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 A and B of the three-year series can be incorporated into sermons, bulletin inserts, newsletters, prayers, or devotions in the months of November and December. Each year a lesson is written for a different reading. All lessons available so far are included for each week.*

**Reformation**

Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23

Daniel, Luther, and we all have one thing in a common: faith in Jesus Christ. Thanks to our faith in Jesus we all face our “lion’s den” moments in life. For Daniel it is pretty evident that his confession of faith resulted in a life threatening situation that was resolved by the Lord’s angels. For Luther, his stand for the whole truth and nothing but the truth as found in Scriptures resulted in his life being put in danger. The Lord used his angels and a fellow Christian, a prince, to rescue him from the threats of death. For us, our lives may not be threatened, but the world we live in has no use for what we are all about as Christians. The Lord uses his angels and his Church’s use of Word and sacraments to give us strength to live in a sin-infested world doing battle with our Old Adam and the devil who daily suggests we not follow the examples of Luther and Daniel.

Galatians 5:1-6

We are free to give our best! In God’s kingdom there are no dues, no bills, and no loans to pay back to him. If we allow ourselves to be pressured or think that somehow by giving back to Jesus God will give us credit toward heaven, we alienate ourselves from Christ. Faith expresses itself in love—free love in response to the freedom Jesus won for us. No more slavery!

Matthew 10:16-23

Christ does not guarantee his followers an easy time as we carry out our mission for him. If we are serious about being his witnesses as the Spirit gives opportunity, we may indeed face opposition, and even persecution. This may even occur over the way in which we make use of the Lord’s resources. But as children of the Reformation, let us remain firm in our beliefs and not allow such opposition to sway us from putting God first in our lives and from using his blessings for the spread of his kingdom.

**Last Judgment**

Daniel 7:9-10

Can you imagine the almighty God sitting on his throne judging our every penny spent, our every moment used, and the use of our every talent? I can. All of us will stand before the Lord. I thank God that another one stood before the Lord and accepted the judgment that we deserved even though he spent every penny wisely, used every moment to his Father’s glory, and perfectly used his talents. He was judged “guilty” for us. He paid for our sin with his blood. Because of Christ, when the Book of Life is opened we will be judged “not guilty.” Now every penny spent, every moment we live, and every talent with which we are blessed is used to thank our Savior.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul writes about the second coming of our Lord. It will be sudden, without warning, and final, so we are to be alert and self-controlled as we wait and watch. This affects our use of God’s blessings as well. We don’t look to hoard and stash away as much as possible, as if we agree with the worldly motto, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Rather, as children of light, we use our time of grace to come to know our Savior and to put his blessings to work in reaching out to those still in darkness.

Matthew 25:31-46

What is the mark of the Christian? What evidence is there of the life of the Christian that lives on? It is in the legacy left behind. For the good steward, it is the evidence that there was giving, sharing, and service in life that resulted in the hungry being fed, the naked being clothed, and the thirsty being given water. It is not accidental that such a life also supports the proclamation of the gospel, so that many are fed on the bread of heaven and drink of the living water. These acts of goodness are not payments for sin, but are responses out of love for what God has done in Jesus Christ. They are not tickets to heaven, but evidences of the living faith that saved us. Those who have demonstrated that they were good stewards of resources as well as good stewards of the gospel are now honored for their sacrifices before the world by Jesus’ announcement and invitation.

**Saints Triumphant**
Isaiah 52:1-6
Isaiah’s words brought encouragement to the exiles of Judah in Babylon, providing assurances that would be fully realized only in Christ. Isaiah speaks to us about living in the Holy City forever, since “without money you will be redeemed.” Our redemption was purchased with our Savior’s blood, but it doesn’t cost us a thing. If our most precious possession comes to us free of charge, let us keep a proper perspective on the things of this world. Rather than letting our earthly blessings determine our worth in God’s sight, may we use them to his glory and for the spread of his kingdom!

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

“Ignorance is bliss.” Not really. People want to know about the future. Palm readers, horoscopes, fortune tellers will sell you a bag of lies. We know what happens after a believer dies. Jesus died and rose again. He has complete mastery over death. On the last day the bodies of the saints triumphant will rise and, together with the saints living at the end, will meet the Lord in the air. We will be with the Lord forever. This encourages us to live for Jesus.

Matthew 25:1-13

“Always faithful” say the Marines. “Here I am. Ask me,” says the Christian steward. As we survey the blessings of God in our lives, we can always find opportunities to be ready to use those blessings to fulfill God’s purposes. We can share our time, use our talents and abilities, and contribute money to extend God’s kingdom. Like the bridesmaids in our reading for today, we are to be prepared for whatever opportunities arise to use what we have for the Lord—ready whenever the Master calls.

**Christ the King**

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23-24

The King of kings is our Good Shepherd. He looks after us. He gathers us from the nations. He supplies all our needs. He provides rest for the weary, healing for the injured, and strength for the weak. With our Good Shepherd providing for our needs so generously, we humbly serve him.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Paul points to Jesus as God’s key man, not only in the lives of those who believe and follow him, but in God’s eternal plan for everything. By keeping our focus on Christ the King, we’ll recognize our role as his saved servants, eager to use the resources entrusted to us for the benefit of his kingdom.

Matthew 27:27-31

Jesus sure doesn’t look like a king in our gospel reading for today. He looks more like a person who has been beaten down, defeated, and soon will be dead. Praise the Lord that we believe in the prophecies of the Old Testament that clearly reveal this is the route Jesus had to travel to be the Lamb of God. Praise the Lord that Jesus successfully traveled this route so that we can live with the assurance that Jesus is Christ the King. He is the King of creation who permits us to enjoy every day. He is the King of the Church who has given us the privilege of being supporting members during our lives on earth. He is the King who will be sitting on the throne of judgment, welcoming us into heaven one day.

**Advent 1**

Isaiah 63:16b, 17, 64:1-8

The cry is “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,” but later there is the admission that even “our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” It’s a good thing the one who came down from heaven came to be our Savior! We know that he is coming again to take us home. What a wonderful thing it would be if, when he comes, he finds us as faithful stewards actively making use of his blessings in spreading his Word!

# 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

According to Paul, God has enriched us with all spiritual gifts; we lack none. “But I’m too shy to knock on doors!” “My friend is too busy with her large family to go to Bible study!” “My husband isn’t diplomatic enough to serve on a committee!” “Our budget won’t stretch to give any more than we already give!” We all can find excuses not to try new and different ways to serve our Lord and Savior, but God gave us everything we need to live our lives in service to him. We need to stop bowing down to excuses and bow down to him, to allow him to work in our lives. He sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins and rise again on Easter; he will strengthen us to use our gifts to bring others to him.

Mark 13:32-37

Be on guard! Be alert! Watch! Jesus is coming. He has entrusted us to manage his affairs until he returns. Therefore, until he returns, we serve him by being faithful with our assigned tasks. Serve Christ faithfully as a father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, employer or employee, teacher or student.

**Advent 2**

Isaiah 40:1-11

In his infinite love and mercy, our faithful God supplies the great gifts of our salvation: his saving Word that proclaims salvation and his messengers to proclaim that sure salvation to a world full of sinners. He entrusts that saving Word and its proclamation to us. Our stewardship of it and the opportunities he gives to support that kingdom work with the other blessings he bestows is our loving response to this saving grace and love.

2 Peter 3:8-14

You don’t have to be very old to remember when people had a lot less “stuff,” maybe only one car, one TV, no computers, a lot fewer appliances on the kitchen counter. We work hard, we are busy, and we have come to believe we need all these things to manage our hectic lives. There is nothing necessarily wrong with these things, but the Bible tells us that on the Last Day “the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” All our possessions and conveniences will be gone. If we acknowledge that all these blessings came from our heavenly Father, who loved us enough to provide the sacrificial Lamb for our sins—his own precious Son, and if we use them prayerfully and consciously to serve and glorify him, we won’t miss them when they’re gone. We will be with our risen Lord and Savior in our heavenly home, praising him eternally with gifts and talents we can’t begin to imagine.

Mark 1:1-8

There were those who came out into the desert to see what John the Baptist was all about. In doing so, they were exposed to the power of the God of their salvation. The law which John proclaimed crushed sinful hearts, and the gospel John proclaimed in the Word and through baptism pointed them towards the coming Savior. God’s power changed them. God’s power has changed us. And now we have the privilege of responding to his love and grace with who we are and what we have.

**Advent 3**

Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11

Salvation is the Lord’s attributing of Christ’s righteousness to all nations. His saving love flows to one and all. That righteousness comes to individual sinners through gospel proclamation. That’s our mission—to share his saving gospel with our world. Our synod enables us to participate in that worldwide work. That’s what our congregation mission offerings are all about—preparing workers and sending them out to proclaim the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Why should we be joyful, pray, and give thanks? Why should we bring our generous offerings to support the Church? Why should we worship and praise him? Why should we feed the hungry and support the poor? We do these things because they are God’s will and we need to obey him, but not out of fear. God wants us to obey him out of love, with humble and grateful hearts. He loved us before we were born. He provided a Savior before we sinned, his perfect Son who carried our sins on the cross and triumphed over death three days later. When we realize this, our hearts will overflow with thanks to him and we will want to do everything we can to please him, serve him, and bring others to him.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

In spite of the temptation to bask in the limelight, John knew his place. He knew why he was sent by God—to point people to Christ, the Savior of the world. Opportunities abound in all our lives as God’s people to do the same. The season of Advent calls on us not only to use our time to prepare our hearts for our Savior, but to help others do so as well by pointing them to Christ.

**Advent 4**

2 Samuel 7:8-16

Our great God promises great blessings to unlikely, undeserving sinners. That’s what his promise to the former lowly shepherd, David, was all about. God would establish the throne of one of his descendants, Jesus Christ, forever. He also promises that we, undeserving as we are, will live with him in his kingdom forever by faith in Jesus. May our lives and all we are and have be a fitting response of gratitude for this indescribable gift!

Romans 16:25-27

Our loving Lord and Savior calls his gospel a mystery that has been made known to us. God has revealed the details of his saving plan to us in Christ. But he never intended for that saving plan to be a secret. Instead he calls on us as his people to make that saving plan known worldwide. What a blessing to be able to join our brothers and sisters across the synod in supporting worldwide gospel proclamation!

Luke 1:26-38

How could this be? How could it happen? She was a young innocent girl, engaged to a good man. How could she be pregnant? What thoughts must have raced through her mind! And yet, she told the angel, “I am the Lord’s servant.” Through her, God gave the world the most wonderful gift, his only Son, to be born as a human baby, to live a sinless life and die on the cross for our sins, and to rise again to conquer death. When seemingly impossible, insurmountable, unbearable things happen to us, do we protest, cry, and try to fight them? Or do we praise and thank God for the gift of the trial so we can use it to glorify him? Do we say “I am the Lord’s servant” and go forth trusting him for comfort and for the strength to serve him?

**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 of 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, what a better time than 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.

**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 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.**

**Christmas 1**

Isaiah 45:20-25

The Lord states the absurdity of worshipping another god instead of him. He is the only God and he alone saves sinners! He calls for every sinner to trust in him alone. His message is both exclusive—no other gods—and inclusive—for all nations. As the greatest gift giving time of the year, Christmas offers us also that opportunity to support the spread of the Christmas message at home and to the ends of the earth.

Colossians 3:12-17

On this Sunday after Christmas most of our gifts are unwrapped, some are already broken, some returned. This epistle talks to us about the gift that keeps on giving, the greatest Christmas gift of all—Jesus. This lesson describes the impact Jesus has upon our lives: an impact that others see by the attitude we display toward them; an impact others see as we gather to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as often as we possibly can; an impact others see as we display an attitude of gratitude in our everyday lives.

Luke 2:25-40

As soon as Christmas is over, the Christmas joy seems to go with it. Vacations from school and work are over. It’s time to get back to “the grind.” Simeon and Anna give us excellent examples of Christmas joy that lasts a lifetime. Both of them had lived long and faithful lives. After seeing their Savior, both were ready for their Lord to call them to the eternal reward that this baby boy was going to win for them. Don’t get rid of Christmas with the dried-up tree. Instead, may the good news of a Savior from sin fill our lives all year round!