

Jesus Teaches on Stewardship

Journey with Jesus

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Let's take our Bibles this morning and let's turn to Luke's Gospel, chapter 16. We're going to jump ahead today to chapter 16 and we're going to see what Jesus says about stewardship. Jesus' teaching on stewardship is the title of the message. If you are a guest with us, you'll find the outline inside the bulletin today and we are on a journey with Jesus. Now, we're going to skip ahead to Luke 16 so when we get there seven or eight months from now, we'll move past this passage but because of next Sunday's Elevated Magnify offering, I want to hear today what Jesus says about stewardship. So we're going to stay in Luke but look at stewardship today from Luke 16.

Will you stand, please, with me and make room for those that are still coming in trying to find a seat and we've got these new chairs so that when you stand up they will just kind of bump you right over away so that someone else can sit there, and so if there is someone needing a place like that, let them in and we're going to read the Scripture and then we are going to go right into the message this morning for the sake of time. I've got a lot to cover here and I'm excited about all of it. Read with me Luke 16 beginning in verse 1 and we will read down through verse 13.

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An

hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Now those of you that have been members for a while, I usually preach about three weeks on stewardship during February or March. Some churches have a month of what they call stewardship month. This year we are going to do it in one Sunday morning. That means two things: 1, I have great confidence in the power of the Bible; and 2, I have great confidence in you. You are a smart congregation, you're ready to go, you're wide awake and you'll get it today, all right? So open your hearts, open your minds and let's see what God says today about stewardship.

Let's pray together.

God, please bless your word to our hearts today and, Holy Spirit of God, open us in understanding that we might know exactly what these verses mean, and mostly then, help us to obey your word and learn from this parable. I ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated.

In John 15, Jesus had been in a house of one of the chief Pharisees and in this particular house he had been giving parables to the Pharisees and he was challenging the Pharisees because many times they were more concerned with the external than they were with the heart. In fact, when you think about the Pharisees, you're always mindful of their outer garments and their prayer phylacteries. They had these prayer ropes that they would carry to the side, they would take their garments and they would fluff them out in a sign of showy pride. In fact, the Bible says in Matthew 23:5, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." In other words, the Pharisees were men filled with pride and Jesus was challenging that pride. For example, in Luke 15, he gave the parable of the prodigal son and in the parable of the prodigal son he likens the elder brother to one of these Pharisees. The elder brother was so filled with pride he was almost mad when the younger brother came back instead of being happy that he was getting right with God. And Jesus was teaching these Pharisees through what we call parabolic teaching. He was giving them the understanding of truth in the form of stories. But when he comes to Luke 16, Jesus directs his teaching to his disciples, to Christian people like you and like me, and he's teaching

them about the importance of how to handle money and challenging them that they would not have the wrong attitudes that the Pharisees had concerning money and stewardship. And this parable that we're going to read this morning reminds us of a very fundamental truth to Christian living and that is that all of us one day will give an account to Jesus for the way we live this life and for the way we steward the blessings that God gives to us. All of us one day will give an account.

Now, when you read in this text you are going to read the word "steward." Verse 16 says, "There was a certain man which had a steward." So by way of introduction, I want you to be reminded that a steward is one who manages the affairs of another, okay? A steward is one who manages the affairs of another and if contrast this to the teaching that we will find this morning in other Scriptures, the truth that we are going to see presented is that God is the owner of everything and we are to be the stewards of his blessings to us, and so we are simply managing the affairs of God here on this earth. Every good gift comes down from above, from the Father in heaven. He is the owner. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He owns the wealth in every mine. He even owns the mines, all right? So God owns it all, he gives to us, and what he gives to us, he said, "Here's some stuff. Take care of it. Be wise with it. Make sure to honor me with it along the way."

Now, in fact, we see that principle very clearly in verse 2 because this particular owner says in verse 2 to his servant, "give an account of thy stewardship." Would you say that phrase with me, please? "Give an account of thy stewardship." One more time, "give an account of thy stewardship." So here we see a parable about an owner telling the servant, the manager, "Hey, I want to know how you're doing with my stuff."

Now by way of introduction, let me also remind you this morning of this fact: that in Matthew, Mark and Luke, one out of every six verses in those Gospels speaks about money or possessions or stewardship. One out of six. The fact of the matter is that of the 29 parables Jesus gave, 16 of those dealt with money or stewardship. In other words, Jesus talked about it a lot because Jesus tells us in the New Testament, "Where your treasure is, that is where your heart is going to be." The majority of my treasure is in another state or in an object or in something that I have purchased, that's what I'm thinking about all the time. So Jesus talked a lot about money. As a matter of fact, it kind of makes me feel under conviction that I'm only preaching one Sunday morning about it this year because Jesus wasn't embarrassed to talk about it. He challenged people to seek first the kingdom of God. In fact, he spoke more about money than he did about heaven. He spoke more about money than he did about hell. Jesus spoke a lot about how we take care of the things that he gives to us because a steward is someone who manages the affairs of another and in 1 Corinthians 4:2 tells us, "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

So whether it's the Bible God has given to us or whether it's the blessings God gives to us, he wants us to steward all of it. In fact, let me give you four realms of stewardship as we introduce the message today, four things that all of us need to remember as stewards because all of these are gifts from God. First of all, think about your time. Ephesians 5 tells us, "redeem the time." Now, I hope you are aware of the simple fact that every day

and every breath is a gift from God. This time right here, this next 30 to 47 minutes, depending on how you listen, is God's gift to us today. This little time we have right here. And God says, "I have given you certain numbers of days," and he says, "In fact, count your days, number your days and be wise with them." And God says, "I want you to redeem that time. Don't waste your days but use your days for my purposes. Be a good steward of your time."

Sometimes we think about stewardship in the realm of talents. God has given us gifts, 1 Peter 4:10, abilities, and God has given some the ability to help and minister and teach and organize and serve and witness and God says, "I want you to use those talents. Don't waste them." Don't hide them in the garage somewhere. If you can serve God with some of these talents, find a way to serve God because one day you are going to give an account to God about how you did with that good singing voice he gave you. Now, if he didn't give you a good singing voice, don't get in the choir and fake it, okay? But if you've got a good singing voice, you ought to use that talent for God today. You see, it's a gift.

Thirdly, we ought to think about the Gospel as a stewardship. How many of you realize that when you were saved God presented to you the Gospel? In fact, 1 Thessalonians 2:4 says he has entrusted the Gospel to us and as Christians we need to steward this. We don't want to just sit on the Gospel. We want to share the Gospel. Lancaster Baptist Church every year publishes hundreds of thousands of copies of the Gospel and we take them throughout the community and we share Bibles throughout the community and we do everything we can on the radio and the internet to promote the Gospel. God gave it to us, we don't want to squander it. We want to share it with everybody. That's just good stewardship.

Then fourthly, we need to be good stewards with our treasures. God gave you a job, he gives you a paycheck, he gives you a promotion, he gives you the sale of a car or a cow or whatever else and God says, "Hey, when I prosper you, I want you to remember me and I want you to steward that blessing very well."

Now, these are some basic truths about stewardship and what it means to be a steward. Having said these things, I want you to jump into the text with me and let's learn the story that Jesus shared with his disciples in Luke 16. If you're taking notes, notice first of all, the master's rebuke. The master's rebuke. "There was a certain rich man," verse 1, "which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods." Notice the accusation of the master. The master heard that his steward had wasted his money and the Bible says that he accused him in verse 1, that he had wasted his money. And the word "accused" means "to bring charges with a hostile intent." In other words, this boss brought his steward and brought him onto the carpet, called him on the carpet and kind of with an angry fashion said, "Hey, you are wasting my business. You have wasted my money. What's going on here?" How many of you have ever been called on the carpet? Anybody want to be honest about that? Most all of you that don't have your hands up right now, there is going to be an invitation right at the end of the service and you can confess your sin of whatever. So how many of you have ever been called on the carpet?

My hand is raised up. All of us, even when we were kids. I want you to get that picture in your mind because this man is calling his servant in on the carpet saying, "What is going on here? This is not right." He's making that accusation to him.

Secondly, notice the accounting of the steward. The Bible says in verse 2 that this master calls his servant and says unto him, "How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship." Let's say that phrase together again, "give an account of thy stewardship." So he is called on the carpet to give an account. The word "stewardship," again means "the management of the affairs of another." So he said, "How are you doing with what I gave you?" Now, keep this in mind because all of us will stand before the Lord and he will not be angry, thank God our sins have been blotted out at the cross, but we're going to give an account for how we did with what he gave us. So there is an accounting time and this is an accounting time where he says, "give an account of thy stewardship."

Now, last week we had the certified public accounting firm come through our church like they do every year and they came through and they do a full audit of all the books of the ministries here and they are not as concerned with the volume of our offerings and so forth, they're not as concerned with the amount of the monies as they are with how wisely have we handled what has been given. And they spend a week or so looking at all that and they give that report and so forth, and this is what the manager is hearing from his boss, he's hearing, "I gave you some stuff. How did you do with what I gave to you? Did you manage it well? Did you steward it wisely?" Again, I cannot stress to you enough if you are a Christian, your sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus, yes, you will not stand judgment for your sin, but you will stand before Jesus for the way you served him, and I want you to remember just like this steward was standing before his master, we will stand before Jesus.

So look in your notes at Romans 14:10 because this is where the dots get connected, Romans 14:10, "why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Every single one of us. You could study 2 Corinthians, there are other passages, every single one of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we will give an account of how we lived this life and how we stewarded the blessings of God. Luke 12:20, "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" So we are all going to give an account to the Lord.

Now, people have different thoughts in their mind of what that's going to be like. I hear some crazy ideas about what it's going to be like to see the Lord and to go to heaven and most of the weird stories have something to do with standing before St. Peter. Folks, you're not going to stand before St. Peter. By the way, we're going to learn in just a few weeks in Luke's Gospel that Peter had a mother-in-law and I want to ask you what kind of a man would want a mother-in-law without a wife? Just a thought. Just a thought. If he was the first pope, he had a wife. Go figure it out. We'll study that. But anyways, we're not going to stand before Peter, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to stand before Jesus Christ, all right? Romans 14:10.

I heard about one preacher who died and went up to heaven and he noticed a New York cabdriver way in front of him in the line and had a much nicer mansion. The preacher went to St. Peter and he said, "You know, I devoted my entire life to my congregation, I preached the word of God every week." And Peter said, "Well, I'm sorry, sir, but our policy is to reward results." And St. Peter looked at him and said, "Now, Reverend, what happened whenever you gave a sermon down there?" And the pastor said, "Well, a lot of the folks did go to sleep. I have to admit that." "Exactly," said St. Peter, "and when people rode in this guy's taxi they not only stayed awake, they prayed."

Now, it isn't going to be just like that, okay? It's not going to be like we rationalize how we are going to get a better place or what it's going to be like in that way, but we are going to stand before the Lord and we are going to give an account for our stewardship: your time, your talent, your treasure. You were saved, did you tell anybody else how to be saved? What did you do with what you know? We will give an account.

So the master is rebuking the steward at this point. Notice, secondly, the steward's response. What does this man do with that news? How does he respond? How will you respond this morning? Well, in verse 3 the Bible says, "Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." He's thinking, "Man, I'm about to lose my job. He's threatening me with my job. What am I going to do?" And I love what he says at first, "I cannot dig." Now, folks, I don't think that means he couldn't physically dig with a shovel, I think it means, "Dude, I've got a white-collar job. I can't go back working at McDonald's. I can't go back digging ditches." And then the next thing he says here in verse 3, he says, "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." He's like, "I don't want to go beg. That's embarrassing. What am I going to do? I'm about to lose my job because the boss is upset." We see his dilemma is very clear, notice this, his dilemma was very clear, "What in the world am I going to do?" By the way, Christian friend, Proverbs 13:4 says, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Let me encourage you that if you are ever called into the boss's office, that you'll have a clear conscience, you'll look him right in the eye knowing that you're one of the hardest working people they've ever had, but this man couldn't do that. He's about to lose his job because he had been wasting the things that had been given to him.

His dilemma is clear but notice, secondly, his decision. Notice his decision. Here's what he says in verse 4, "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." He says, "I'm going to do my best so that if I lose this job, they'll at least know who I am. They'll remember me."

"So he called," verse 5, "every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation

wiser than the children of light." He goes to these different people that he had been doing business with, one man owed 875 gallons of oil to his boss, one man owed 1,100 bushels of wheat to his boss, and so this steward begins to make preparation so that his boss could receive some of the money that was due to him. Perhaps he lowered the amount that was owed. Perhaps the steward took some of his commission off the top. I don't know how he came to the deal, all I know is he quickly made arrangements and the Bible tells us that as he made these arrangements, that the master was pleased, verse 8, "the Lord commended the unjust steward." He made a decision. It was late in the game but he was going to do the best that he could.

I don't know all of you, some of you perhaps have not given to the Lord as you should for decades, maybe you got saved when you were 16 years old, but the fact is no matter where you are, even if it's late in your game, it's never too late to start honoring God. It's never too late to do your best as a steward and this man said, "Whoa, I have been negligent. I'm about ready to lose my job. How can I make this right? How can I do my very best to make this right?" So he went and did what he could. Now, all of us need to remember the importance of doing our best, and all of us need to remember the importance of making right decisions in stewardship, even if you haven't done well in the past. This is the beginning, beginning today. It was for this man. That's why he said in verse 4, "I am resolved what I am going to do."

I heard about a man whose wife had her credit cards stolen and so he called the police and said, "Hey, my wife's credit cards were stolen. I need to report it but," he said, "really honestly, you don't have to look too hard for them, the thief is using them far less than she did." Sometimes we can get in a bind financially and, you know, we'll pay MasterCard 17% but we won't tithe 10 to the Lord, and there just comes some point in your life where you say, "This is nuts. I am resolved that from now on I'm going to seek first the kingdom of my God. From now on, I'm going to manage the affairs of my house properly." So the steward had a good response.

Notice, thirdly this morning, not only the master's rebuke, not only the steward's response, but notice the Lord's recommendations. Now, here we get to the application of the message and I want you to get this. It's so very important. Notice what the Lord begins to say to these his disciples. In verse 8 he says, "the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The Lord said to his steward, the master said to his manager, "You have done well. At least you came back and finished strong. You made some good decisions here at the end." It's like the man in Matthew 25:21 where it says, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Throughout the Scripture you'll find this principle, that if you'll do well with what God gives you, he will commend you for doing well with what he gave you. So here's the Lord's recommendation if you're taking notes. A. Be a wise steward. Be a wise steward. It says in verse 8, "because he had done wisely." He had done wisely. You and I need to prepare wisely. We don't need to think always just at the last minute. This man had prepared wisely.

I heard about a father-in-law to be, he was meeting with this young man that was dating his daughter and he knew that they were thinking of marriage and the father began to ask questions, and I've been through that twice and I'm going to tell you what, I had a ton of questions too. And one of the questions I had was the same question this man had, he looked the young man in the eyes and he said, "I want to know this. If you want to marry my daughter, how much money do you have in the bank?" And you say, "Boy, that's a tough question." When you've got a daughter that's going to get married, you'll ask him too. "How much money do you have in the bank?" And the guy looked at him and he said, "I don't know, I haven't shaken it lately." That's not a reassuring answer if you have a daughter that is going to get married, right? And you know, the fact of the matter is that a young man like that needs to be told, "Hey, if you want to marry my daughter, you'd better get past the piggy bank and go down to Wells Fargo or Bank of America and get serious about life."

You see, you need to plan wisely and this master is saying to this servant, "Finally in making these kinds of negotiations, in bringing payment back, you have been wise in your dealings." You need to prepare wisely. Be disciplined. That may include having a family budget. That may include sitting down and making a plan for paying off debt. But prepare wisely. This is why we give out in these services as we did just a moment ago, this large card, and this is why we passed this out this morning, this is why in October we give a prayer reminder, and back in January we had the Elevated Magnify service, and this is why we passed this out today, to say, "Look, don't let next week's offering just be the last minute. Hey, whatever. I'll give a tip like I do at the restaurant." But this should be something we literally are thinking about and praying about, "What can I do on a weekly basis or a monthly basis or over all of next year? And do I tithe and is that even in my budget?" We need to plan wisely as we prepare and as we look forward to what God would have us to do.

The Bible teaches that principle. Look in your notes at Luke 14:28, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" You see, this is something we do in our lives. We consider where we are at and how we can be a part. Look at 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." As we approach the Elevated Magnify offering next Sunday, we need to sit down in prayer and we need to purpose in our heart in prayer with God, "God, what do you want me to do?" Not grudgingly like, "Ah, I'd better do this. Man, they are really preaching about it at the church and all they want is money. He preached a whole sermon, one out of 52 on money. I'd better give because they are probably going to come knocking at my door about it." Look, by the way, if that's how your spirit is, don't give because God loves a cheerful giver. I heard a preacher years ago, he said, "God loves a cheerful giver but he'll take it from a grump." I disagree with that. God wants us to truly be in love with him. When we give to him, he wants it to be not like we're writing a check to the IRS but like we're putting an engagement ring on our sweetheart's finger. "I'm excited to give this to you, Lord." And when we have these offerings, these buildings and many times multimillion dollar projects, it just takes sacrificial loving

offerings to make it happen, and it's a joyous time. It's not a hard time. It is a blessing to be a part. Every man must purpose in his heart. So the Bible says prepare wisely.

Notice secondly, we are to prepare eternally. Now, I want you to look at a verse. I've never preached this verse ever before at our church and when you first read it, it's intriguing but you're not sure how to break it down. So let's read it and then let's break it down. Verse 9, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Now, I don't know where you are or how you read the Bible, I read a verse like that and I go, "Cool, what does it mean?" So I want to share this with you because it teaches us how to be a wise steward who is preparing for eternity. This verse is telling us that when we use our wealth for good, we can help influence others to know Christ.

So notice here, first of all it says in verse 9, "make to yourselves friends of mammon." Mammon is an Aramaic word that means money. God says, "I want you to make yourselves friends of mammon," but notice it says, "of the mammon of unrighteousness." So this is money, money is something that though it is referred to here as unrighteous mammon, can be sanctified for God's use. It can be set apart. "Lord, I want this to be used for your purposes." Mammon that is called unrighteous, then, can be used for God and what verse 9 is telling us is to use our affluence for eternal influence. God says, "Take the blessings I have given to you, your temporal affluence, and use it for eternal influence."

Now, we're going to see that in just a moment even more but before I go to the second part of that verse, let me ask you this question: how many of you believe that as a pastor what I'm doing in this church should come forth from the Bible? I'd better get the right book in my hand. This is the Bible. These are my sermon notes. All right, from the Bible. As a pastor, that the way we operate the church should be biblically based? And I want to show you why it is in this principle of giving and I want you to look in your notes at 1 Timothy because here's the Apostle Paul telling the pastors what to do in the church and all I'm trying to do is what he said. Notice what it says in 1 Timothy 6:17, "Charge them," okay, that's what I'm doing right now. I'm challenging you to think about your giving, I'm charging you and notice what it says, "Charge them that are rich in this world." How many of you would agree with me that every American is rich in this world? Come on, help me. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." There it is again, he's the owner, we're the steward. He gives it all to us. Verse 18, what are we supposed to do, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." God says, "Tell the people to be ready to give, ready to distribute and willing to communicate." The word "communicate" means "to give." We ought not to come in next week just as a haphazard thought or even every week with our tithing, we need to be thinking about it, preparing for it. Ready. "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Now, there is no greater way to give than to give to the glory of God and for the purpose of helping people to know God, and we need to prepare wisely. I heard about a little boy

and his dad and they were playing in the backyard, they were playing store. So the boy sold a pair of binoculars and the dad said, "How much are the binoculars?" And they began to negotiate and the dad said, "All right, I'll tell you what, son, I'll give you five cents for the binoculars." And the little boy said, "Dad, we're playing store, not church."

Now, we need to teach our children that we truly believe in seeking first the kingdom of God; that we truly are preparing wisely, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Why? Look at the second part of the verse, verse 9, "that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Now, the word "fail" means "die." So God says, "If you'll use your affluence for eternal influence and if you'll take that unrighteous mammon and if you'll give it to me, if you'll lay up treasure in heaven, then there will be people that will welcome you into heaven. They will welcome you into heaven and you will realize that what you gave helped them to know Jesus and helped them to come to know what it means to be a Christian living in heaven."

Let me illustrate it this way: there are two times a year that we pass out cards at this church, once is for the building program and every October for the missionary program, and these are special offerings above the regular tithe. And last October we passed out the commitment cards and this church, by the grace of God, is supporting more than 200 foreign missionaries overseas. Right now while I'm on this platform, there are people, every one of those dots represents a city or a place in a country where people are being supported from Lancaster Baptist Church, hundreds of dollars a month, starting churches, winning souls, helping poor and needy people to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. And when we fail, some of those people are going to welcome us into eternal habitations. Some of those people are going to welcome us into heaven and do you know what they are going to say? "Thank you for giving to the Lord. Because you gave, a missionary came and I'm from Africa, I'm from Thailand, I'm from China, but I'm in heaven with you now because you were willing to be a steward who gave so that I might hear the Gospel." By the way, that's why every week of my life Terry and I give to the missions program of Lancaster Baptist Church. We are so thankful that we can be a part of that.

But then I also want you to think about this year, not only finishing the West wing and then preparing for the East wing and the future broadening of this auditorium, but also some time in the next 12 to 18 months we want to build the bus barn and relocate the parking of the buses over here where we can work on them because we want to bring children to come to Lancaster Baptist Church so that they can know more about Jesus. In fact, I have some of them with me right here this morning. Boys and girls, come up here. I want to welcome you to big church today. Come on up here. These are some kids. Every week more than 500 to 600 boys and girls come to Lancaster Baptist Church. You'll never meet them. You'll never get to know them. But I want to tell you that because of your tithes, this church spends about \$250,000 a year to run and gas and insure and repair buses so that children like this can come to Lancaster Baptist Church.

So I want you to meet a couple of them this morning and I want to make sure I get the name. You're Dede, right? Dede's 12 and tell us, now what bus route do you ride to church? "Route 11." Route 11. Who is your bus captain? "Andrew Hutchins." Andrew

Hutchins, all right. And tell all these folks here kind of like what you do on the bus coming into church? "We just sing songs and we just have a lot of fun on the buses and we pass out candy sometimes." Awesome. Now, do you sleep on the bus? "No." You sing songs, right? Now, when you come to church, do you go to sleep? "No." Just these folks do that, right? "Yes, sir." That's right. So when you come to church, what do they do when you come to church? "The same thing that we do on the bus but they teach us about the Bible like we're doing now." That's awesome. Teach about the Bible. By the way, some of you this is new to you, they don't teach the Bible in public school anymore. A lot of homes where a lot of our bus kids come from, they don't teach the Bible there. Somebody has to teach the Bible to this generation. I'm glad that Dede has learned the Bible. That's awesome, Dede. We are so thankful for that.

Let me see now here, who's next here? Lionel. Come over here, buddy. How old are you, Lionel? You told me at the first service, 10? "Yes." And that means you are in fifth-grade, right? "Yes." How long have you been riding the bus? "Three years." Three years, that is fantastic. And do you have sisters or brothers that ride the bus with you? "I have three sisters that ride the bus with me and sometimes my cousins." Sometimes your cousins. Well, you bring all your friends, anybody that wants to come, okay? We're glad you're riding the bus. You know, I got saved when I was 10, just your same size, your same age, and we're very glad you're coming to Lancaster Baptist.

You guys have a camera, put the camera on these boys and girls. These are handsome kids right here. A little closer on them, not on me, all right? The first service they had it on the back of my bald head so let's try to avoid that, okay? Thank you very much.

Okay, Asia, come over here, right over here. This is Asia. Asia, how old are you? "14." 14 and how long have you been riding the bus? "10 and a half years." 10 and half years, that is awesome, Asia. And who is your bus captain? "Brother Jacob." Brother Jacob. He's a good man. Now, when you come in, do they have a class for girls that are 14 like you? And is it tenth grade and ninth grade or what grades? "Yeah, tenth grade to ninth grade." All right, and that's girls and boys or just the girls? "Girls and boys." Those boys don't bug you, do they? "No." All right, good. If they do, just whop them, okay? And we're sure glad you're coming and what are you learning about right now in church? "Just about God and Jesus." Learning more about Jesus? That's awesome. We're very glad you're coming to our church. So thankful.

And tell us your name again, "Quinique." And Quinique, how long have you been coming to church? "Two years." Two years. That is great. Whose bus do you ride? "Brother Downey." John Downey. You know, I led Brother Downey to Christ 26 years ago and he got saved and now he's helping you know about the Lord and that's just awesome and we're so glad that you're coming and these are boys and girls that you're helping to reach with the Gospel. Aren't you thankful they are a part of Lancaster Baptist Church? Let them know you are glad they're here.

Now, I want them to stay up here and let's meet a couple of other bus kids right now because I want you to understand that these are who is going to welcome us into eternal

habitations if we're giving to the work of the Lord. It's something we can be thankful for. Let's see here, Brother Zachary, why don't you come up here. Ms. H. why don't you come up? Is Brother Williams, Reggie Williams in here? I'm not sure who all I've got in this service. Come on up here. Come on up here, brother, and let's meet some of these other bus kids here for just a minute. I want you to get the full cycle picture in your mind, okay?

So let's start over here. Danielle, come right over here. Danielle, how are you? "I'm okay." I'm not going to ask you how old you are. How does that sound, okay? Danielle, when did you first start riding the bus? "When I was eight years old." Eight years old, where was that at? "In Michigan." That is awesome and how old were you when you accepted Christ? "Eight." Eight years old. Well, I want to challenge you girls, she started when she was eight and she's still in church so be faithful to the Lord, and if you ever need help, you let us know. Danielle serves now on the staff here at West Coast Baptist College and I'm so thankful for that.

Dr. Zachary, step up here for a minute. How old were you when you rode the bus? "I was seven." Seven years old and how long after that until you accepted Jesus? "I started riding on Monday for vacation Bible school and got saved on Friday." Got saved on Friday, and even as a child, he made that decision and he's still in church 79 years later. No, how many years later? Some years later. Those of you that don't know Dr. Zachary, he's the head of the music department at West Coast Baptist College and has an earned doctorate in what, Dr. Zachary? "A Doctorate of musical arts and piano performance from the American Conservatory in Chicago." And he's a bus kid and someone knocked on his door, some people gave money in their church so the church could run the bus so he could be saved.

Brother Reggie, come over here, would you? This is Brother Reggie Williams and Brother Reggie teaches an adult Bible class in our church. When did you ride the bus, Brother Reggie? "At the age, I started at the age of eight and was saved at the age of 10, but through the military, my best friend on base and through my bus captain, through the Awana program, I came to know Christ." Your dad was in the military and they ran a bus onto the base. "Correct, yes." What base was that? "California." Up in Northern California. "That's right." And Brother Reggie is our assistant dean of men here at West Coast Baptist College and he's a bus kid.

I just want you to remember that bus kids need the Lord and as we give this auditorium is for everyone that would come and hear the Gospel and we're trying to help our bus ministry get stronger to keep the buses rolling. In fact, the state has new emissions laws and in the next two years we have to buy all new buses or convert some of our existing buses over for the emissions laws, and a lot of churches have quit running buses but we just believe kids like this need the Gospel. And we don't get any federal money to run our buses. Just thought I'd share that with you. None of the stimulus package comes to our church, but when God stimulates your heart, a lot of good things still happen, amen? Let's thank all these bus kids for helping us today.

You say, "Well, how does that work, pastor?" Look in your notes at Matthew 6:19. Don't miss this, Matthew 6:19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In other words, folks, God says, "Be a wise steward. Don't save up for all this stuff that is going to rust or get stolen. Lay some of it on ahead so that you'll know when you're with the Lord that you helped others to know the Lord. Be a wise steward."

Secondly, letter B: be a faithful steward. In verse 10 it says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Learn how to be faithful, not just in your personal savings or your 401(k) or whatever, learn how to be faithful in the things of heaven, laying up in store in heaven. And it says here be faithful in the least. Football coach, Tony D., said, "Character begins with the little things in life." We must show that we can be trusted with even the trivial things. One time a guy said to me, "Pastor, when I win the lottery I'm going to give a lot of money to the church." I said, "No, you won't. You're not giving from what you have now, you won't give from what you have then." God wants us to start where we are, ladies and gentlemen, and God wants us to be faithful stewards from where we are right now.

Look at verse 11, it says, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" When my wife and I moved to Lancaster back in 1986, we had about \$4,000 in our life savings and the church said, "Pastor, we want you to come. We don't have a salary to offer. We don't have a way to move you here, even, but if you'll get here, will let you preach for us." And I believed that is what God wanted me to do. We rented a Ryder truck and loaded our stuff. We took some more of our money and paid first and last month's rent for an apartment in downtown Lancaster. We took the rest of the money and bought paint for the inside of the old building and put the rest of it in the offering. Five days after becoming a pastor, I was flat broke. We took everything we had and poured it into getting started here and I'm telling you, tens of thousands of people have been saved and we do not regret for one moment what we have given to the Lord and time and time again with you, we have laid aside and sacrificially given again so that more people would be saved, so that when we fail, that we will be received in the eternal habitations by men and women who will say, "Thank you for giving to the Lord." Before we started taking a salary at the pastorate of this church, we began supporting missionaries overseas because we truly believed give and it shall be given unto you. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. We must be faithful when we just have a little if we are going to be faithful when God gives us more because God blesses faithfulness.

The Bible says in verse 12, "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Carl Henry said, "I don't think God despises riches, in fact, he gives them to us. What he despises is the misuse of them. He rewards stewardship."

My Bible says that my God shall display all of your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus and, my friend, you cannot out give God. That's why we want to be wise stewards, that's why we want to be faithful stewards, and thirdly and finally, that's why we want to be committed stewards. Notice what it says as we close, verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters." Some of you this morning need to get off the fence of indecision and you need to recognize it's not about working for money, it's about working for God. "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Listen, long before a church member stops going to church, long before they stop reading their Bible, they will stop giving because where your treasure is, that is where your heart is also and you can't serve two masters. You're going to serve God or you're going to serve money. And that's why God says, "Look, I want you to commit your heart to me." Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. I don't want to come in second place after your job. I don't want to come in third place after your goals and your savings. I want to be at the very top of the list." You see, my friend, money is a great servant but it's a lousy god and it's not to be our god. It's something that we are to recognize is a servant for the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Years ago at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, the pastor was invited to lunch at one of the farmer's houses after church and he said, "Sure, I'll be glad to come." So he went over to the farmer's house and there was a beautiful meal prepared. That meal had mashed potatoes and gravy and roast beef and corn and rolls and butter and honey. What else can I say to make you really hungry right now? The pastor saw that meal there and they said, "It'll be about 5 or 10 minutes and we'll be ready to eat." The farmer took the pastor up to the top of the house to an observation deck and the farmer said, "Pastor, let me show you a little bit of our farm." He said, "I just want you to see what we have here. First of all, if you look everything to the north here, all of the cattle as far as you can see in that direction," he said, "we own all that in that direction." He said, "If you look over here at the south, the oil rigs, all the trucks, the machinery as far as you can see out that way, we own it in that direction." He said, "Pastor, if you look over here to the east, you'll see the wheat and the crops. As far as you can see in that direction, we own it out there too." And then the farmer said, "If you look over here to the west, you'll see the hills and the trees and as far as you can see in that direction, we own it." And the pastor said, "That's wonderful, sir, but let me ask you a question: how much do you own in that direction?" That's the question. How much do you own in that direction.

Oh, we must commit, then, that we will labor for the Lord. You cannot serve God and mammon. Notice in Deuteronomy 14:23, "And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always." God says, "I'm going to bless you but I want you to tithe so that you'll always fear me and remember me and honor me and put me in the first place."

So here's the question: what kind of a steward will you become? We know who owns it all. It's only because of God that we're breathing right now. It's only because of God that

we'll be eating in the next moment. He's the owner of everything but how are we going to steward what he has given to us? Will you follow the teaching of Jesus and be a wise steward? Will you follow the teaching of Jesus and be a faithful steward, a committed steward, someone that is truly serving him? Or will you go on wasting life like the unwise man? Please remember, my friend, there will be an accounting of our stewardship. We will stand before the Lord.

Someone might be here today and say, "You know, it's just a little tough. I mean, this idea of tithing and giving a special offering for the ongoing construction, the Elevate and Magnify offering. All of this, I understand, I see the kids, I see these people that got saved because others gave, you know, but it's not coming together." Well, let me try one more verse before we close because if nothing else brings it together, this verse should, John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God loved and God gave. We love him, we give to him.

Friends, the reason we give is because of what he has given to us. And by the way, if you have never received God's gift of eternal life, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," that's Jesus, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." God is not willing that any should perish. God does not want you to spend eternity in hell. God said, "I sent my Son so that you could be rescued from hell, so that you could have a home in heaven," and if you have never accepted Christ as your Savior, then just forget what I've been saying today about giving money and receive something, receive salvation through Jesus Christ. But if you have received salvation, there is no greater reason to give than because of what he has already given to you.

Let's pray, shall we?

Father in heaven, thank you for helping us to see how to be better stewards. Forgive us, Lord, for the things and the time that we have wasted. For those times when we have not given as we should, help us to wake up like this steward did, help us to say, "I know what I'll do, I resolve to do right for the rest of my life." Speak to us today, Lord, that we might be more committed and faithful stewards.

Thank you so much for joining us today. If this message has helped you, we hope you will share with a friend or family member. We always love to hear from those whom God has changed through his word. Share your story with us at lancasterbaptist.org/contact.