone? This psalm is a brutal takedown of unbelievers who accuse Israel of having an absent God. To paraphrase: “Sure, we know where your gods are, but what good are they who can neither speak nor hear nor see?” How great it is to have a God who is not limited by what we can see or construct!

**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

What’s in a name? Servant. Master. King. Lord. Jesus was all of these and more. Another name that describes Jesus is Model—for life and for death. In our Palm Sunday epistle reading we can truly know the model for humility we are to follow. Even though Jesus was “in very nature God,” he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” And “he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” It is a matter of attitude, humble and obedient. On a scale of one to ten—ten being the highest—where would you place your attitude using humility and obedience as defining qualities? What would happen if you were to move up one number? How would your behavior change? Would anyone call you a humble servant even if you are the boss?

Mark 11:1-10

Never ridden before. The colt on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem had a sacred duty—to carry the Savior of the world into Jerusalem where he would finish his war against sin and death. What an honor, even for an animal! You have a similar honor. To carry Christ into the world through your faithful stewardship so that he can conquer souls for his kingdom.

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 our best in gratitude for the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

In this first letter to the Corinthians we are reminded of the first Lord’s Supper, a “meal” for mind, body, and soul—for our whole being. As the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine are “a participation in” the body and blood of Christ, we are united “in the body of Christ.” When we take part in the Lord’s Supper, we have life and forgiveness through Christ’s body and blood, sacrificed for us on the cross of Calvary. As stewards of this great mystery, we go to the Lord’s Table as witnesses of our faith and return empowered to proclaim God’s goodness in Christ.

Mark 14:12-26

As the disciples were eating the Passover lamb that had been prepared for them, Jesus interrupted the meal with an offering of his own meal. Through the bread and wine, Jesus would give his disciples the true Passover Lamb. Every time you eat this supper prepared for you by the sacrifice of Christ, may you leave his table with a song in your heart, ready to carry out the Lord’s will.

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.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Exodus 12:21-30

When major world events happen, it’s compelling to bring our children over to the TV to say, “Pay attention; this is history in the making!” Imagine being a participant in a piece of history so defining that it would be recorded in the Bible and remembered for thousands of years. Yet it’s so easy to focus so much on the tradition of the practice and miss the reminder that God will provide for us, through whatever means necessary, to accomplish his good purposes.

**Good Friday**

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Like a lamb to the slaughter—this is how our Redeemer, God’s Servant, went to his death. Not because human beings were too strong for him, but because it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer as he bore the sins of many. So also, we are not called upon to serve the Lord with our time, talents, and treasures because we have no choice, but because it is our Lord’s will, who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

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

Good Friday reminds us that Jesus is our great high priest. He is the Son of God who perfectly followed his Father’s will to be the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed for the sins of all mankind. Because he did all this he is the source of our salvation. Because he did this we know we can confidently approach God’s throne with our prayers and petitions. Because he did this we are compelled to make sure his church on earth continues to proclaim this good news throughout the world.

John 19:17-30

He didn’t give us a tenth of what he had. God did not have ten 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 one and only Son.” God’s love for us in turn creates a responsive love in us that expresses itself in many wonderful ways. Some people will be tempted to say, “To give all or even a large amount is not reasonable.” Whoever said that love was reasonable? Love does extravagant things. God has proved his love for you. He has proved 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, with its obvious foreshadowing of Christ’s crucifixion and the words he’d say 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.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Hebrews 7:26-28

It’s not hard to find fault with the customer service representatives we interact with on any particular day; so often, it takes considerable persuasion just to convince someone to take what you’re telling them at face value. This is not a new problem; the author of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that even high priests appointed from among our brethren are appointed “in their weakness.” Imagine if we had to depend only on unreliable humans for access to God! Thank God that Jesus is our great, holy, innocent, unstained high priest who gives us true access to God.

**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 through to enter the new heaven and earth Jesus has prepared for us.

John 20:1-18

Imagine the grief of Mary Magdalene beginning on Good Friday, the day of Christ’s earthly death on the cross, and continuing through this Easter morning when she discovered his empty tomb. Mary Magdalene, chosen to be one of those to find the tomb empty, saw the resurrected Jesus. Can you imagine yourself in that situation: empty tomb, angels, Christ raised? She might have floated awestruck to tell the disciples the news: “I have seen the Lord!” Mary Magdalene, an ordinary woman who loved her Lord and Savior, was given a special part to play in the resurrection story. What do you do as a result of being privileged to experience through God’s Word what she experienced? As a steward of the gospel message you are an ambassador for Christ. Put yourself in her place, in the place of one of the disciples who heard her speak. Do this every day, as though the first Easter is happening again 365 times each year. Live as the Easter person that God created you to be!

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.

**Easter Day**

Isaiah 25:6-9

He will swallow up death forever. Christ’s victory over death has guaranteed to us that death has no power over us. What a powerful message we have to take to the people of this world! Death is not the end of all things. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Death has been destroyed. We live in the hope of the resurrection. With such hope, we look forward to the day when we will live with the Lord forever. Having such confidence, our hearts are ready to serve the Lord with our talents, time, and treasures.

Mark 16:1-8

The women travel with heavy hearts to their Lord’s tomb to serve him with one final act of love—preparing his body for burial. They bring their spices to him, but an empty tomb thwarts those plans. Jesus wasn’t there; he is risen! The women left the tomb bewildered. What they would later know and believe, we know and believe now—that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! What “spices” has the Lord given you for service to him?

Psalm 118:14-24

On this joyous Easter Day we rejoice at the resurrection of Christ after his death on the cross. The message of Psalm 118 relates the Old Testament symbolic image that the “stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” The gospels use this image to symbolize the humility and death of our Savior, Jesus, becoming the foundation “stone” of our Christian faith. The Easter season is one of setting priorities and reflecting upon the life, death, resurrection, and “new life” of Christ. We can find great strength and joy in knowing that Jesus loved us enough to pay the ultimate sacrifice for our sinfulness. No further sacrifice needs to be made. We are now freed from “payback” service. We can live our lives using all the gifts God gives, freely giving and serving. There is no worry that God will someday demand something unexpected of us. This is guaranteed through his resurrection.

**Easter 2**

Acts 3:12-20

Refreshing times from the Lord—may these always come to you as though it were for the first time. Knowing that your sins are wiped away through repentance and faith frees you from your captivity to sin and guilt. Take the plunge into this grace of God and may the resultant freedom set you loose in your service to him.

1 John 5:1-6

Since the time of Adam and Eve, obedience to God has been an identifying mark of his children. Obedience is not a burden, but a privilege of the faithful. This obedience is a loving response to our loving God, who has provided us with all that we are and have. In the same package with all his gifts to us is a command for obedience. “And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world . . . Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” Love is the operative word in the mix of obedience. As we manage and care for all that God has given to us, we need to remember that he is the loving owner; we, in response, are to serve as the loving caretakers.

John 20:19-31

Can you feel the joy? The disciples and Thomas felt the joy of the resurrection. They were overjoyed. With the eyes of faith, we too see the Lord every time he comes to us through his Word and sacrament. May this joy fill your hearts as you eagerly serve our risen Lord!

Psalm 16

Our God’s plan of salvation clearly involved the death of our Savior. Just as clearly it involved his resurrection. His resurrection assures us of our salvation and our own resurrection. The certainty of our eternal future frees us to live now in Christian joy and gratitude for God’s including us in that plan. In that joy and gratitude we offer our lives in service to our risen Lord and Savior.

**Easter 3**

Acts 4:8-12

There is no other name. You can’t find salvation from God’s wrath anywhere else—only in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. May we never reject him through poor stewardship, but always honor and glorify him.

1 John 1:1-2:2

Jesus Christ, in his life and death, had many awesome attributes! In the epistle reading for this third Sunday after Easter he is called “the Righteous One,” the “Word of life,” the “light,” and “the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” Our sinfulness does not keep us from his saving grace, for, in Jesus, “we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense.” We have hope for eternal life through him: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” Although we can never be Christ the Savior, we are instructed to be followers of Christ, and to strive to be like him. As managers of all of life and life’s resources, we “walk in the darkness” when we selfishly use what God gives rather than employ it in service to God for his purposes. Let us bring our Christian stewardship into the light by managing to his glory all that God gives.

Luke 24:36-49

“Peace be with you.” Is there a greater phrase that can be uttered for our soul’s comfort? We have peace with God through the forgiveness of sins won for us by his Son. In this peace we are prepared to serve him with all our heart and soul.

Psalm 118:14-24

On this joyous Easter Day we rejoice at the resurrection of Christ after his death on the cross. The message of Psalm 118 relates the Old Testament symbolic image that the “stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” The gospels use this image to symbolize the humility and death of our Savior, Jesus, becoming the foundation “stone” of our Christian faith. The Easter season is one of setting priorities and reflecting upon the life, death, resurrection, and “new life” of Christ. We can find great strength and joy in knowing that Jesus loved us enough to pay the ultimate sacrifice for our sinfulness. No further sacrifice needs to be made. We are now freed from “payback” service. We can live our lives using all the gifts God gives, freely giving and serving. There is no worry that God will someday demand something unexpected of us. This is guaranteed through his resurrection.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Acts 12:1-19

A risen Savior is a ruling Savior who uses even martyrdom and imprisonment to further the work of his kingdom. When faced with such daunting obstacles to kingdom work, God’s people continue to place their trust in a risen Lord to protect and sustain them, and then they continue to carry out that kingdom work with confidence and joy.

**Easter 4**

Acts 4:23-33

The power of Christ’s resurrection so filled the hearts of his disciples that they spoke the Word boldly even when their lives were threatened. May the power of Christ’s resurrection fill you with such boldness as you testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

1 John 3:1,2

What great love the Father has lavished on us! You are a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Run to your Father in times of happiness or trouble and know with certainty that he has you in his powerful arms. May this heavenly hug from your Father encourage you to give him your best!

John 10:11-18

Among the many names given to Jesus is “the good shepherd” as described in this section of the gospel of John. His job as a shepherd, he says, is to “lay down my life for the sheep.” Because he has complete knowledge of all of us, and “my sheep know me,” there is an intimate relationship between him and his sheep—all of us who believe in him. Jesus goes on: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.” A good shepherd uses all the resources at hand for the benefit of the sheep. Similarly, our resources, given to us for our needs, should also be used in bringing in the “other sheep.” We look to Jesus as our model for obedience and unconditional love, and we, in turn, are to be models for others “not of this sheep pen.”

Psalm 23

These words from our Good Shepherd about his eternal love and care for his sheep have comforted countless Christians in their greatest hours of grief and pain. Nothing, not even a walk through the valley of the shadow of death, can separate us from his love. Divine love like that produces love for him in us. How will we show that love for Jesus with all that we are and have?

**Easter 5**

Acts 8:26-40

Philip was not one of the apostles. He was one of the seven deacons who helped with the distribution of food to the Greek Christians (see Acts 6:1-6). When an angel told him to follow the chariot carrying the Ethiopian official, he did not hesitate. When it became clear that the official needed someone to explain the prophecy of Isaiah he was reading, Philip did not say to himself, “That’s not my job. If only one of the apostles was here, he could talk to him.” Philip recognized the opportunity to give the reason for the hope he had. He was “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) because he was in the Word. We, too, are prepared to serve the Lord through his Word. We don’t have a “that’s not my job” attitude. Rather, we look for every opportunity to serve the Lord and share the good news of our risen Lord.

1 John 3:18-24

We live because of Christ. We are compelled to live a God-pleasing life because of Christ living in us. The consistent offering of our time, talent, and treasure for God’s purposes reveals this life of Christ in us and provides testimony of our priorities to those around us.

John 15:1-8

Throughout Scripture we can find vividly illustrated messages from God. The illustration from today’s gospel reading was easily understood at the time it was written, and remains clear for us today. Christ is the “true vine,” the perfect vine, to which the branches—some fruitful and some not—are attached. Those of us who follow him, who remain attached to the true vine, are blessed with his promise: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.” Then we will truly be his disciples and, as his stewards, “bear much fruit.” With the temptations of this world, remaining attached can sometimes be difficult. The more we experience the nurturing care and love of the gardener, our Father in heaven, the more we become willing managers of the resources God gives.

Psalm 67

This psalm prays for the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that all nations will be blessed through his seed, the Christ. That prayer is answered as the gospel is spread to more and more people, bringing them to faith in Jesus. May we be an answer to this prayer as we also support the spread of the gospel with our prayers and offerings!

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Acts 16:11-15

The word of God works. As soon as the sinner comes to faith in Jesus it changes that life eternally. The gospel opened Lydia’s heart and moved her to insist on hosting the apostle Paul and his companions. That same gospel opens our hearts and moves us to lives of service to our Lord.