

Sermon for The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 12, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Malachi 3:7-18

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

Sermon Title: Good News: You're Hired A Steward of God's Property

Introit: Psalm 24:2-6; Antiphon: Psalm 24:1

Hymns:

LSB 649 – Blest Be the Tie That Binds

LSB 660 – Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

LSB 783 – Take My Life and Let It Be (v. 1,4,6)

LSB 664 – Fight the Good Fight

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is the eighth message in a series of ten sermons. This eighth message is called: "Good News: You're Hired. A Steward of God's Property." God has given us countless blessings. No doubt far more than we could know about. How we care for, and use, those blessings to care for ourselves and those around us is important. What is a good Christian steward? The Bible says:

Psalm 24:1 The earth, and everything it contains, are the Lord's. The world and all who live in it are his.

Haggai 2:8 "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," declares the Lord of Armies.

1 Chronicles 29:14 Everything comes from you. We give you only what has come from your hands.

Luke 12:48 Much will be expected from everyone who has been given much. More will be demanded from everyone who has been entrusted with more.

A steward is a manager. They can be the manager of a house or a business. They are not the owners of the company but are ones hired to manage it. As Christian stewards we are caretakers of God's creation. Everything was made by Him and belongs to Him. Everything came into existence through Him. Not one thing that exists was made without Him.¹ We honor God by managing well those things that are placed under our care.

How do we do that? What does God say about our use of time and talents?

Matthew 25:14-15 The kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a trip. He called his servants and entrusted some money to them. He gave one man ten thousand dollars, another four thousand dollars, and another two thousand dollars. Each was given money based on his ability. Then the man went on his trip.

1 Peter 4:10-11 Each of you, as a good manager, must use the gifts that God has given you to serve others. Whoever speaks must speak God's words. Whoever serves must serve with the strength God supplies so that in every way God receives glory through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:13-17 Light exposes the true character of everything because light makes everything easy to see. That's why it says: "Wake up, sleeper! Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you." So then be very careful how you live. Don't live like foolish people but like wise people. Make the most of your opportunities because these are evil days. So don't be foolish but understand what the Lord wants.

God gives different gifts to each person. His ultimate goal are: that all people come to faith,² that His kingdom would be extended on this Earth, and that all would enjoy the eternal salvation He has promised to all believers. Our goal should be to discover and hone those skills to serve ourselves and our neighbor.

This of course includes our money. Now if you've experienced some of the things I've experienced you've probably heard a pastor or two who have preached, "the Lord loves a

1 John 1:3

2 1 Timothy 2:4

cheerful giver but we'll take your money anyway." Maybe you've even heard a few pulpit pounding sermons of law demanding you give more. I once received a letter from a church, over two years after I had transferred my membership to another congregation. The letter expressed their great disappointment in my drop in giving over the last two year. Having been on your side of the pulpit I know how those messages sound. I won't do that. Yet with that said does the way we use our money please or displease God? The Bible says:

Mark 12:41-44 As Jesus sat facing the Temple offering box, he watched how much money people put into it. Many rich people put in large amounts. A poor widow dropped in two small coins worth less than a cent. He called his disciples and said to them, "I can guarantee this truth: This poor widow has given more than all the others. All of them have given what they could spare. But she, in her poverty, has given everything she had to live on.

Proverbs 3:9-10 Honor the Lord with your wealth, and with the first and best part of all your income. Then your barns will be full and your vats will overflow with fresh wine.

Malachi 3:8-10 "Can a person cheat God? Yet, you are cheating me. But you ask, 'How are we cheating you?' When you don't bring a tenth of your income and other contributions. So a curse is on you because the whole nation is cheating me! Bring one-tenth of your income into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I won't open the windows of heaven for you and flood you with blessings."

2 Corinthians 9:7-9 Each of you should give whatever you have decided. You shouldn't be sorry that you gave or feel forced to give since God loves a cheerful giver. Besides, God will give you his constantly overflowing kindness. Then, when you always have everything you need, you can do more and more good things. Scripture says, "The righteous person gives freely to the poor. His righteousness continues forever."

Money is a sensitive subject for a lot of people. We as New Testament believers have the freedom to give as much, or as little, as you are given opportunity through the blessing or trials that God brings to your life. If you've got to choose between putting food on your table for your kids or giving more to church feed your kids and teach them about Jesus. You will be doing far more for the Church's future that way, than putting the cash in the plate.

Others have been given a spirit of generosity and the ability to exercise that desire. Neither should feel better or lower than the other. It is all of us working together that maintains this building and the resources we offer here. That is true for all of you as members of this congregation. It is just as true for me. All of us contribute our time, talents, and treasures as we are able.

I think too often when stewardship is brought up in the church people tend hear nothing but money. Stewardship is far, far, more than that. The way you care for your children, your neighbor, your family, your car, your house, really anything and everything you have is a reflection on your gratitude to God for what you've been given. All of that is important.

Another aspect of our stewardship is in our witness to the world around us. The way we reflect our faith in our work and our lives. Even our faith is a gift from God. The faith you have is not your faith. Apart from God you cannot believe. Your faith is a gift and how you manage it is a reflection of your stewardship of that gift.

We share that gift through various means to spread the Gospel to people here in Austin, Mower county, Minnesota, and throughout the world. It is God's will that the message of salvation has come to you, and through you it goes out to other people. A Christian knows Jesus and share that knowledge with others through their time, talents, and treasures.

Luke 18:28-30 Peter said, "We've left everything to follow you." Jesus said to them, "I can guarantee this truth: Anyone who gave up his home, wife, brothers, parents, or children because of the kingdom of God will certainly receive many times as much in this life, and will receive eternal life in the world to come."

Daniel 12:2-3 Those sleeping in the ground will wake up. Some will wake up to live forever, but others will wake up to be ashamed and disgraced forever. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness on the horizon. Those who lead many people to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

Galatians 6:9-10 We can't allow ourselves to get tired of living the right way. Certainly each of us will receive everlasting life at the proper time if we don't give up. Whenever we have the opportunity we have to do what is good for everyone especially for the family of believers.

1 Corinthians 15:58 So then brothers and sisters, don't let anyone move you off the foundation of your faith. Always excel in the work you do for the Lord. You know that the hard work you do for the Lord is not pointless.

As we live our lives in this world we are bound by various obligations and responsibilities. It is not meeting those burdens, but how we meet them, that pleases or angers God. God has given each person gifts, strengths, and skills. Your goal in life should be to use those gifts as God provides opportunity. Be that in: your job, your community, your congregation, your family or anywhere else. A good Christian steward should be the one that uses what God has given them for good.

Someday the Lord will return for an accounting. Faithful stewards will hear Jesus commend and praise them for their good work. He promises to give countless rewards in this life, and more in the life to come. Faithful stewards should feel encouraged and never give up their work for Jesus. No work done for Him is ever wasted. To be a good steward is to be a good Christian. We learn how to do that best in our Bible studies and devotions as we feed our faith and dwell on God's Word. Though these things we grow as Christians and that growth then flourishes around us in all that we do.

May God grant us wisdom to honor Him in all things.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.