

# **“ASPECTS OF STEWARDSHIP: GIVING EVERYTHING”**

Proper 27B November 8, 2009

## **Introduction:**

Today begins our season of intentional emphasis on Stewardship. We are beginning now, so we are ready in January aggressively to do the work God is calling us to accomplish in 2010. Therefore, during November, I'll be discussing Aspects of Stewardship. I hope what I share will be informative, challenging, and – most importantly – Godly.

Also, during November we will pass out our stewardship materials. Your packet will include forms on which you will indicate where, or how, you believe God is leading you to serve with your Time and Talent during 2010. You will also receive a Financial Faith Pledge card on which you can make the faith pledge representing what you believe God is challenging you to invest from your Treasure into the work of the church. In the packet will also be a Proposed Budget for next year and other informative pieces.

In a mature, perfect world, led by God's Spirit, none of this would be necessary. We would all simply serve with the gifts God has given us, in the places God has led us, trusting the results to God alone. In that perfect world, we would all tithe our income to God,

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trusting the leaders of the church to be Godly people who are led by God's Spirit in the use of the money.

However, we don't live in a perfect world. We are all sinners saved by Grace – and we are still learning how to follow God's leading and “do everything as unto the Lord.”

Therefore, it is wise and prudent to have a season where we discuss Stewardship; receive encouragement to engage God prayerfully, asking God's will for how to use our Time, our Talent, and our Treasure. In a sport's analogy, this is the preseason training that gets us ready to begin playing the season. It is the rehearsal season for musicians and actors before the concerts and plays begin.

During this Stewardship month we will hear sermons, testimonies, read printed materials, pray, complete faith commitments of our Time, Talent, and Treasure; turn these commitments into the church, and prepare ourselves for serving God during 2010.

During these next four Sundays I want to say some things about stewardship as a lifestyle. Today, what I want to say about stewardship is this.

**Stewardship Is The Responsible Use of God's**

**Resources:** (repeat)

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In various parables within the Gospels, Jesus discusses good and bad stewards. They are men who either take care of their master's goods or misuse them. The good stewards exercise responsible care for the master's resources, and are rewarded. The bad stewards neglect to properly take care of the master's resources and are usually punished.

For example, in the Parable of the Talents, the one who hides his master's talents ends up losing even what he begins with, while the ones who increase their talents are rewarded.

Likewise, God has given each of us resources to use for the purposes of the Kingdom of God. All of us have time, we have talent, and we have treasure. Like the Talents Parable, we don't all have the same amount of each resource, but we all have Time. We all have Talent; and we all have some Treasure.

I'm preaching to the choir here, but we can use all our time for our own pursuits, or use some as God directs. We can use all the talent God has equipped us with for our own aims, or use some to further the spread of the Gospel. We can spend all our treasure on what we choose or redirect a portion of it, under God's guidance, to fund the work of the church.

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There is a profound sense in which

### **All We Have and All We Are Belongs To God:**

We know this is true though we don't always live like we believe it; but we can't take any of our possessions or accomplishments in this world with us when we leave here.

All we have belongs to God the Creator. When we offer everything back to God as an act of worship and devotion, we honor God and become part of His answer for the problems of the world. This is underscored in our Psalm today; verse 1 – *Unless the Lord builds the house, their labor is in vain who build it.*”

In the lesson from Ruth, Boaz serves as a type of 'kinsman-redeemer' foreshadowing how God in Christ will take care of us in every conceivable situation. But, our trust must be in Him, and not in the things and systems of this world.

In the Gospel lesson today is the story of the widow's offering of a penny to the Treasury of the Temple. The scene is preceded with Jesus condemning the Scribes who make a public show of their religion. They are trying to impress people with how good they are and how important to God they must be. But, that is not impressive to God for God looks not at the outward things,

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but at the heart. After teaching against pretentious religion, Jesus sat and watched people putting their offerings into the Temple Treasury. Scripture notes that “many rich people put in large sums”. Then, a poor widow came and dropped her penny in the treasury. Jesus used her offering to illustrate his teaching point. The rich put large sums into the offering, but they gave out of their abundance. In other words, their amount was big, but their sacrifice was small. On-the-other hand, the widow’s amount was miniscule, but her sacrifice was great, because she “put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Ultimately, that is the Stewardship Test, isn’t it? Shannon and I are tithers – we give 10% of our gross income back to God. I learned a long time ago that God honors tithing done with the right motivation. If, I am tithing so I can stand here (in public) and make a show of how wonderful I am because I give God 10% of my income, what credit do gain with God? The fact is, it is easier now to tithe then when I first stepped out in faith and obeyed the leading of God to trust Him with my money. Back then, the amount of my tithe was probably something like \$1,500. Now our tithe amount is over \$10,000. But, it took more faith to give that first \$1,500

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than it does to give the \$10,000. Back then, there was so little discretionary money in our budget that \$1,500 felt like a deal-breaker. It was really an act of faith to begin tithing. Now, it is a holy habit, but it no longer hurts to give my tithe.

The rich(er) people gave out of their abundance; the widow gave everything. Who was trusting God more? Who was living the reality that (ultimately) it all belongs to God anyway? Jesus used the widow's offering to illustrate this principal that the ideal is to recognize that everything belongs to God; and, that we can trust God with everything we think we own – our Time, our Talent, and our Treasure. We are blessed when we reach that point of trust.