

“We Are Stewards of the Lord’s Possessions”
(Luke 16:1-13 – Pentecost 18 – October 12, 2025)

Luke 16:1-13 – ¹He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ²So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ ³Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’ ⁵So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ ⁸So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. ¹⁰He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. ¹¹Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Dear Redeemed of God who have been purchased for eternal life by the blood of His Son:

In Jesus’ parable, a steward wasted his master’s possessions. When he was caught, he dealt even more dishonestly. Seeing that he was losing his job and home, he secretly lowered the bills of those who owed his master, so they would be his friends and receive him into their houses. How can Jesus follow that bad example with the commendation: “I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home” (vs. 9)? Does He commend such sins of dishonesty and stealing to get ahead in life? No, He calls the man an “*unjust steward*” and classes him with “*the sons of this world*” (vs. 8) – that is unbelievers, who may know well how to get ahead in this world, but who are lost when it comes to eternal life.

Jesus puts it into perspective when He says: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (vs. 13). The unjust steward served the god of mammon, money. So in what point was he commended? It was not for his laziness or dishonesty, but “*because he had dealt shrewdly*” (vs. 8). Even the master,

cheated as he was, had to admit that the steward had acted cleverly and diligently to secure his worldly future. He was clear about whom he really served – himself and his greed.

Here is the point of comparison: If the children of the world can act so wisely and diligently to secure a future for themselves in this world, even by unrighteous mammon; do we as the children of God act so wisely and diligently in seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? Do we make plans and act wisely in view of our eternal future in heaven? Are we so clear about whom we really serve?

In contrast to the self-serving steward, Jesus wants us to keep our priorities straight and realize that **“We Are Stewards of the Lord’s Possessions.”** What is our motivation in serving Him? It is not to try to secure our eternal future by our own plans and works. We serve Him out of thankfulness that, as our Savior, Jesus already has worked out our salvation and won eternal life for us. He has given us the riches of His heavenly Kingdom as a gift, by faith. So we want to use earthly gifts He gives us to serve for His glory and for the good of others, especially as we share His Gospel and make friends for eternal life.

1) As the Owner, God gives us gifts to use in His service

Like the rich man in our text, God is the Owner of all things. The reason He gives us gifts in our daily lives is that we may use them in His service.

King David acknowledged this. At the collection of offerings for the building of the temple at Jerusalem, David prayed to God: *“All that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name”* (1 Chronicles 29:11-13). David understood that all we have comes from God and really belongs to Him – our wealth, honor, strength, abilities – everything. So he wanted to give glory to God in the way he used every gift.

Like the steward in the parable, our heavenly Master has entrusted to us our time, talents, and treasures, and all that we have. He expects us to use them in ways that are pleasing to Him and to His glory alone. What are the ways God wants us to use His gifts?

First, He gives us His gifts so we can provide for ourselves. Luther wrote in his explanation to the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed, concerning God the Father: *“He richly and daily provides me with food and clothing, home and family, property and goods, and all that I need to support this body and life.”* This is why Jesus reminds us: *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added*

to you” (Matthew 6:31-33). Along with His gift of salvation and eternal life in Christ, God gives us His daily gifts to provide our needs in this temporal life.

Second, God also gives us His gifts so we can provide for others. He provides through our ability to work, or through gifts and inheritance. He gives plenty so we have enough to share. The apostle Paul points this out in Ephesians 4:28: *“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”* In contrast to the unjust steward, who served only himself, our good and honest work in the Lord’s service can benefit others. It includes providing for our family, loved ones, and others in need (1 Timothy 5:8). In this, we serve Jesus Himself, as He says in Matthew 25:35-36: *“I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”*

Third, God gives us His gifts so we can provide for the work of His Church. The apostle Paul told believers in 1 Corinthians 9:14: *“The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”* Believers are to provide for the work of the Gospel among them. This includes supporting pastors and the ongoing ministry of nurturing believers through God’s Word of Sacrament. It also includes supporting the work of missions at home and abroad, as we reach out to share the Gospel with the lost.

To this end, the apostle Paul instructed believers to give their offerings to the Lord as firstfruits. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 he wrote: *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.”* In other words, make it a regular priority to give to the Lord, as you see He blesses you. Give thoughtfully and prayerfully, in proportion to the income and gifts He gives you. Why can we give cheerfully and generously to the Lord from our earthly treasures? Because we are thankful that He has given us the incomparable gift of heavenly treasures and eternal life in Jesus Christ. And we want to share this treasure with others, as we support the work of His Gospel.

This is what Jesus means by the words: *“I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home”* (vs. 9). It is not that money and earthly wealth is unrighteous in itself; but the same money that many use for unrighteousness we can use for good, to bring the Gospel of God’s free salvation in Christ to others. As we share the Gospel by which God works faith in people’s hearts, we are making lasting friends for ourselves. For one day, all who are brought to faith in Jesus as their Savior will welcome one another in His everlasting home in heaven.

So God gives us gifts that we may provide for ourselves, for others, and for the work of His Gospel. Yet as sinners, often we are tempted to use His possessions as our own.

This is what happened with the unjust steward. He saw the wealth his master entrusted to him and was overcome with greed and dishonesty. He probably thought: “My rich master won’t miss a few dollars if I take some here and there. I deserve more than I’m getting anyway.” But he ended up getting fired and sent away from the master’s house because he forgot he was a steward, not the owner. He was supposed to use what his master entrusted to him according to his master’s will, not his own will.

The sinful nature leads us to wrong attitudes in our stewardship. We may see the gifts God gives us to manage and say: “I don’t want to use it in His service; I want to use it for myself.” We may not always prayerfully and cheerfully give our firstfruits to the Lord, but give sparingly as an afterthought. Instead of using the strengths and abilities God gives to serve for His glory and for the good of others, we may want to use them for our glory, thinking only of ourselves. In many ways, we may selfishly withhold the time, the talents, and the treasures God gives us to use in His service. For this, we repent.

2) As our Savior, He gave His greatest gift to redeem us

Yet we can rejoice, for our heavenly Master has not treated us as our sins deserved. Even though He saw all the self-serving ways we have used His gifts, He did not condemn and cast us out of His house forever. Instead, in mercy and love He gave us His greatest gift. God gave His only-begotten Son, to pay the great price to redeem us for eternal life. The accounting that God should have demanded of us for all our sins, He demanded of Jesus instead. On the cross, the Master Himself suffered the punishment for His unfaithful servants. Jesus took the punishment for all our greed, selfishness, and wasting of His gifts. In Christ crucified, God has forgiven all our sins. In exchange, He has accounted to us the perfect life of stewardship and service Jesus lived for us.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul reminds us as believers: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* By taking on Himself the poverty of our sin and paying the whole debt in His own death, and by rising from the dead, Jesus has secured for us eternal riches in His heavenly Kingdom. He has put it all in our possession through His gift of faith. And His gift just keeps on giving. Day by day, Jesus continues to deliver the wealth of His Kingdom to us. He gives us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing the riches of our heavenly inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). He applies His forgiveness and eternal life to us in the waters of Baptism, in His Word of Absolution, and in His Body and Blood in the Sacrament. These are priceless treasures from our Savior!

As stewards of the Lord’s possessions, the eternal riches He gives us moves us to serve Him in thankfulness and joy, as we sing in the hymn (*“We give Thee but Thine Own”*):

May we Thy bounties thus As stewards true receive
And gladly, as Thou blessest us, To Thee our firstfruits give! Amen.