

“Easter: Giving Back... Continuously and Concretely”

The Reflection Series

Scripture:

Luke 12: 13-48(NIV)

³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” ¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’” ²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[a]? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. ³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?” ⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ “The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one

who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Subject Question: What four signs does Jesus teach us concerning our role as Sensible Stewards in life?

Compliment answer: A Sensible Steward... will be Responsible, A Sensible Steward... will be Relaxed, A Sensible Steward... will be Ready, and A Sensible Steward will be... Rewarded.

Big Idea: The four signs Jesus teaches us concerning our role as Sensible Stewards in life are: A Sensible Steward... will be Responsible, A Sensible Steward... will be Relaxed, A Sensible Steward... will be Ready, and A Sensible Steward will be... Rewarded.

Homiletical Idea: **“God is either Lord of all, or not Lord at All..”**

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand their calling to be good and Godly, sensitive and Sensible Stewards of the gifts and resources the Lord has entrusted to them.

Introduction: As we end the Long Liturgical season of Easter (8 weeks of Lent, Holy Week, and the following 7 weeks of Easter), we have explored **our** “Giving Up” of the Lenten weeks, **Christ’s** “Giving Of” on Easter, and so far, we have explored **our** heart’s desire to somehow “Give Back” to Christ for the salvation He graciously extended to all of us who have come to know Him as Lord and Savior. The final two sermons deal with the practical and pragmatic: the when and how, we can actually put some feet to our faith, some action to our words, as we live as truly thank-filled stewards, not simply thankful owners, of all that the Lord has allowed us to have and achieve in our life as we have walked with Him. We have been bought with a price, the Apostle Paul proclaimed... thus, all that we have is ultimately His to begin with; all that we possess then, comes with an accountability tag...ultimately, we all will have to answer the question, what did you do with what you were blessed with, to care for...? 4 points to cover in this sermon: 2 points this week and 2 next week.

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

Groundwork:

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

12:13-21 Christ's kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. Christianity does not meddle with politics; it obliges all to do justly, but worldly dominion is not founded in grace. It does not encourage expectations of worldly advantages by religion. The rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. Covetousness is a sin we need constantly to be warned against; for happiness and comfort do not depend on the wealth of this world. The things of the world will not satisfy the desires of a soul. Here is a parable, which shows the folly of carnal worldling while they live, and their misery when they die. The character drawn is exactly that of a prudent, worldly man, who has no grateful regard to the providence of God, nor any right thought of the uncertainty of human affairs, the worth of his soul, or the importance of eternity. How many, even among professed Christians, point out similar characters as models for imitation, and proper persons to form conversation's with! We mistake if we think that thoughts are hid, and thoughts are free. When he saw a great crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing to be able to do more good, he afflicts himself. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country could not have said a more anxious word. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it. It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty, than to indulge the flesh and gratify the sensual appetites, without any thought of doing good to others. Carnal worldlings are fools; and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, and they will call themselves so. The death of such persons is miserable in itself, and terrible to them. Thy soul shall be required. He is loth to part with it; but God shall require it, shall require an account of it, require it as a guilty soul to be punished without delay. It is the folly of most men, to mind and pursue that which is for the body and for time only, more than that for the soul and eternity.

MacLaren's Expositions

What a gulf between the thoughts of Jesus and those of this unmannerly interrupter! Our Lord had been speaking solemnly as to confessing Him before men, the divine help to be given, and the blessed reward to follow, and this hearer had all the while been thinking only of the share in his father's inheritance, out of which he considered that his brother had cheated him. Such indifference must have struck a chill into Christ's heart, and how keenly he felt it is traceable in the curt and stern brushing aside of the man's request. The

very form of addressing him puts him at a distance. 'Man' is about as frigid as can be. Our Lord knew the discouragement of seeing that His words never came near some of His hearers, and had no power to turn their thoughts even for a minute from low objects. 'What do I care about being confessed before the angels, or about the Holy Spirit to teach me? What I want is my share of the paternal acres. A rabbi who will help me to these is the rabbi for me.' John Bunyan's 'man with the muck-rake' had his eyes so glued to the ground and the muck that he did not see the crown hanging above him. How many of us find the sermon time a good opportunity for thinking about investments and business!

Christ's answer is intentionally abrupt and short. It deals with part only of the man's error, the rest of which, being an error to which we are all exposed, and which was the root of the part special to him, is dealt with in the parable that follows. Because the man was covetous, he could see in Jesus nothing more than a rabbi who might influence his brother. Our sense of want largely shapes our conception of Christ. Many to-day see in Him mainly a social {and economical} reformer, because our notion of what we and the world need most is something to set social conditions right, and so to secure earthly well-being. They who take Jesus to be first and foremost 'a judge or a divider' fail to see His deepest work or their own deepest need. He will be all that they wish Him to be, if they will take Him for something else first. He will 'bid' men 'divide the inheritance' with their brethren after men have gone to Him for salvation. But covetousness, or the greedy clutching at more and more of earthly good, has its roots in us all, and unless there is the most assiduous weeding, it will overrun our whole nature. So Jesus puts great emphasis into the command, 'Take heed, and keep yourselves,' which implies that without much 'heed' and diligent inspection of ourselves {for the original word is 'see'}, there will be no guarding against the subtle entrance and swift growth of the vice. We may be enslaved by it, and never suspect that we are. Further, the correct reading is 'from *all* covetousness,' for it has many shapes, besides the grossest one of greed for money. The reason for the exhortation is somewhat obscure in construction, but plain in its general meaning, and sufficiently represented by the Authorized and Revised Versions. The Revised Version margin gives the literal translation, 'Not in a man's abundance consisteth his life, from the things which he possesseth,' on which we may note that the second clause is obviously to be completed from the first, and that the difference between the two seems to lie mainly in the difference of prepositions, 'from' or 'out of in

the second clause standing instead of 'in' in the first, while there may be also a distinction between 'abundance' and 'possessions' the former being a superfluous amount of the latter. The whole will then mean that life does not *consist in* possessions, however abundant, nor does it *come out of* anything that simply belongs to us in outward fashion. Not what we possess, but what we are, is the important matter.

But what does 'life' mean? The parable shows that we cannot leave out the notion of physical life. No possessions keep a man alive. Death knocks at palaces and poor men's hovels. Millionaires and paupers are huddled together in his net. But we must not leave out the higher meaning of life, for it is eminently true that the real life of a man has little relation to what he possesses. Neither nobleness nor peace nor satisfaction, nor anything in which man lives a nobler life than a dog, has much dependence on property of any sort. Wealth often chokes the channels by which true life would flow into us. 'We live by admiration, hope, and love,' and these may be ours abundantly, whatever our portion of earth's riches. Covetousness is folly, because it grasps at worldly good, under the false belief that thereby it will secure the true good of life, but when it has made its pile, it finds that it is no nearer peace of heart, rest, nobleness, or joy than before, and has probably lost much of both in the process of making it. The mad race after wealth, which is the sin of this luxurious, greedy, commercial age, is the consequence of a lie—that life does consist in the abundance of possessions. It consists in knowing 'Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' Is there any saying of Jesus Christ's more revolutionary, or less believed by His professed followers, than this?

The story of the rich fool is not a parable in the narrower meaning of that word—that is, a description of some event or thing in the natural sphere, transferred by analogy to the spiritual—but an imaginary narrative exemplifying in a concrete instance the characteristics of the class of covetous men. The first point noted is that accumulated wealth breeds anxiety rather than satisfaction. The man is embarrassed by his abundance. The trouble of knowing how to keep it is as great as the labour of acquiring it, and the enjoyment of it is still in the future. Many a rich man is more worried about his securities than he was in making his money. There are so many 'bags with holes' that he is at his wits' end for investments, and the first thing he looks at in his morning's paper is the share list, the sight of which often spoils his breakfast.

The next point is the selfish and arrogant sense of possession, as betrayed by

the repetition of 'my'-my fruits, my barns, my corn, and my goods. He has no thought of God, nor of his own stewardship. He recognises no claim on his wealth. If he had looked a little beyond himself, he would have seen many places where he could have bestowed his fruits. Were there no poor at his gates? He had better have poured some riches into the laps of these than have built a new barn. Corn laid up would breed weevils; dispersed, it would bring blessings.

Again, this type of covetous men is a fool because he reckons on 'many years.' The goods may last, but will he? He can make sure that they will suffice for a long time, but he cannot make sure of the long time. Again, he blunders tragically in his estimate of the power of worldly goods to satisfy. 'Eat, drink,' might be said to his body, but to say it to his soul, and to fancy that these pleasures of sense would put it at ease, is the fatal error which gnaws like a worm at the root of every worldly life. The word here rendered 'take thine ease' is cognate with Christ's in His great promise, 'Ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Not in abundance of worldly goods, but in union with Him, is that rest to be found which the covetous man vainly promises himself in filled barns and luxurious idleness.

There is a grim contrast between what the rich man said and what God said. The man's words were empty breath; God's are powers, and what He says is a deed. The divine decree comes crashing into the abortive human plans like a thunder-clap into a wood full of singing birds, and they are all stricken silent. So little does life consist in possessions that all the abundance cannot keep the breath in a man for one moment. His life is 'required of him,' not only in the sense that he has to give it up, but also inasmuch as he has to answer for it. In that requirement the selfishly used wealth will be 'a swift witness against' him, and instead of ministering to life or ease, will 'eat his flesh as fire.' Molten gold dropping on flesh burns badly. Wealth, trusted in and selfishly clutched, without recognition of God the giver or of others' claims to share it, will burn still worse.

The 'parable' is declared to be of universal application. Examples of it are found wherever there are men who selfishly lay up treasures for their own delectation, and 'are not rich toward God.' That expression is best understood in this connection to mean, not rich in spiritual wealth, but in worldly goods used with reference to God, or for His glory and service. So understood, the two phrases, laying up treasure for oneself and being rich towards God, are in full antithesis.

Benson Commentary

Luke 12:22-31. *And he said unto his disciples* — Having delivered the preceding instructive and awakening parable, whereby he intended to caution the contending brothers and the multitude against covetousness, sensuality, and the love of pleasure, he now proceeds to address his disciples, and caution them against those anxious cares and earthly affections which are also very inimical to religious dispositions, and obstructive to all progress in the divine life. This part of his discourse he grounds on, and enforces by, the consideration of God's superintending providence, and on the caution and parable which he had just delivered. As if he had said, Since a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth; since plenty of goods and fruits is not capable of prolonging it one moment beyond the term fixed for it by God; ye, my disciples, more especially ought, for that reason, to take *no thought*, or rather, as **μεριμνατε** means, *not be solicitous* for the prolongation of your lives, by anxiously laying up a store of provisions and clothes, &c., as if these could preserve life; no, you should consider that *the life is more than meat*, &c. See the contents of these verses explained at large in the notes on Matthew 6:25-34. For Luke has here, as in other places, recapitulated several precepts given by our Lord to his followers, according to St. Matthew, at a very different time. Some commentators, indeed, have laboured to show that both evangelists refer to the same period, but certainly they have not been able to prove that point: and to attempt it was perfectly unnecessary, it being surely proper that our Lord should repeat to his hearers in Judea, who had hitherto not been favoured with his public ministry, the doctrines which he had before delivered to such as attended his discourses in Galilee. *Neither be ye of a doubtful mind* — **Μη μετεωριζεσθε**. Be not (like meteors in the air, tossed about by every wind) of a fluctuating, unstable mind or judgment, agitated with a variety of restless, uneasy thoughts. Any speculations and musings in which the mind is suspended in an uneasy hesitation, might well be expressed by the word. The thing forbidden, says Theophylact, is **περισπασμος και του λογου αστατος περιφορα**, a distracting and unstable fluctuation of the mind, or reason, about provision for the body, which Christ would here remove from the children of God, assuring them that his wisdom knows what is needful for them, (Luke 12:30,) and that his fatherly care will certainly provide for them what is so.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

22:21-38 How unbecoming is the worldly ambition of being the greatest, to the character of a follower of Jesus, who took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to the death of the cross! In the way to eternal happiness, we must expect to be assaulted and sifted by Satan. If he cannot destroy, he will try to disgrace or distress us. Nothing more certainly forebodes a fall, in a professed follower of Christ, than self-confidence, with disregard to warnings, and contempt of danger. Unless we watch and pray always, we may be drawn in the course of the day into those sins which we were in the morning most resolved against. If believers were left to themselves, they would fall; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. Our Lord gave notice of a very great change of circumstances now approaching. The disciples must not expect that their friends would be kind to them as they had been. Therefore, he that has a purse, let him take it, for he may need it. They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce than they had been, and they would need weapons. At the time the apostles understood Christ to mean real weapons, but he spake only of the weapons of the spiritual warfare. The sword of the Spirit is the sword with which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves.

Benson Commentary

Luke 12:41-44. *Then Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable to us — Who are thy constant followers, to us who are ministers; or even to all — That come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and, in them, to all Christians? Peter, it appears, had been giving close attention to the whole of Christ's discourse, and saw it to be very important; out was at a loss to know whether the latter part of it, namely, the parable of the watching servants, was spoken to the multitude in general, and therefore to all that should hereafter become Christ's followers, or to the apostles in particular. He therefore begged his master to satisfy him as to that point. He knew indeed that the parable was addressed to all the disciples, but it contained instructions which Peter thought might be peculiarly designed for the twelve. And the Lord said, Who, &c. — Our Lord, in his answer to Peter's inquiry, shows that, though his exhortations were directed to all, they more especially concerned those who were, or hereafter should be, intrusted with the care of the souls of others, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, &c. — The sense of the word is, "What do you think ought to be the character and conduct of a steward to whom his lord commits the care of his family in his absence, as I do the care of my church to you? Why,*

certainly, he should be both wise, to know in what manner to govern the family, and *faithful* in executing whatever his wisdom and prudence direct as fit to be done; for thus only all the members of the family under his care will have due provision made for them.” *Blessed, μακαριος, happy, is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing* — To complete the character of such a steward, he must never remit his care and diligence, that so, at whatever time his Lord returns, he may find him employed in the prudent and faithful discharge of the duties of his office. If this be the case, such a servant shall be happy, not only in the consciousness of doing his duty well, but in the rewards and honours which his lord will bestow upon him. Here we see the unspeakable importance of a *patient continuance in well-doing*. The servant spoken of is supposed to be now *wise, faithful, and happy*; yet our Lord’s words imply that he might become the reverse of all this, and perish for ever. *I say unto you, That he will make him ruler, &c.* — He will commit the management of his whole estate to him; a trust which such a servant merits by the prudence, faithfulness, and diligence which he showed as steward of the household.

- A. A Sensible Steward will be... **Responsible.** (Vs. 13-21). ³ *Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”* ¹⁴ *Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”* ¹⁵ *Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”* ¹⁶ *And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.”* ¹⁷ *He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’* ¹⁸ *“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.’* ¹⁹ *And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”* ²⁰ *“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’* ²¹ *“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”*
- B. When we began talking about the Easter teachings concerning our “giving back” to God, we started off by stating that a “giving back” attitude begins with our minds, travels to our hearts and flows out through our hands. It truly is impossible not to be a giving back person... one who has been touched by the Holy Hand of the Maker who has extended love and grace and changed ones heart! We then went further, and for the past two weeks we have discussed our great desire to somehow live a life that exudes “giving back” in our Christian lives as events, time, and circumstances compete for our attention and we make choices as to whether we will remain in the faithful chair of commitment, or move to the fluffy chair of comfort, or slip to the fateful chair of

cynicism...As you can tell from our chairs this morning, stewardship or living out and giving back as a lifestyle, as devoted disciples, only really makes sense when our lives finally are lined up... and in tuned with: Christ's ways, His desires, based on His promises, and sold out to being involved in Heaven's agenda, not just our own, realizing that we have been called to a life bigger than us, a lifestyle unlike so many who surround us, and a heart that leans more towards God's glory and others benefit.

C. In other words, If our focus is on Christ, if in our minds, we truly once again, desire His nearness... If in our hearts, we literally cherish His presence, then and only then will we feel the great mystery and privilege of being a good steward, a responsible steward, a loving steward of all that He has blessed us, and our greatest desire is to dwell so close to Christ, walk with Him in such a way, that I can observe Him using our lives and hands, to impact and perhaps change for eternity other people's lives and even worlds.

1. In the beginning of our parable we see what I would consider a smart man, a good business person, a successful entrepreneur, prosperous in everyone's eyes, except...and this is so common and yet so tragic... the One who matters the most: God. For this good business man The accounts were balanced and the bills were paid... Like many of us, He understood the need to be responsible; to be diligent in every conceivable way, except it seems as the text points out, when it came to settling His life debt to His Creator. His biggest misconception came in seeing Himself as the ultimate owner, the proverbial captain of His own ship... who could do what He wanted with all of the good things that He had accumulated as he saw fit. With a that said consider: This man who considered himself as a responsible person, held two misunderstanding:

1. Observation: **This man was irresponsible to Himself. (He thought that life consisted of just material things).** And it's true, the things that we can see and touch can become a sole reality to us... It plays into our desire to have and to hold, to possess and to take pride in what we can accumulate and what we can achieve... And if life was only that... if there was no possibility that there is a God, then who could

really blame him for the way that he felt and thought and approached his riches...

2. Observation: **This man was irresponsible to Others.** (He didn't realize that God's blessings meant he should help others).

3. Observation: **Midas touch**

He simply forgot or misunderstood, or somehow convinced himself of the possibility of a better life to be lived out, not as one who simply possesses, but one who systematically passes, not just a greedy getter, but a generous giver... ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." As a modern day Christian we know that all we have been blessed to accumulate is not going to go with us. Yet, too have a tendency to hold our possessions tightly, we often make the same assumptions as the man in the parable... O yes, it's nice to have nice things and enjoy them, but it's not just accumulating nice things that make us truly, truly happy... The truth of the matter is: unlike this man who had so much stuff and so little character, God says as long as you occupy the chair of the committed, I will always be gently reminding you that, we have been blessed to be a blessing.

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

A Sensible steward is... Responsible...

A. A Sensible Steward will be... **Relaxed.** (Vs.22-34). ²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[a]? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ "Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

B. I love the way that Jesus teaches: He gives a backwards lesson about responsibility and then, begins to tackle the issue that most of us automatically begin to struggle with when it comes to money and possession; worry. What would happen if it seems that God asks me to give too much away? I mean, I don't mind contributing to any cause out of my abundance... Certainly, He wouldn't want me to tap into my retirement or my 401, or my annuities, or my rainy day account. Or downsize, or adjust my lifestyle... That in my mind would be irresponsible... and it would be if you were not just the steward but the owner... Let's talk about worry for just a few minutes:

We worry, not because of our possessions or lack of them... we worry because we fail to focus on God. --John Maxwell

1. Observation: **Worry is Destructive.** (Vs.22, 29) ²² *Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.*
2. Observation: **Worry is Deceptive.** (Vs.23)
 - a. It gives us a false view of **life.** (Vs.23)
 - b. It gives us a false view of **God.** (Vs.24, 27, 28) ²⁴ *Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds...?* ²⁷ *"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these..."* ²⁸ *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!*
 - c. It gives is a false view of **itself.** (Vs.25-26) ²⁵ *Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[a]?* ²⁶ *Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?*
3. Observation: **Worry is Distractive.** (Vs.30-34). ³⁰ *For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.* ³¹ *But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.* ³² *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.* ³³ *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.* ³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

God's pleasures and our treasures must go together!

"Jesus talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in

all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.” -Howard L. Dayton, Jr., Leadership, Vol. 2, no. 2.

- C. The question of course is, why? Why does God insist that we don't worry? I would like to think that the answer is found in the phrases such as, peace of mind or serenity of heart. And God truly does want us to have those things. But there is more to it than just being able to live relaxed, when it comes to the subject of finances. It's also a quiet calling, an whispered invitation if you will, to let God prove Himself and His ability to do what He says... provide for us. There is only one time in all of scripture where God says **test** me in this... Malachi 3:10 *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*
- D. In reality, giving back to God, letting him prove himself, giving Him control over not just our spiritual lives, but also these lives we live are living now, is daunting, but how delightful. No wonder a Sensible Steward... will be Relaxed... Here is the reality, letting Him assume His place as Owner and ours as Steward which **will** lead to a life of constant "giving" has never been for God, but, ... it's always been for us. Listen, You and I don't do God a favor by giving our money on a weekly basis— He personally doesn't need the money, He does you and me a favor by saying and challenging us as His dear children with the proposition that if meet my standards, what I have always deemed was appropriate, then I'll blow your perception of who can give out give who... out of the water. The real question is then, so what is His standard? I want to talk in closing about the biblical teaching concerning Gods invitation to tithe. Let me say upfront, our tithe **goes** to the church, but it's **given** to the Lord. Tithing as well, is His idea... it's a God initiated covenant between Him and his own. Well, let's end up this week by talking about what we'll start with next week: the tithe. 7 observations:
1. Observation: *Pledging can be, and must be, seen as a great form of tithing. It's not just a question of semantics... when it's a pledge the emphasis is on what we want to give. When it's a tithe the emphasis is on what we willingly give back. An owner pledges; a steward tithes. Pledgers determine the amount—and many times that amount meets or exceeds the biblical Old Testament standard of 10% of our gross*

income. A Steward understands that God has set the amount... and as such understands that the 10% is the minimum threshold where God says He will then begin to pour out His blessings and so on.

2. **Observation:** There is no **legal** standard of tithing in the New Testament for a reason; Jesus taught that the OT standard for His followers was the minimum and now, with Him as your financial advisor, it's more about increasingly and exceedingly **liberal** giving. (See Matthew 23:23).
3. **Observation:** Jesus taught Godly reciprocity in the Sermon on the Mount: **Matthew 6:** ³⁸ Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
4. **Observation:** The tithe (10% or more) is to go to God's storehouse, the church—one's local church family and base of operation. An offering is any amount over and above the tithe to any ministry you may be led to support.
5. **Observation:** Your heart is more important to our very loving and very patient Lord, than your ability to meet or exceed His standards. (Mark 12:42, Widow's Mite). With that said, you and I as Christians, for our own good and His continued blessings, should start giving what we can (2%, 5% or whatever) and moving toward to God's minimum standard of 10% as he blesses your efforts! (Remember, He said Test Him in This)
6. **Observation:** Tithing is covenant, privilege and responsibility of being a member of a local church family—you must have a local storehouse to tithe to) and God wants you to be a member in a bible-believing, conservative church family.
7. **Observation:** Tithing in general, is always voluntary. According to recent Pew Study, approximately 247 million people in the US claim to be Christian. How many of that number go to church? That's a different and more difficult number to uncover. At best, the pollsters say 40% of all Americans, or about 98 million go to church. At worst, other studies suggest 20%, or less than 50 million, actually attend and many as few as 12 times a year. However, when we analyze the attendance number, we know that, of those who do attend church, far fewer actually tithe any money. It's alarming that Christians now give less per capita than during the Great Depression. When we finally look at those in church, at best 25% of the congregation give. That's at best. If you have that level of participation, you're not in the norm, according to other research, which says only about 3-5% actually tithe in most

cases. And, it's not the wealthy who always tithe. The statistics suggest that if you make less than \$20k, you're eight times more likely to give than someone who makes more than \$75k.

This research should give us pause. God says in [Malachi 3:10](#), “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’”

Let me repeat, being or becoming a tither is God's idea and His ideal for you and me as His children. He longs to bless us and keep on blessing us. His ability to do so is covenantal in nature—financially speaking. God can only bless what He already owns. Our part is to be responsible stewards and relaxed stewards, Disciples of Christ and trusting and trustworthy Children of the Most high. Affiances, by the way, is one of three ways that we are challenged to “Give Back” continuously and concretely. The other two areas? We'll talk about next week.

Part 2

The other two concrete and continuous ways that we literally live a life of giving back to Christ for all that He has given to us are: Giving, not just of our treasure, but of our “time” and our “talents” Paul taught this concept in 1 Corinthians 12: ¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by^o one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you!” ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all

prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues³¹? Do all interpret? ³¹Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

1. **Observation:** We are dependent on one another—we need what the other has to offer. No one is unimportant. Everyone wins when we come together, spend time together, and exercise our individual and collective gifts and talents. Tithing includes giving of God given time and talents.
2. **Observation:** We prove our love for God by our willingness to love and invest in one another.
3. **Observation:** To claim that we would rather regularly spend time on the golf course or by ourselves watching Christian TV on Sunday mornings, rather than making our way to church, is one of the most unchristian behaviors, one of the most diabolical lies, and one of the most unhealthy personal practices that we can deceive ourselves into believing. Not tithing of our time and talents investing in Gods people in a Church family is robbing others, yourself and ultimately God.
4. **Observation:** If as a committed, loving Christian who is striving to walk with Christ and be in tuned for His agenda you must find a local church to tithe your treasure, your time and you talents.
5. **Observation:** There are no perfect churches, mainly because there are no perfect people. Every church has its fair share of problems and problem people. The mature congregant however refuses to listen to the Enemies lies and refuses to take their ball and go home. Part of your commitment to God is a proof in the pudding commitment to God's imperfect, people.
6. **Observation:** Church hoppers do more harm in a church than they themselves can understand and see. Their constant joining and leaving churches is a sign of an impossible Christianity: a narcissistic spirituality: more and only concerned for what they can ultimately get from a local church rather than what they actually have come to mean as a perceived family member within a local church.

Tough words I know... Yet, like I said to begin with, our salvation is free; it doesn't cost us a thing... discipleship isn't. Discipleship is high demand... being in the chair of the committed costs us a lot in our lives. Is it really worth it? I am sure that Jesus had this in mind as He continues in our parable and gives us the 2 last reasons why the giving of our treasure, the giving of our time and the giving of our talents are equally important"

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. A Sensible Steward will be... **Ready.** (Vs.35-40). ³⁵“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. ³⁹But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”
- B. The fact of the matter is that as Christians we are each called to live and live-fully (John 10:10), happily and peacefully in this oft-unhappy and cruel world. But His call is to have two life agendas.
1. **Agenda:** One the one hand we are to walk with God in our **secular** lives; working, marrying, having children, taking vacations, enjoying friends and cherishing families. We among all of Gods creations have the wonder of memory, and cherished memories can and do enhance our lives and the years go by.
 2. **Agenda:** However, we are to simultaneously walk with God in our **spiritual** lives; serving and loving, becoming more and more like Jesus, learning from others, sharing with others, maturing with others, and cherishing the spiritual examples the Lord provides as the years go by.
- C. Ours is journey however to be lived with **both** eyes wide open. One eye on the world, what is happening here in us and through us and for us? And, one eye toward heaven knowing that Jesus may come again at any time to take us to a new place, a new home, in the company of these who we have traveled our lives with.
- D. Let me ask you, if we really believed that Jesus could come back at any moment, how would that affect our view of the treasures that we have been blessed to accumulate? How about the time that we have been given to enjoy and share. And lastly, what about the God-given gifts and talents we have been called to develop and use. Life is STEWARDSHIP. And as such every one of us lives with one of two life attitudes: “Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus...” or “Ever wait, Lord, I’m not quite ready.”

A Sensible Steward is Responsible, Relaxed, and Ready...

- A. A Sensible Steward will be... **Rewarded.** (Vs.41-48). ⁴¹Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?” ⁴²The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food

allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ "The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

- B. Its amazing isn't it, that we only have one shot at this thing called life... every day is an opportunity, every hour is precious, every second counts.
- C. What about you? First, as far as membership, isn't time to become a part of our church family? What's really holding you back? How about your treasures? Are you an Owner or A Steward? How about your God given talents, what can you do in this church family for God and for others?
- D. Have you heard His call to Responsible, Relaxed, Ready and Rewarded steward?