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 Years C and 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.*

**Last Judgment**

Jeremiah 26:1-6

It is not popular to declare the truth. One gains popularity by telling people what they want to hear. Jeremiah was sent to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. God told him, “Tell them everything I commanded you; do not omit a word.” Does this remind you of Jesus’ command to us in Matthew 28? “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Pastors and teachers are not to omit a word of God’s Word to their flocks and neighbors. Fathers and mothers are to instruct their children in every word of God. We are all to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have. Yes, there are hard sections of God’s Word, but we learn every word, we hang onto every word, and we proclaim every word.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

How do you spell relief? J-E-S-U-S. Jesus spells relief. He brings relief from the suffering that we experience because we are Christians. He is coming with his blazing angels to judge the world. God is just and his judgment is right. Make no mistake. Jesus will punish all who do not know God or obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be shut out from the presence of God forever in everlasting destruction. Your sins, however, were paid for, in full, by Jesus. You are counted worthy of the kingdom of God through faith. Encouraged that Jesus is in control, we persevere amidst persecution certain that he will bring relief. Confident that we are judged worthy of the kingdom of God, we live for Jesus.

Luke 19:11-27

We often look down upon the one servant who buried his mina (talent), but legally this was his minimum responsibility. It was perfectly permissible to do it. However, he did not do what he knew his master expected. As the church year draws to a close, we focus on Christ’s second coming. We all know what to expect. Scripture is clear. Are we operating according to minimum responsibility or the Master’s expectations? How are we managing our investments in the one sure thing, the church? Are we making the most of every opportunity we have to hear and learn God’s Word, attend the Sacrament of the Altar, and be in touch with our Lord? Just as we can lose our worldly wealth if we are careless in our money management, so we can also lose our spiritual wealth if we detach ourselves from Word and sacrament. As the single earthly agency through which people enter God’s kingdom, the church cannot bury the gospel. But to proclaim it boldly takes people. To prepare and sustain people to go into the world takes effort, selective and proper use of talents and abilities, funding for the physical support of those efforts and time to do the work. We know what the Master expects. Let’s do it.

Psalm 90

Moses keeps us mindful of the shortness and frailty of this present life. As the Lord’s stewards, we pray for hearts of wisdom that cling to faith in Jesus, our Savior, so that we can use the time of our pilgrimage on earth to serve him with joyful hearts.

**Saints Triumphant**

Isaiah 65:17-25

Isaiah paints a picture of the glories, blessings, and bliss of heaven that all of us will one day enjoy. As we move through life we always need to keep our eyes on this prize. Even though we live in the “church militant” we know one day we will live in the “church triumphant.” May our offerings reveal people who are absolutely confident that we are saints triumphant even now during our lives on this earth. Despite what the devil suggests, we are saints who are headed for heaven.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

Are you discouraged when you see the direction in which the world is headed? The news every night reports so much evil and so little good. As Christians, we know that this world will only get more and more evil as the last day approaches. We could easily get discouraged and give up. Turn your thoughts to Christ. He chose you through the work of the Holy Spirit. He called you to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ gives us hope. He is our encourager. But what do we do while we wait for him to take us to glory? We rejoice in our Savior. We remain steadfast in the faith. We pray that the message of our Lord spreads rapidly and is honored. We pray for protection from evil men. We look to God’s love and Christ’s perseverance and are confident in our Lord.

Luke 20:27-38

It is never a good idea to try to make God look foolish. That is what the Sadducees were trying to do. They wanted to make Jesus look foolish because they didn’t believe in the resurrection from the dead. So is there life after death? And what does it mean for us? Jesus did what we need to do when someone questions the resurrection. He went to Scripture: “Even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.” Is there life after death? Yes. That means that the most important relationship that we have is with our God—yes, even more important than your relationship with your spouse. In heaven earthly relationships will cease and we will all be children of God. Loved by the Father, redeemed by Christ, restored through the work of the Holy Spirit, and delivered from death by God, we live for him right now and will live with him in eternity.

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.

**Christ the King**

Jeremiah 23:2-6

“And this is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.” What a name that is! The Lord is our righteousness. We are not our righteousness. We have none. There is nothing good in us, nothing that would make God love us or bind him to us. He owes us nothing. We are beggars, debtors. All we have to offer is sin and death. The Lord is our righteousness. Jesus is our righteousness. Jesus was made our sin, though he was sinless, so that in him, baptized into his death and his life, we might become the righteousness of God. God deals with us through his Son. When the Father looks at us, clothed in our baptism, covered with his Son, cleansed by his blood, all he sees is righteousness. “The Lord is our righteousness” isn’t an excuse to do whatever we please. That’s the name we bear in the world. “The Lord is our righteousness” has been etched on our foreheads and our hearts. We are the Lord’s people, his chosen and holy people, sheep who show off their Good Shepherd’s righteousness to family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors.

Colossians 1:13-20

An interesting teaching of the Bible is that Christ is the King. He is the King of the world, the church, and heaven. When we bring our offerings to church we are acknowledging that Jesus is the King of the world. He is to get all the credit that we are able to have money to share with his church. He is the King of the church on earth and we want to use our money to finance his church. He is the King of heaven. Since we are absolutely confident we are going to live forever with him, we want to make sure that what we leave behind is also used for the forward advancement of his kingdom.

Luke 23:35-43

Worship the King! The man who wore a crown of thorns is wearing a crown of glory now. Notice the people, the rulers, and the soldiers mocking Jesus. Still today many mock Jesus by their words, with their actions, and in their lives. Few recognize the glory of Christ. But some do—one of the thieves recognized the glory of Christ. He knew that Jesus had saved others and he saw hope there. He recognized that Jesus had done nothing wrong. He looked to Jesus as his Savior. Instead of mocking Jesus like everyone else, he defends Jesus and pleads for mercy. Worship the King! No longer was the thief’s life a mockery of the King of kings. Now he lived for him who promised: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” It is that promise, “Today you will be with me in paradise,” that gives up hope and motivates us to worship our King with our words, our actions, our wealth, and our lives. No sin is too great for our King to bear. No trouble is too severe for him to overcome. Our perfect King defeated our enemies through his death and resurrection and gives us paradise.

Psalm 98

By our Lord’s gracious coming into the world he destroyed death and made all things new. This motivates us to never tire of proclaiming his salvation to the ends of the earth, but instead to always “sing” and “shout” his praises in the way we use our treasures, our time, and our talents. Proper Christian stewardship will always be a direct result of recognizing just how much our Lord has done for us.

**Thanksgiving**

Luke 17:11-19

Ten lepers are healed, but only one comes back to say thank you to Jesus. Sadly, isn’t that still the norm today with us, as we so easily forget to thank our Lord for all he has done for us? Thankfully, we have a national day of Thanksgiving to remind us of our forgetfulness. As we grow in our understanding of God’s blessings, we’ll also understand that Christian stewardship is simply our way of saying thank you to God. What we give to him serves as an acknowledgment of all that he has given to us. It’s the Christian thing to do.

**Advent 1**

Isaiah 2:1-5

Now is the day of salvation; it may soon be over! Purchased by the blood of Christ, salvation is available for all. Do you have a sense of urgency in bringing people to Jesus? Too often we just go through our lives as if we have all the time in the world. We might think of family or friends—they’ll come around eventually. Time is running short. The world’s time is running out. They might not have the time that “eventually” requires. Get the Word out! Proclaim peace through Jesus!

Romans 13:11-14

Most of us who consider ourselves faithful Christians would not want to admit that we spend much time thinking about gratifying the desires of the sinful nature, and certainly not in orgies and debauchery. However, most of us waste time and energy trying to figure out how to do or buy things that aren’t important or even good for us. God has blessed us with our lives and possessions, and most importantly, salvation through the death and resurrection of his Son. If we ask him, he will also give us discipline in our thoughts. Through his Word, through prayer, and through worship and Christian fellowship, we will be able to center our thoughts on God. He will strengthen us to spend our time glorifying and serving him by serving others with our time, money, and possessions.

Matthew 24:37-44

We’ve all experienced that sinking feeling of being unprepared. Once again we failed to use our time wisely. That’s bad enough with earthly matters, but it’s eternally tragic with spiritual matters. Let’s never be unprepared for Christ’s return! And by God’s grace through faith in Jesus we aren’t. As faith-filled Christians we’re ready and we maintain that spiritual readiness as we spend our time in Word and sacrament. We’re also equipped by Word and sacrament to assist others in being ready for Christ. Through the words we speak to others about Jesus and our support of God’s kingdom work we do just that.

Psalm 18

Our God is the mighty Rock of salvation who blesses us with the strength of faith to cling to him in every trouble. Armed with his strong Word, we are preserved from every assault of Satan and his evil forces. With such divine protection, we are free to serve him as his children and motivated to give him our best—our very lives—as a thank offering for keeping us safe at his “right hand.”

**Advent 2**

Isaiah 11:1-10

It’s refreshing when someone delivers on what they’ve promised to you, refreshing because we struggle with unfulfilled promises every day in this sinful world. Here’s one of the many promises that our Savior God has fulfilled in you. He has brought you into his Church through the work of his Son, the Branch from Jesse’s stump. And in that Church you enjoy the peace of forgiveness and a loving relationship with the holy God. How many others are there in our world that still need to be brought into his Church by faith in Jesus? That’s our mission. May the Lord richly bless your efforts in carrying out and supporting that work!

Romans 15:4-13

Everyone needs some encouragement sometimes. This earthly life can be very hard to endure. God has given us his Word to strengthen us. It teaches of his love, so great that he sent his Son to withstand all the temptations and hardships of our human life, to die for our sins on the cross, and to be raised in victory over sin and death on Easter morning. It tells of Christ’s suffering, and of his compassion for human suffering. When we go through times of trial, our fellow Christians encourage us, lift us up in prayer, and walk with us as Christ’s representatives on earth. After we have endured our trial, we respond by praising God and by giving of ourselves in any way we are able, serving him by using the time, talent, and treasure with which he has blessed us.

Matthew 3:1-12

We don’t relish deadlines, but they do push us into action. John reminds us that the end is near, the deadline for all people and all things. The wisest use of our time is to give Jesus what he calls for: repentance, which is true sorrow for our sins and trust in Jesus for our forgiveness. With that kind of daily preparation, we’re ready for his deadline.

Psalm 130

Waiting for someone to arrive or for something to happen can seem like an incredible waste of time. And 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.

**Advent 3**

Isaiah 35:1-10

Distractions while driving a vehicle can be dangerous, even fatal. The Lord reminds us that, as his redeemed people, we’re traveling on the highway of glory to eternal life with him. At this time of year especially, there are plenty of deadly distractions. Keep your focus on Christ, your coming King and Savior!

James 5:7-11

Patience and timing: two valuable commodities in the agricultural communities of the world. The city dweller who visits a Midwest rural area in mid-October may ask the farmer, “Why have you not harvested your corn?” not realizing that the fields are filled with feed corn, rather than the corn that we eat. The farmer needs to be an excellent manager, knowing the exact moment of readiness for his crop to be harvested; being ready with the equipment needed to accomplish the tasks like cultivating, planting, harvesting, hiring, or recruiting help from others when needed; watching and waiting. In this hurry-up world, we have difficulty with watching and waiting patiently. We tend to grumble and complain, become impatient with our circumstances and with one another. During this Advent season we are watching and waiting for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, our Savior. And we are reminded of our need for watching and waiting for Christ’s second coming and the time of judgment. Like the farmer, we need to be excellent managers of resources and time, always ready, always equipped with the tools of faith and love, always ready to bring others to faith with us.

Matthew 11:2-11

There are times in every Christian’s life when he or she concludes that our God isn’t doing things the way we expected. We’d like him to agree that our way is better. So what’s a Christian to do? Read his Word and let him remind you of who he is. He is the compassionate and gracious God who shows his love and mercy to sinners. And he calls us to share that great and saving news with our world! What a golden opportunity we have to do that in this season! May our mouths and lives be filled with that good news! Consider ways in which you can support those who share that good news worldwide on your behalf.

Psalm 146

As the nameless rich man demonstrates in today’s Gospel reading, material wealth does not promote generosity. Even the dogs paid more attention to Lazarus than he did. Psalm 146 reinforces where the poor person’s help comes from—not from mortal princes, but from the Maker of heaven and earth. His usual means of providing such help is his people. He gives us wealth so that we might use it for others. More importantly, he gives us hearts that care about others. In this way he allows us to join him in his work: “The LORD gives . . . the LORD loves . . . the LORD watches over”—and so much of that he does through us.

**Advent 4**

Isaiah 7:10-14

When our God wants to give us something, it’s the height of sinful arrogance to deny it. But in this case, God graciously gave Ahaz a sign anyway—the greatest of signs—the sign of the virgin birth of the Savior. What a saving wonder! And now he wants to give you his grace to prepare your heart for his coming. Get as much of the grace as you can! Make use of the added opportunities in these last weeks of the month to hear his Word and commune with your fellow Christians! Encourage others to join you in hearing the sweetest news ever: the birth of the Savior. And reflect on how God’s gift to us inspires our gifts to him.

Romans 1:1-17

How well we know that God’s plans are not our plans. How well Paul knew that. He had planned to come to Rome many times without being able to carry out the plan. Surely he did not imagine that when he finally could make the visit, it would be as a prisoner. Yet God enabled him to bring the gospel to more people than he might ever have reached had he pushed forward with his own plans. When we plan the day or the future, we employ time, resources, and talents that God has given us. As we plan, we seek guidance in prayer that our plans will serve God’s purposes, and then trust him to carry out his will through us.

Matthew 1:18-25

Stewardship involves trust—taking God at his word. God called for that trust in asking for firstfruit offerings from his people. He also asked for it from Joseph, the husband of Mary. This wasn’t the way Joseph would have wanted to start his marriage, but he trusted the Lord to bless him as he did what the Lord asked.

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 that “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!

**Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 9:2-7

“To us a child is born.” That’s the very heart of the gospel—that God sent his Son into this world as a baby boy to be our Savior. We have heard that good news and we believe it. Now, what will we do with that good news? God help us share it!

Titus 2:11-14

On this Christmas Eve night when “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light,” we focus on the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior. We have vital choices in life—to grow toward the “light” or the “darkness,” toward “ungodliness and worldly passions” or “self-controlled, upright and godly lives.” We strive toward the example that Jesus gave us, lived for us, died for us—of faith, hope, and love, “eager to do what is good.” As managers of our life choices and all the concerns and resources of our lives, we strive toward wellness and balance of body, mind, and spirit. “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” The “blessed hope” of this free grace is a gift given to us—the blessings and benefits of which we must share with all men so that they will know Jesus and his unconditional love. As stewards also of the gospel message, there is no time like the present to share this best of news!

Luke 2:1-20

If the baby Jesus was the first Christmas gift, then the second would have to be the glorious news the angels told the shepherds, that a Savior had been born. Once they had seen and worshiped him, opened the gift, did they hide it, hoard it, and keep it to themselves until the newness wore off? No, they spread the Word to everyone. We have received the same Good News: Christ the Savior, God’s Son, came to earth as a baby and lived among us without sinning. He died on the cross as the spotless Sacrificial Lamb for our sins and rose from the grave on the third day to defeat sin and death. We can no more keep it to ourselves than the shepherds could. We have to share the Good News in everything we do and use every word we say to bring the unsaved to Christ.

Psalm 96

There are two activities that are inseparably linked to our celebration of our Savior’s birth—joyful words and songs of praise, and the giving of gifts. Don’t take those two activities for granted! Let this psalm remind you of the manifold ways and reasons for praising your Savior-God, and then “bring an offering and come into his courts.” His Gift to us at Christmas inspires our gifts to him all year long.

**Christmas Day**

Isaiah 52:7-10

When I think of beautiful parts of the body, I don’t think of feet. But these feet mentioned by the prophet aren’t beautiful because of their appearance; they are beautiful because of their purpose—bringing the Good News. God has blessed us with everything we are and everything we have. Some of these things may not seem especially beautiful to us until we acknowledge that they are undeserved gifts from our Heavenly Father. By the power of the Holy Spirit, our response should be to use everything, our humble possessions and homely qualities, as well as those that seem more attractive and presentable, to glorify our Creator and display to others the love of Jesus. His death on the cross was certainly not beautiful to see or experience, but it was beautiful because of its purpose—to redeem us from our sin.

Hebrews 1:1-9

Christmas means we don’t have to wonder who God is, what he says, or what he does. Because of Christmas we have God in human flesh. We belong to him and he belongs to us. Jesus is the greatest gift God could give us. What will you do with that gift?

John 1:1-14

These first words of John’s gospel reveal to us that we are celebrating more than the birthday of a little baby who was born in Bethlehem. We are celebrating the visible entrance of God’s Son into our sinful world and personal lives. We are celebrating the entrance of the one who also gets the credit for the creation of the world, for the light of salvation that has been turned on in our lives, for our adoption as children of God. This morning’s message gives us all the motivation we will ever need to join the wise men in bringing gifts to our Savior’s church. Our gifts are turned into gospel action in our local congregation and through our worldwide church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Psalm 98

By our Lord’s gracious coming into the world he destroyed death and made all things new. This motivates us to never tire of proclaiming his salvation to the ends of the earth, but instead to always “sing” and “shout” his praises in the way we use our treasures, our time, and our talents. Proper Christian stewardship will always be a direct result of recognizing just how much our Lord has done for us.

**New Year’s Eve**

Isaiah 51:1-6

As we look back on the year nearly past and look forward to the next, we may have our doubts and concerns to say the least. It may be more accurate to say that we’re filled with fear. But recall the God of your salvation. He took an unlikely couple (Abraham and Sarah), and produced a great nation through whom he sent the Savior. His promises are rock-solid and divinely sure. His Word cannot fail. May his Word of love in Christ erase your fears and empower you with hope as you commit your life to him.

1 Peter 1:22-25

We are but blips on history’s monitor, and pausing on New Year’s Eve to consider that truth is helpful. We’ll pass away and soon be forgotten. So, what’s worthy of our time and attention? The living, eternal Word of our God. May love for our Savior cause us to evaluate our use of that Word in the past, confess our misuse of the Bible, and, assured of our forgiveness through Christ, boldly honor and cherish that Word in the future.

**New Year’s Day**

Numbers 6:22-27

It’s common for us to place our names on items we value. It’s a good way of marking them as belonging to us. At our baptisms, our God placed his name on us—Child of God. He did that to bless and save us, to grant us eternal life with him, and to fill us with eternal hope and joy. He also made us his own to glorify him with all that we are and have. May everything we say and do reflect the truth that we are his!

Philippians 2:9-13

Names are hugely important. That’s why large corporations dole out millions of dollars to get their names placed in large letters on highly visible places. But there’s no name that comes close to the importance of the name “Jesus.” It’s the only name by which we’re saved, the only name that guarantees us life with him in heaven. By God’s grace you know his saving name. He placed his name on you at your baptism. Each day of your life is an opportunity to honor his name by the way that you live and by what you do with what he’s given you.