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.*

**Easter 4**

Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

In the early days of the spread of Christianity, challenges were much the same as they are today. As the number of disciples rapidly increased, the variety of backgrounds brought together in faith also increased. Each new disciple brought a new set of expectations. In the Epistle reading for this fourth Sunday of Easter, we find a model that churches today can follow in order to clarify expectations of the wonderfully diverse people who have come to faith. Here in Acts 6 the presenting problem is that there are not enough volunteer leaders to handle all of the expectations of ministry. The answers? A need uncovered, a job description created (assist in the “daily distribution of food” to the widows), qualifications set (“full of the Spirit and wisdom”), the number of volunteer leaders needed determined (seven men), consensus reached (“this proposal pleased the whole group”), recruitment accomplished, and installation conducted (the apostles “prayed and laid their hands on them”). Results? “The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” Where can you apply yourself in volunteer leadership in our congregation?

1 Peter 2:19-25

Who are you committed to and why? Has God called us to live for ourselves, to get ahead in this life at any cost to us or the people around us? Is that being a faithful steward of the gift of faith? Jesus, who was completely innocent, took on our guilt and through his atoning work we are healed and no longer adrift in this world. Remain committed to him and his goal for your life.

John 10:1-10

Are we able to put a price on the life Jesus has enabled us to have by way of his death and resurrection? He has given us such a life with one of the outcomes being we want to share this life with others. There are many entities, some using the name of Jesus, trying to get into our wallet. It is easy to understand how people like us can become wary of the money talk that takes place inside and outside of the church. A way to help us be faithful and wise managers of our God-given resources is to make sure what we are supporting is going to promote the gospel in its truth and purity. Continue to listen for the voice of our Savior as he speaks to us through the Scriptures. Continue to support efforts to have his voice in the ears of many.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Hebrews 13:20-21

The Good Shepherd, Jesus, provides us with everything we need to serve him. He gives us the reason to serve, the ability to serve, the resources to serve, and the opportunity to serve.

**Easter 5**

Acts 17:1-12

Have you shared the faith with anyone lately? If so, what kind of reaction did you receive? In order to be ready for your next witness opportunity, continue to be a faithful steward with the Word yourself. Dig into God’s truths, apply them to yourself, and then with the confidence God provides, share that knowledge with the goal of leading someone to Jesus.

1 Peter 2:4-10

In his book *Everyone a Minister*, Oscar Feucht wrote, “The task before the churches today is a task of ‘reorchestration.’ There is a new musical score before the churches. And every member has his own instrument to play in God’s symphony. It is not a new melody. The musical score was given by our Lord at his ascension (Acts 1:8-9).” Although this book was published more than 20 years ago, the message continues to be timely and clear. As we look at the Epistle lesson for this fifth Sunday of Easter, another old, but timely message is shared: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.” We are each uniquely blessed and gifted people of God with our own set of talents and abilities. As in an orchestra, we might all have a different instrument to play, but we are playing the same melody—proclaiming the gospel message of the risen Christ.

John 14:1-12

You know the way to heaven! How many people in this world are able to say that with the same confidence you are able to say it? Is there anything you can do to help people come to the same confidence? You can pray. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the opportunities and needs. Ask him to bless the financial means you and fellow members give for the support of the mission work that is being done so people can share our confidence in the risen Lord.

Psalm 33

The earth certainly is full of the goodness of the Lord since by his word he made the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. What a display of power! That power gives us every reason and confidence to trust him to provide for us. And what is more, since his plans and purposes are the best, we can take him at his word and trust him to provide all we need. We can do so with confidence since the track record of his unfailing love is impeccable. Knowing this gives us every reason to give him our very best.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

1 Kings 18:16-45

The Lord shows his power in your life. The Lord is the one true God. He powerfully proved it by sending his Son, who died and rose from the grave. This same Lord is the God whom you serve.

**Easter 6**

Acts 17:22-31

Don’t know what to say as a lead-in to a conversation about God? Look around you and use what you see as a discussion starter. Ask the person where they think “that” came from or why does “this” happen. God has put before you one conversation starter after another. Use your time to observe what all could be used to share him who is at the heart of your faith.

1 Peter 3:15-22

Sometimes someone will say, “If I must suffer, I’m going to be sure to do something to deserve it.” Peter states the opposite is true, that it is better to suffer for doing good. We should never forget the price Christ paid for our salvation, having done nothing but good and yet he suffered the horror of death on the cross for our sins. This was the suffering that wedeserve. In our mortal lives we will never be without sin, yet when we stand before God on Judgment Day he will only see that his perfect Son paid our penalty. In thanks for this, and for all the earthly blessings he has given us, we joyfully seek to use everything we have and everything we are to show his love to others near and far who don’t know Jesus.

John 14:15-21

Love for Jesus cannot help but act. We are moved by his love to make the most of the time, talents, and financial resources given to us. To aid us in our actions of love, the Lord does not leave us to ourselves; the Holy Spirit is working in and through us. How do you see yourself at this time in your life evaluating and then putting into practice the various gifts God has given to you not just for your personal interests but also in the interests of others? Because he lives, we too shall live. God help us expand who is included in the “we too shall live” category.

Psalm 66

“Come!” is the invitation that goes out to God’s people. Come and listen to what God has done for us and for our salvation. Come and praise the Lord of our salvation. Let everything we do in life—our words, our actions, our offerings, our service—praise the God who saves.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Genesis 4:1-16

You bring your firstfruits as an offering to the Lord, as Abel did—a generous proportion of what the Lord has given to you. The unbelieving world will not understand what you are doing, and they may even ridicule you for doing it. Yet you know the Lord and how he has blessed you. You honor him with your gifts.

**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!

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

Colossians 3:1-4

Set your hearts on things above. That is where your Savior is. Rejoice in his salvation. Fill your life with service to your risen and ascended Lord. Serving him is the priority in your heart and life.

**Easter 7**

Acts 1:1-14

What would Theophilus do with the news of the risen Christ? What did Jesus’ disciples do after their risen Savior had soared behind the clouds? Their Savior gave specific directions: “You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.” Don’t spend your days “looking into the sky” dreaming. Don’t fritter away your life. Jesus will return. What will you do with your life, Christian, before he comes?

1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11

Rejoice in suffering? It’s not something we normally choose! Jesus chose to do his Father’s will and suffer and die for our sins. Our suffering may be due to the sinful world, but the opportunityto suffer in the name of Christ is certainly a gift from God. As with all of his gifts, we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts so we can see how we can use our suffering to serve and glorify God. It may be that by humbly remaining firm in our faith through our trials we will lead someone else to the Lord. We know that after our trials God will restore and strengthen us, and at that time we will be able to share our experience and respond out of thanks to serve others who are suffering. There is nothing God gives that we can’t use to help others.

John 17:1-11a

Knowing the Father and his Son constitutes eternal life. Following the Father and the Son is Christian living. As Jesus lifted up prayers to his Father, we lift up prayers and our lives to the Father. We do not belong to the world; we belong to our God. He has created us, bought us, and made us his own. Our lives of faith reflect that.

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.

*Christian Worship: Supplement*

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

We believe; therefore we speak. We speak with our own mouths. We support pastors who speak in our communities. We support missionaries who speak in different parts of the world. Through our speaking, many more will come to thank God for the grace they have received.

**Pentecost**

Joel 2:28-29

Tongues of fire were visible. The sound of rushing wind filled the room. Joel came to mind. Joel was fulfilled! God poured out his Spirit. What a thrill it will be to see other servants of God, men and women, with us in heaven. Because of the spread of God’s Word, hearts are changed, and heaven is opened. We may not all speak the same language while on earth, but we will sing to the Savior together in heaven. Spread God’s Word. Support the spread of God’s Word.

Acts 2:1-21

The events of Pentecost remind us of the global mission of the church. The ending verses of our reading remind us not only of the geographical spread of the gospel, but the proclamation of the gospel over time. Each one of us is part of that mission. Locally or globally, now or in the future, we serve God and support the church’s mission with our resources. Truly the Spirit works the miracle of faith, but faith is not sustained and nourished outside of the Word of God. The proclamation of the Word happens through the physical presence of people who give of themselves in service to the church. God’s stewards recognize that all that they have and are results from what he has done. As his modern disciples and stewards, we, too, want to use our resources to make the proclamation of the gospel a priority.

John 16:5-11

The Counselor gives Christians a whole new perspective on life. Enlightened by his grace, we observe a world convicted of guilt. By the Spirit of God, we are transformed to live righteous and thankful lives. Grief does not fill the hearts of the people of God. Joy, praise, and thanks fill us—and lead us to respond to the Spirit’s gifts.

Psalm 51b

What would you think if someone gave you a gift, only to discover that the gift was broken? You may wonder, “What’s wrong with this person? That is not the kind of gift I want to receive.” King David understood, though, that “a broken spirit” and “a broken and contrite heart” are the only kind of gift that God will accept. Indeed, it’s the only kind of gift that we can give. We are broken. We are sinners. David’s actions with Bathsheba and her husband (the setting for this psalm) show just how deep the sinfulness goes. Yet God does not cast us away into the junk heap where broken things belong. No, he cleanses us, gives us a new heart, a new spirit, and restores us by his salvation. Bring your broken selves. Bring your imperfect gifts. By his grace and through Christ who brings our salvation, he will not despise them, but is pleased to accept them.

**Holy Trinity**

Genesis 1:1-2:3

What a magnificent world we live in. It is “very good.” How easy it is to get swept away with the beauty of creation. We might fail to thank and praise our wise and amazing Triune God. The Creator doesn’t demand our thanks. His masterpiece and amazing salvation certainly deserve our honor, glory, and praise. Generous offerings are one tiny fraction of the thanks we give.

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

The divine mystery of the Trinity constantly calls for our attention. We cannot comprehend the marvelous three-in-one nature of God, nor should we expect to. How can mere mortals understand the love and peace of God? We simply believe what our God has done for us. We respond to the grace and love and let that rule and dominate us. We live in holy fellowship with the people of God.

Matthew 28:16-20

When Jesus sent his disciples into the world to make disciples of others, he was speaking to us also. We can never forget that this is what he wants us to do. All the earthly blessings our heavenly Father has entrusted to us are to be used toward this goal. The money we spend in our daily living should be spent in ways that glorify him as much as the money we give in our regular offerings. The way we speak and act and treat others Monday through Saturday should reflect Christ’s love as much as our Sunday worship. The disciples had walked with Jesus and seen him dead, buried, and alive again. They were ready to obey him, to receive the Holy Spirit, and teach others everything about him. Have we been blessed any less than they were blessed? Can we do any less?

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**

Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

How did you learn about Christian stewardship? The giving pattern you have was established through some understanding of expectation. Your giving, hopefully, is gospel-driven, meaning it is a response to God of giving back to him a portion of your resources because of the blessings of faith and life he has given to you. How do we pass on the lessons of giving to our children? Mostly by example. What they see is what they learn. According to our reading today, we are to be intentional in what we teach our children about living the Christian life. Our examples should be instructive. And the results can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the lessons taught and learned. May we, as God’s stewards, take care to teach our children the lessons of faithful stewardship.

Romans 3:21-25a, 27, 28

There is no difference. We are all wretches damned to hell. Christ Jesus made the great difference. He became that sacrifice of atonement. We are okay in the eyes of the Father completely through the work of the Son. Want to brag about that? Don’t! The Spirit of God changes our hearts. As Luther famously noted for the people of his day “faith alone justifies.” Lives of faith bear that out.

Matthew 7:15-29

Calling out “Lord, Lord,” driving out demons, and performing miracles does not give you a ticket to heaven. Neither does giving an offering open heaven. Jesus and his Word give you heaven. Those who do the will of God bear good fruit. They build their house on the rock. They will hold on to God’s Word. They offer God honest thanks.

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, an inheritance that supports them as their lives continue on. 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 shall 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.

**Pentecost 3**

Hosea 5:15-6:6

Hosea lived and prophesied during the final years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Hosea reminded the people of God’s faithfulness that is as sure as the rising of the sun and the coming of the winter and spring rains. Truly God is good and his mercy endures forever. As God said in Genesis 8:22, “As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” We still live under this promise of God, and life experiences affirm that God keeps his Word and provides for all our needs, even when we are inclined to forget him and go our own way. God’s faithful provision for all our physical needs and especially his rich provision for all our spiritual needs in Christ Jesus serve as encouragement for our response of faithful stewardship of all of life for his purposes.

Romans 4:18-25

God credits as righteousness our faith. He does not credit our acts of love, our offerings, or our kindness. Those are fruits of faith. The fruits of faith come in response to the one who was delivered to death for us. His resurrection is our justification. He did what he promised. May we abound in bringing glory to our King.

Matthew 9:9-13

It sounds so simple. Jesus said, “Follow me,” and “Matthew got up and followed him.” As a tax collector, job and money meant a lot to Matthew. But when confronted with the choice of keeping his job with its good income or following Jesus with his gospel of forgiveness and life, Matthew left behind all that had been dear to him. Following Jesus means our Savior, not our money, is our priceless treasure. Keep it that simple.

Psalm 119c

Why do people invest their money? They hope to enjoy greater returns in the future. The more you put in, the greater the potential return. The same is true with the time that we invest with the Word of God. “I meditate on it all day long.” What kind of returns would you guess such a person receives from centering a life around God and what he says? They bring a sweetness and satisfaction that surpass all the sweetness of the world. Time is a precious commodity. Spend it wisely with the Word.