

STEWARDSHIP

TEXT: MATT. 6:19-34

Introduction:

1. I want to speak this morning on the subject of Christian stewardship.
2. A steward is a servant in charge of property belonging to his master. For example, Eliezer was the steward in charge of Abraham's house (Gen. 15:2).
3. In the parable of the unjust steward, the "certain rich man" represents God (Luke 16:1).
4. The steward represents you and me (Luke 16:1, 2).
5. Strictly speaking, stewardship covers more than just money though the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16 deals with money.
6. We will all have to give an account to God with what we do with our time as well as our treasure (cf. Luke 16:2).
7. First Corinthians 4:1, 2 says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
8. I am convinced that Christians that understand the principles of Christian stewardship are stronger and happier.
9. The Bible has much to say about money, and I hope we can look at a few of them this morning.
10. Here is an important principle: you can never outgive the Lord (Luke 6:38).
11. Another principle: the Lord is not concerned so much about how much you give – it is how much you keep for yourself that matters (cf. Mark 12:41-44).
12. Let us go back to the text we first read (Matt. 6:24). Note that our Lord did not say, "You cannot serve God and *the devil*." That would be obvious to most people. But what is not so obvious to many is that one cannot serve God *and mammon* (money).
13. Many people live for money, die for money, worship money, etc. (Cf. I Tim. 6:6-10).

I. THE BIBLE HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT MONEY

1. Whenever I preach on stewardship, I always try and emphasize that the Bible has much to say about money. Some people, even some Christians, seem to think that it is not spiritual to talk about money.
2. Some people get tense when preachers bring up the subject. Their palms get sweaty, they make frequent trips to the bathroom, they start grinding their teeth.

3. Well, people can grind their teeth till their faces turn red but I still must preach the Bible. Malachi 3:8, 9 says those who do not tithe are robbing God.
4. Some people think it's not spiritual to preach on money. But consider this: our Lord spoke often on the subject, as did the other preachers in both the Old and New Testaments (cf. Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35).
5. Many preachers shy away from the subject of money because it has been badly abused by some these ridiculous TV preachers.
6. According to the Bible, your financial situation is ultimately determined by God. God is sovereign. This means He has control over everything, even how much money you make (cf. I Sam. 2:7).
7. If a man is successful, he ought to thank God because it is God who gives us the power (or the ability) to acquire wealth (Deut. 8:18).
8. A basic Bible principle is that everything belongs to God, i.e., our money, our homes, our cars, our possessions, etc. (Ps. 24:1; 50:10-12; Job 41:11).

II. GOD WANTS US TO GIVE

1. God wants His children to support His church. I read a true story about the dedication of a church building. The pastor was Dr. Louis Bauman. He said that if the church ever tried resorting to chicken dinners or bazaars to raise money, he would resign. A Christian lady happened to be visiting that day and she was impressed by the pastor's remarks. She put \$3,000 (big money back then; Dr. Bauman died over 50 years ago) in the offering that day, wound up joining the church, and remained a faithful giver.
2. By the way, some pastors hesitate to preach on money because they are concerned about unsaved visitors.
 - First of all, not all visitors are unsaved. I have had visitors walk up to me after I finished preaching on stewardship, and tell me they found the message very helpful.
 - Furthermore, I have seen people get saved after a message on stewardship. Let us not be guilty of limiting what God can do.
3. God wants us to give. As we noted before, we have the testimony of our Lord Himself (Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35). Let us not hold back on the Lord.
4. Some have joyfully discovered that the more they give the more God allows them to give. This is the beauty of faith promise (or grace) giving.
5. Jesus says "it is more blessed to give than to receive" and "**Give**, and it shall be given unto you..." You can never outgive the Lord.

6. RG LeTourneau was an inventor in the earthmoving industry. His machines represented nearly 70% of the earthmoving equipment and engineering vehicles used by our military during WWII.
7. He also founded a private Christian college, LeTourneau University, in Texas. He was known as a devoted Christian and a philanthropist.
8. For many years, he lived on ten percent of his income and he gave away ninety percent to Christian work, especially to foreign missionary efforts.
9. Even when his business was in financial jeopardy, LeTourneau continued giving sacrificially to the Lord's work. "The question" he said, "is not how much of my money I give to God, but rather how much of God's money I keep for myself."
10. RG LaTourneau used to say, "God's shovel is bigger than mine."
11. Remember, you can never out-give the Lord. I have never heard of a Christian looking back and saying, "I gave too much to God, I shouldn't have given so much." But I have heard of old Christians weeping bitter tears because they were so stingy with their money.
12. I believe some Christians do not give much because of a lack of faith. They do not believe God can meet their needs.
13. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). Paul wrote this to the church in Philippi, a church which gave generously to his ministry.
14. Sharon told me that her church supports 152 missionaries, and gave over \$129,000 last year to missions.
15. Robert Murray McCheyne, the 19th century Scottish preacher said this: "It is but the other day I heard of a child of God who was in very reduced circumstances, her husband being blind, yet who contrived not only to live, but to give to others also. She worked with her own hands that she might have to give...to missions abroad. This was sowing the seed, all the seed she had, for she had no hoard. And did the crop fail? No, it appeared in India. A distant relative died, leaving \$20,000 to her alone! (Keep in mind, Mr. McCheyne died in 1843. \$20,000 was a lot of money in those days.) God is able to do this every day. 'God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work' (II Cor. 9:8). How easily God can give you, by the smallest turn of His providence, more than all you give away in a year! O trust the Lord! But the wicked cannot trust God."
16. John Bunyan put it this way:
"There was a man, some thought him mad,
The more he gave, the more he had."

17. Sir Frances Bacon said, “Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.”
18. God wants us to give systematically, on the Lord’s Day (I Cor. 16:2). Notice the words, “as God hath prospered him.” This indicates that for some people a mere tithe is insufficient. I would say that Luke 6:38 suggests more than a tithe.
19. Not only does God want us to give systematically (as opposed to haphazardly or impulsively), He also wants us to give cheerfully (II Cor. 9:6-8). Many people give with the wrong motive.
20. If God truly has the man (or the woman or child), He has their wallet or pocketbook (II Cor. 8:5).
21. Giving proves our love for God (II Cor. 8:8). One of the most colorful evangelists of the 19th century was Sam Jones. A man once came to him and said, “Mr. Jones, the church has put my assessment (the old Methodist way of supporting the church) too high.” “
 - How much do you pay?” the evangelist inquired.
 - “Five dollars a year.”
 - “Well, how long have you been saved?” asked Sam Jones.
 - “About 4 years.”
 - “What did you do before you were saved?”
 - “I was a drunkard.”
 - “And how much money did you spend on drinking?”
 - “About \$250 a year.”
 - “How much were you worth?”
 - “I rented land and plowed with a steer.”
 - “What have you got now?”
 - “Now I have a good plantation and a span of horses.”
 - “Well,” said Sam Jones emphatically, “you paid the devil \$250 a year for the privilege of plowing with a steer on rented land, and now you don’t want to give to God who saved you, \$5 a year for the privilege of plowing with horses on your own plantation. You’re a rascal from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot.”

III. GOD’S MINIMUM STANDARD IS THE TITHE

1. Tithing is not stressed in the NT, but grace giving is. The tithe is a benchmark or a standard.
2. Tithing is first mentioned in the book of Genesis, about 500 years before the law (Gen. 14:20; 28:22).
3. Tithing was incorporated into the law (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22).

4. According to Malachi, the Israelites were guilty of robbing from God (Mal. 3:8-10). Notice: “In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).
5. Faith promise missions is an offering on top of the tithe. But some people take the faith promise out of the tithe. That’s not right.
6. A few years ago, a member of a Baptist Church in Virginia was accused by the United States Navy of stealing money. He told his pastor that it was all a misunderstanding and he could explain. He insisted he was innocent and asked his pastor to testify as a character witness. Before testifying, his pastor asked the church treasurer if the man tithed. The treasurer said, “I think so, he is a good giver.” At the trial, the pastor said: “If a man is willing to rob God, he certainly is capable of stealing from the U.S. Navy.”
7. I began this message by reading Matthew 6:19—34. Our Lord said in verse 21, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
8. Where is your treasure?
9. The great British soldier, General Charles Gordon was born near London, England in 1833. He distinguished himself as a great soldier during the Crimean War (1853-56), and then he volunteered to join the British forces in China. He was present during the occupation of Peking in 1860 and defended Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion.
10. He returned to England in 1865, where an enthusiastic public had already dubbed him “Chinese Gordon.” When the British government tried to reward him for his magnificent service in China, General Gordon declined all money and titles, but did accept a gold medal on which his name and a record of his 33 engagements were inscribed.
11. After he was killed by Muslim rebels in Sudan, the medal could not be found. After a thorough search, it was finally discovered that he had sent it to Manchester during a famine, with a request that it be melted and used to buy bread for the poor. **In his diary he recorded that the medal was the only earthly thing he valued and that he had given it over to the Lord Jesus Christ.**
12. Oh, if we only had more Christians like General Gordon today!
13. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Years ago, I read a booklet by Larry Burkett that really impressed me. He explained that today people work a lot less harder than they did 100 years ago (shorter work week, modern tools and technology, etc.).
2. Also, we now live an average of eighteen years longer than we did 100 years ago and have at least one-third more disposable income per family.

3. And yet today fewer Americans are tithing and today Americans are giving less to missions than they did 100 years ago.
4. It used to take the average missionary only a few months to get to the mission field. Now it takes over two, and sometimes three years.
5. And yet we wonder why churches today are so weak? One hundred years ago most Christians believed strongly in tithing and giving to missions, but it is not that way today.
6. We need to have our priorities right. Let us do things God's way and He will take care of us and bless us.
7. Many Christians are not obedient when it comes to stewardship. They are not giving like they should.
8. If you have not been a faithful steward, why don't you make up your mind that you are going to make it right today?
9. And if you used to be a faithful steward, but have been derelict in your duties, why don't you make it right?
10. If all our members would give regularly and generously like they should, our church would prosper, and all our members would be better and stronger Christians.

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