

Sermon – Luke 16.1-9 (Trinity 9 – 2024)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, You have bountifully given us Your blessing and our daily bread: We beseech You, preserve us from covetousness, and so enliven our hearts that we willingly share Your blessed gifts with our needy brethren; that we may be found faithful stewards of Your gifts, and abide in Your grace when we shall be removed from our stewardship, and shall come before Your judgment, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

He 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.

<sup>2</sup> "So 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.'

<sup>3</sup> "Then 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.

<sup>4</sup> 'I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

<sup>5</sup> "So he called every one of his master's debtors to *him*, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

<sup>6</sup> "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

<sup>7</sup> "Then 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.'

<sup>8</sup> "So 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.

<sup>9</sup> "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

When we talk about stewardship, we're talking about our lives here on earth. But to understand stewardship, we need to understand what we mean by "our lives".

It doesn't mean the same thing as when the world talks about "our lives". The world lives according to the false illusion that our lives belong to us. We don't owe any obedience to anyone, not even God. "It's my body. I can do what I want with it. It's my time, my energy, my money, my possessions. I'm going to live my life the way that I want."

Such a life appeals to our selfish fallen nature. But this is actually rebellion against the truth. For Paul speaks the truth that "**In [God], we live and move and have our being**" (Acts 17:28). We owe our existence to God. He is the One who in love created us. He fearfully and wonderfully made each one of us. Every breath we have is a gift that He has given us. Every morning we wake up is a day that the Lord has made—a day in which we rejoice and are glad. Our lives and all things belong to God, as the Psalmist says, "**The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein**" (Psalm 24:1). In one sense, our lives are not our own. Our lives and all that we have are the Lord's.

This is what is pictured in the text. The steward had nothing of his own. He only had use of that which was owned by the master. The problem was that he used what belonged to the master for his own benefit, and not in accordance to the will of the master.

And this is our problem. The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. We belong to the Lord. All that we have belongs to the Lord, and we are to live and use our bodies and all that we have in love according to the Lord. Yet, we must admit our guilt in using our lives, our bodies, and all that we have according to our selfish wills rather than according to the will of our gracious God.

We have rebelled against God and sold ourselves into the slavery of sin. Paul says, "**Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey?**" (Romans 6:16)

When we talk about stewardship, we're talking about our lives here on earth. And so our rebellion against God is carried out in the bad stewardship of our actions and decisions in our daily lives. While we are to live godly lives, serving the will of our God, we instead carry out our lives as though they have nothing to do with our Creator.

Luther teaches us these sins to confess in the Small Catechism. "Consider your own station according to the 10 Commandments, whether you are father or mother, son or daughter, employer, employee." Notice how he brings it to our vocations in life. You are a parent. Are you conducting your responsibilities as God wills. What are you doing with your time, your

energy, your money, your possessions. Are you using them in service to your children, giving them what they need for their lives. Or are you neglecting the needs of your children, not giving them the attention, formation, and love that they need. Most importantly, are you training them in the knowledge and fear of their Lord with the reading of God's Word, singing and conversing about God and His gracious works for us? Or children, are you using your mouths for honoring your parents and superiors. Are you using your mind and energy on growing in knowledge and in favor before God and men?

Employers do you treat your employees well and give a fair wage? Employees, do you use your time well, faithfully serving your employer, not stealing from them through laziness?

Then Luther continues to speak about other sins we may commit in our daily lives: "whether you have been disobedient, dishonest, lazy; whether you have injured anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted anything, or done any harm."

Don't these sins have much to do with our stewardship? God gives us time, but we are lazy with it. Certainly, God gives us time for rest and leisure, that is a blessing, however, the excess of it is sinful. God has also given us a name and reputation, but we destroy it with lying and deceiving. God has given us the ability and resources to help and serve our neighbor, and we do not help and serving, and by this sin of omission, we injure our neighbor by word or deed. We have also been neglectful and wasteful with our money and goods.

Jesus points out specifically in our text, that we ought to shrewdly manage our lives and our goods for the sake of others that they may enter Christ's kingdom through faith. With our money and presence, we are called to generously support the preaching of the gospel—that is giving of our firstfruits, not the leftovers—and we do this that the proclamation of the gospel may be freely carried out among us, and into our communities. With our stewardship, which is different than how the world conducts its stewardship, we show ourselves to be lights of the world, not glorifying ourselves, but our gracious God, that others may desire to see the grace of God that has moved us to good works and confidence in God's love and providence!

Is our stewardship, are our lives lived according to the will of God?

We acknowledge that we fail. God has every right to remove us from the gifts He has given us to manage. He has the right to remove our breath from us and give us our due, which is the punishment of hell.

But God is so gracious. He seems to be foolish in the stewardship of His favor, showing it to us unworthy sinners. It is the foolishness of the cross, He was willing to give up His only begotten Son on the cross for us! That is God Himself who suffered and died there, and that is our help and salvation.

We who have sold ourselves into the slavery of sin, but He would not let us perish eternally, but in giving up His Son, He has purchased us back from sin and death. His shed blood has covered your sins, your poor stewardship, your lives not lived for God but sin. His death has saved you from the punishment you have deserved.

Jesus was the Suffering Servant. He lived His whole life in service to God accomplishing His will, that He may redeem you. And that's what it means to redeem. It means to buy back. With divine generosity, He paid the all-sufficient price that you may be His. **"You have been bought with a price!"**

He does not cut you off from His service, rather He forgives you, and that forgiveness is yours even now. He draws you to Himself again, calling you His dear child.

And so as His dear children, we remain in service to Him, as stewards of the gifts of His bountiful grace. And with joy, we live these lives knowing that we are God's forgiven and redeemed people. The Holy Spirit is with us and He strengthens and helps us in our stewardship. And when we stumble, we know we have a merciful Father that bountifully and generously forgives us and restores us to our life in loving service to Him. And He will keep us until He receives us into our everlasting home. And we pray that our stewardship may lead others to join us there, too. God be praised! Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Forevermore. Amen.