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 C 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.*

**Easter 6**

Acts 14:8-18

In this reading for the sixth Sunday of Easter, we see Paul and Barnabas as they were seen by the people of Lystra after Paul healed a crippled man. Because of the peoples’ beliefs, they interpreted this miracle as a sign from their gods. They thought they should worship the apostles and offer sacrifices to them, as if they were gods. This angered both apostles, who explained that they were only human. Paul witnessed to them, pointing out that their sacrifices had no meaning to the God who had created all things and who had shown his kindness, given them rain to grow crops, provided them with food, and filled their hearts with joy. Still, the people had great difficulty with stopping the sacrifices. Ritual and strong traditions prevented the people from understanding that there was nothing they could do that would pay for the free grace that comes from God through Jesus Christ’s supreme sacrifice for all sinners. If you were asked today to give a testimonial of the role of Christ in your life, what would you say?

Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

Nothing but the best in God’s kingdom. Should it be any different among God’s kingdom while we dwell here below? Unfortunately we do not always give God our best in construction, time, thought, or life in general. Praise him for the Easter message of sins forgiven and a place in heaven through the perfect Savior, Jesus. May his light be evident in what we do and say so that others will be led to confess him as Lord and have a share in the perfect heaven.

John 14:23-29

Love and obedience go together, especially when we’re talking about our love for God that results from his love for us. We have opportunity to show our love for him through faithful use of all his gifts to us. The misuse of our time, talents, and financial resources can lead to trouble and unnecessary stress. The Holy Spirit reminds us that we are at peace with God knowing our sins are forgiven through Jesus and we are at peace with ourselves as he guides us in responsible living.

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.

**Ascension**

Acts 1:1-11

He’s alive! He is back at the right hand of his Father. He has given us a job: to be his witnesses. We have been given the privilege to tell the people of this world that Jesus is alive and well. We can tell them that Jesus is in control of all things, even making sense of moments when the world seems out of control. There is no time to be idle; the message is too important. Only Jesus knows when he will be returning, and we will have to give an account of our work—work done because of his love for us.

Ephesians 1:16-23

What is the Church? The Church is the body of Christ. “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” The apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians expresses his continuous thanks to them for their “faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.” On this celebration of the ascension of Christ, we are reminded of his “authority, power, and dominion.” As members of his body, Christ shares part of his dominion with us as stewards. He gives us creation to care for. He gives us talents to employ in service to the body and to others. He gives us all sorts of resources to manage. Let us prove to be grateful recipients of his grace.

Luke 24:44-53

Like a stone dropped in a lake, repentance and forgiveness have rippled out from Jerusalem to all nations, including to you today as you read this. God’s witnesses continue to share the news of our ascended Savior. God uses us—our mouths, our prayers, our offerings given in thankful love—to spread that message.

Psalm 47

Sing praise to your God who sits on high! Jesus has completed his work of taking away our sins and providing us with eternal life. Now he rules over all things as King over all the earth. Sing praise to him with your voice and honor him with your life. How awesome he truly is!

**Easter 7**

Acts 16:6-10

Do you like roadblocks or detours? Thanks to modern GPS systems we can become aware of potential detours. Detours, however, can lead to new adventures, and that is not all bad. Paul learned this lesson, adjusting to a change in his plans, and it turned out well for him as far as being able to share the gospel with people he might not have otherwise reached. The more familiar we become with the Bible the better we can adjust to the detours put before us and see them as opportunities to witness God’s ability to turn negatives into positives to his glory.

Revelation 22:12-17, 20

One of the common table prayers we use is “Come, Lord Jesus.” In this prayer we invite Jesus as a guest into our hearts, homes, and to our meal. Our prayer recognizes the meal as another gift of God. It presupposes that the food eaten by those around the table will provide health and energy to them so they may continue their service to the Lord. A second verse, common in the Slovak Lutheran tradition, reads, “And may there be a goodly share on every table everywhere.” It’s an evangelistic petition. Those who pray it ask God to shower the same blessings we have on others, especially the gift of the gospel message. “Come, Lord Jesus!” is the cry of all the faithful, as we wait for the Day of the Lord—a day when we don’t have to invite Jesus to come into our homes, but the day we will come into his. In the meantime, let us continue to thank God for his many gifts and employ them in his service.

John 17:20-26

What is the best use of your time while here on earth? It is being connected to Jesus by way of his Word and connecting others to him through that same Word. Our time on earth is not to be about amassing material possessions, which will not last; it is to be about glorifying the name of God and his Christ. That, dear friends, is the heart of stewardship.

Psalm 8

The majestic name of the Lord deserves our unending praise! Look at the creation the Lord has made. Consider the redemption Jesus has brought. Recall this through the faith the Holy Spirit has given you. All these blessings are from your majestic Lord.

**Pentecost**

Genesis 11:1-9

The Tower of Babel is a classic example of the misuse of resources. In the church, time, energy, and money can get diverted because someone desires to build a monument to self. The monument need not be a tower, a steeple, or an addition to a building. Monuments to self can be as subtle as a congregation practicing isolationism to the point of decline in a community that is growing with a new, but different, population. It may involve using our Lutheran schools only for ourselves when they can be tools for outreach. When we try to retain God’s grace and blessing for personal or corporate use, it hinders the proclamation of the gospel. May we always be eager to invest our time, energies, and dollars for God’s purposes.

Acts 2:1-21

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit continues to take place wherever the Word and sacraments are being used. Evidence of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is seen in people like us gathering for worship. Evidence of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is seen in every worship service as we sing our hymns, give our offerings, confess our sins and our faith, and join in prayers. Evidence of the Holy Spirit is also seen when we go back out into the world and love our neighbors as ourselves. There is only one explanation for these type of responses—the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon each one of us.

John 15:26-27

What occupies a good chunk of your time? How much of it is spent pondering and doing the things of God such as acts of kindness or handing out church information in the neighborhood? You say you don’t feel equipped for such tasks? Such action does not depend on our feelings, but on the Holy Spirit working in us. He is the One who equips us to show Jesus in us by our words and actions. Thank you, Holy Spirit!

Psalm 51b

Nothing in our hands we bring. No sacrifice we offer can atone for our sins. We simply confess our sin and our guilt. The Holy Spirit creates a new heart in us. He fills us with the joy of salvation. That joy opens our lips to praise the Lord. Now we bring offerings not to earn forgiveness, but to express our joy as forgiven children of God.

**Holy Trinity**

Numbers 6:22-27

Trinity Sunday is intended to remind us of the many blessings the Lord has showered upon us in our everyday lives. God the Father is the one who made us and gives us all our time and talents. He is the one who ultimately gets the credit for all the worldly things we enjoy. God the Son is the one who paid the price for all of our sins. Thanks to Jesus we know we have a gracious God who intends to use us to share his grace with the world. God the Holy Spirit is the one who places faith in our hearts to believe in the Holy Trinity. He is the one who gave us peace the very moment he placed faith into us.

Romans 5:1-5

We have been set free from the entanglements of our sin. We have been given peace with God. We have been given reason to rejoice even in the face of hardships. What is our response to what we have been given? We show our thanks to God by being faithful managers of these gifts. Our offerings reflect our appreciation for the gospel we hear and also our desire to have others hear it as we support other mission efforts.

John 16:12-15

Are 20 year-olds any better at sharing than two year-olds? While one’s age may not make a difference, Jesus does. Jesus willingly shares what he has done with the Holy Spirit who in turn shares it with us. Through Spirit-worked faith in our hearts, you and I are in a position to share what Jesus has done with others. What does selfishness really get us? It may give us short-term happiness; but sharing Jesus with others as he has shared himself with us through the Spirit of God—that gives everlasting happiness.

Psalm 150

Alleluia! Praise the Lord! What more can you add to that? Praise the Triune God: the Father who created and preserves you, the Son who redeemed you, the Holy Spirit who sanctified you. Praise him with whatever talents he’s given to you. Look at the list of musical instruments in the psalm. Not all require the same talent, but all praise the Lord. So all Christians can use their abilities to praise God in all they do.

**Pentecost 2**

1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43

Solomon built God’s temple for the people of Israel. However it is the prayer of Solomon that God would bless the foreigners among them, those who came from distant lands because of the name of Lord and who would spread the news of the one true God to the whole world. We are foreigners who, by God’s grace, know the Lord. Let us make the most of our opportunities to share the good news of God’s grace to the entire world.

Galatians 1:1-10

The true, untainted gospel of Jesus gives us freedom. Our Savior has freed us from the guilt and power of sin so that we, in faith, may joyfully strive to carry out God’s will. Though we continually feel the pressure to please other people, the Holy Spirit instead enables us to choose God as our priority in all things. This includes sharing his Word without compromising it to suit our own or others’ agendas.

Luke 7:1-10

What do you have that has the greatest value? In our society this question often results in choosing from among the many things we own. It’s just the way we are conditioned to think through our sinful nature. Perhaps some people will answer that question with an intangible, such as health, happiness, or contentment. In this lesson, the centurion valued his servant very highly. The centurion did not want to lose the servant. Jesus understood. Jesus also holds individual people as a most valuable commodity. He went to the cross for everyone. If people are of value to us, we will give them priority—especially those who do not know their value in the eyes of Jesus, their Savior. And we will give all our attention, our resources, and our efforts to get that message out to every man, woman, and child.

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.

**Pentecost 3**

1 Kings 17:17-24

The story of Elijah and the widow at Zarephath shows us how God mercifully provides for his people. Elijah was fleeing for his life when God commanded him to go to the widow. This woman and her son were quickly running out of food, yet they trusted Elijah and God by sharing all they had with God’s prophet. Completely out of their own control—just by the grace of God—these people in a hopeless situation were fed. In the same way when illness and death struck the widow’s son, God mercifully took care of the widow by bringing her son back to life. In the same way, let us make joyful service to God our priority and trust him to take care of our needs.

Galatians 1:11-24

The ability to lead and direct others is a special talent. Paul recognized how he had abused this talent in his former life as Saul. Paul also recognized that only through the revelation of God could he have known the truth. After his conversion, Paul began to use his talents and abilities for God instead of against him. His leadership and motivational skills were turned to build the church, the body of Christ, instead of tearing it down. Of course, God chose him to serve in this capacity. As stewards, God gives gifts, talents, and abilities that we can misuse to tear down the church or use in God’s service to build up the body of Christ in unity. Like Paul, we know that only the Spirit working through the Word of God can direct us in proper use of gifts and talents that God has given. May we always be open to hearing God’s call to use our gifts to extend his church.

Luke 7:11-17

It’s hard to imagine a sadder scene. A widow plods to the cemetery to bury her only child, a young man. Jesus gave him back to her. There is no happier scene than the Lord of life busting out of Joseph’s grave, conquering death, and opening up heaven. Filled with awe, may we spread the life-changing message that the Prophet has come to help his people. How dare we fritter away the lifetime our Lord gives us?

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.

**Pentecost 4**

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

So much, so much, so much! God has showered us with so much. Yet we whine and even covet what we don’t have. What ungrateful creatures given that we have the greatest gift from God—his pardon for our sins straight from his mouth: “The Lord has taken away your sin.” Have you heard the shout from the cross today: “It is finished”? God has another gift on the other side of the grave waiting for us. We will not die, but live in that setting, by God’s pure grace.

Galatians 2:11-21

How could those two great Christian leaders, Peter and Paul, not work together? How often do we not act in line with the truth of the gospel? Our time, our checkbook, our activities do not always show we have been crucified with Christ. We have been justified by faith in Christ. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us. He loved us and gave himself for us. Our life of faith now demonstrates peace with God, harmony with others, service to our Lord. Lord, let it happen!

Luke 7:36-50

What motivates you to bring your gifts to the Lord? For the woman in today’s reading, the motivation was forgiveness. Of all the gifts God gives to us, forgiveness in Jesus Christ is the most precious. No gift we could give back to God for what he did through his Son Jesus Christ could ever balance the debt we owe for what our Lord accomplished for us on the cross. Yet Jesus says in today’s reading that the debt we owe has been canceled. That means that we do not give out of obligation but as an act of worship and thanks to God.

Psalm 32

In this psalm, David repeatedly highlights the joy we find in knowing Christ’s forgiveness and the protection he offers to us. This is so contrary to our instincts of how to take care of ourselves; we assume that by possessing more we’ll find greater flexibility and freedom. But David emphasizes that it is the Lord who preserves us from trouble while the sorrows of the wicked are many. Let us all remember this when considering how best to use our gifts in the Lord’s service.

**Pentecost 5**

Zechariah 13:7-9

As the one-third of the sheep who are faithful to the true God, we expect to be tested and refined by our service to God, Zechariah warned. We need to be ready day and night to give answer of our faith in the one true God. The day God will call us to account is unknown. Until the accounting is required, let us be about the work of our God. Do not be put off by roadblocks, challenges, or even failure. God uses these to refine our faith.

Galatians 3:23-29

What are you wearing right now? Are you wearing the garment of salvation Christ dressed you in at baptism? You are a part of his family through faith in him. God’s law doesn’t drive us. God’s law guides us. God’s love in Christ is offered to all: Jew, Greek, German, you name it. Debt or debt-free does not matter. Rich or poor doesn’t count. Male or female is immaterial. When you belong to Christ Jesus you wear your faith. You are justified by faith. Show that by dressing in love.

Luke 9:18-24

To deny one’s self is not easy. Pushing aside our sinful nature is difficult. The plots of many movies and TV shows reflect the old visual effect used in cartoons: the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other, both whispering into the ear of the subject—one suggesting good behavior, the other suggesting evil. As stewards, that selfishness comes to the surface much too often. Self comes first; God gets the leftovers. Much more time and money is spent on self rather than for God. As an individual I am so convicted by such statements that my reaction is to rise up to defend my choices, my rights. God says, “Leave self behind for once. Act like the steward of the Master’s property that you are. Be a servant to the Master’s plan for all that he gives into your care. Shoulder his burden, if you can.” And there’s a promise in there, for even if we use up our whole life in service to the Lord, he will give us a new one that we’ll never use up.

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. But 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.

**Pentecost 6**

1 Kings 19:14-21

Elijah was very zealous. Everyone else had lost the faith. He was the lone ranger of Israel—so he thought. God told him, “Guess again. Seven thousand have not gone to Baal.” God calls on us to get up and get with the program in the invisible church and in that visible place where we hear the Word and gather with the faithful. May he inspire us to build his kingdom. May he keep us from seeing ourselves as the battered remnant. May he change hearts through our efforts!

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

So often churches and pastors take God’s Old Testament command to the Israelites concerning tithing and use it to bind the consciences of God’s New Testament people. They do it because it works—people give. But it doesn’t really work if people are giving grudgingly and dutifully rather than joyfully and worshipfully. They give as ones who have been burdened with a yoke of slavery. May we remember that we are freed by Christ who has fulfilled all those Old Testament laws for us. How shall we use such freedom in the area of stewardship? As we live by the Spirit, we will freely, joyfully, and worshipfully use our wealth to serve God and one another in love.

Luke 9:51-62

Corporations today often run what is known as a cost-benefit analysis. Before spending millions of dollars the company wants to know what real benefits will result. If the ultimate benefits to the company don’t outweigh the expenses, the project is killed. Most of us, at least subconsciously, do a cost-benefit analysis of our giving. To give time, energy, and money to church costs us something personal. If all we do is weigh the physical evidence, we will concentrate too much on what we are giving up. However, our relationship to the Lord is spiritual. If we look with spiritual eyes, we will see that the rewards of being part of God’s kingdom far outweigh the earthly cost.

Psalm 62

If only I had . . . What do you want—riches, honor, security? Don’t look for those in anything tangible. Rest in God alone. Talk about a Rock, a Fortress, a Refuge! Look for what matters most in this life and the next: a God who saved you; an unshakeable future that can never perish, spoil, or fade; riches that don’t wear out—for eternity. Trust in him at all times, for he alone is our Rock and Salvation.