

“Stewards of the Treasures”

Do you love money? Is it your master? I sense some hesitancy in answering – some squirming in the pews. “What’s he up to? What’s the point? OH, WAIT – here it comes – the STEWARDSHIP sermon about giving more offerings!!!”

NO, that’s not what this is about. But the questions still stand. Do you love money? Is it your master?

Are you desperately waiting for your next paycheck – agonizing until you can have it in your hands – or see the funds hit the bank? Do you rearrange your schedule – go out of your way – to make sure the money is in your hands – as if it will save you from all your troubles?

Do you delight in the feel of those fresh \$100 bills – tucking them into your wallet – hiding them in your purse? Or is that just what old people do? Does a Venmo notification cause the same little smile to spread across your face?

Does it give you a sense of freedom because now you can do what you want to do? Like a benevolent master, money enables you to live as you wish?

Or, does money become a source of anger and frustration? Do you bemoan the “welfare state” – get all worked up when people don’t pay their “fair share” – and find yourself constantly comparing how you work hard for your money, while others seem to be slackers?

Or, do you simply dismiss all of this saying, “that doesn’t apply to me”? Well, the Pharisees did the same thing – that’s why Jesus tells this parable. No doubt they pretended like Jesus’ words didn’t apply to them – putting up a façade, a fake front – ridiculing Jesus for saying such things to them.

I'm not Jesus. I can't see your hearts. I don't know what you are thinking. BUT, I do know that all of us – our sinful nature – is no different than the Pharisees, or the people in the days of Amos who couldn't wait to set aside all of this churchy-stuff in order to get back to their money. And what the Lord says to them certainly applies to all of us. "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds," He says.

Jesus tells us about a rich man, and his manager who has been wasting his possessions – who is now being called in to give an account of his management. In the end, this "dishonest manger" is commended – which leaves us scratching our heads.

He's commended for being shrewd – not for stealing from his master. He is commended for how he deals with the situation at hand. You see, he still has the books in hand – and he slashes the amount owed his master in order to curry favor with the debtors. In other words, he makes use of them for his own benefit.

The moral of this story is not "the end justifies the means" – or, "sin boldly" – or, "it's better to ask forgiveness than permission." It's about using the resources at hand – using the things that belong to our master – AND – understanding the difference between unrighteous wealth and true riches.

Jesus says, "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." They are better stewards – better managers of the resources at hand. We, the children of God, could learn something from them – not about how to be unrighteous – but how to use our master's resources!

We mimic the world when we worship money and possessions and all manner of unrighteous wealth – but Jesus reminds us that, in the end, it will "fail." Money and possession have good uses in this life – but you can't take it with you – and they cannot get you into heaven.

So, don't worship it. Don't be "lovers of money" like the Pharisees. Don't let it be the master of your life.

Instead, be good stewards – be shrewd managers of the true riches which the Lord has entrusted into your hands. And what are those riches? Nothing short of God Himself – God in the flesh Jesus – His Word which is Spirit and truth – His Sacraments which give and preserve eternal life.

With Christ and His forgiveness, you have life and salvation. Baptized into Christ you are a new creation – and the new man that comes forth from daily contrition and repentance views money and possession differently – not as a god to be served – but as gifts from God to be used for the benefit of ourselves and others.

The treasure of Christ's Body and Blood is that it gives you a whole new life – a "peaceful and quiet life" in which God's eternal favor is certain and sure – and the old life of worry, anxiety, and a continual toiling for more, is put to death. [P]

Dearly beloved, you cannot serve two masters. You will hate the one and love the other. One will fail – the other is eternal. Thanks be to OUR God – that He has entrusted us with His treasure – with His own Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.