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 2**

Genesis 28:10-17 (18-22)

Promises . . . How do we respond? God made promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. In a dream, God spoke to Jacob, “Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring . . . I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” In Genesis 28:18-22 we read about a promise from Jacob—in response to the loving promise of his Lord—that he will give back one tenth of what the Lord has given to him. God gives us all that we have and everything that we are and can be. Your time, talent, and treasure all come from God! Are you willing and able to give back proportionately to what God has given to you? Try it! You'll like it! Try it for a week, a month, a year, a lifetime!

Romans 5:1-11

Consider just how many daily functions depend on performing a task at precisely the right time. Swing the bat too soon and you have a strike instead of a home run. Take out the brownies too early and you have a gooey mess instead of a chewy treat. In this chapter of Romans, we see that our salvation is also a matter of careful timing: “At just the right time . . . Christ died for the ungodly.” But when is the right time to save a wretched sinner? Is it before we’ve had a chance to do too much harm? Is it once we’ve hit rock-bottom and have truly realized the depth of our sin? Is it once we’ve made a decision to turn away from wicked behavior and to live righteously? No! Paul writes that Christ died “when we were still powerless.” He writes that, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” We were not saved when we were good and ready. We were saved while we were still deep in the muck of iniquity. Let us all give thanks that we have a God who doesn’t wait for us to realize our own need before calling us to him.

Mark 8:31-38

Consider how many of our decisions we make by asking ourselves, “Is it worth it?” We might not realize how often our sinful nature asks the same question in response to Jesus’ invitation to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. On our own our answer would always be, “No, this suffering or this struggle or this sacrifice is not worth the cost!” Yet we are not our own! And neither is our life. Deny yourself. Endure present difficulties. Follow him. He has given us life! He has given us hope! He has given us the kingdom.

**Lent 3**

Exodus 20:1-17

How often does a review of God’s commands cause us to bow our head in shame? And 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 and encouragement 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.

**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 of 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.

**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 he 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.

**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.

**Maundy Thursday**

Exodus 12:1-14

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

**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 10 sons from whom he gave one to the world for its salvation. What motivates to such generous giving? It is love. Scripture says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” God’s love for us in turn creates a responsive love 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.”

**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!

**Easter**

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.

**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 of 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!

**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 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.

**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 and loving embrace. 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. But 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.”