

Occupy Till I Come – Living as Faithful Stewards of Christ

A distraught man frantically rode his horse up to John Wesley, shouting, “Mr. Wesley, Mr. Wesley, something terrible has happened! Your house has burned to the ground!” Weighing the news for a moment, Wesley replied, “No. *The Lord’s* house burned to the ground. That means one less responsibility for me.” We might say, “Get real,” but Wesley’s reaction didn’t stem from a denial of reality. Rather, it sprang from life’s most basic reality – that God is the owner of all things, and that we are simply His stewards.

Jerry Caven had a successful restaurant chain, two banks, a ranch, a farm, and several real estate ventures. At age 59, he was searching for a nice lakeside retirement home. But *the Owner* had other plans. “God led us to put our money and time overseas,” Jerry says. “It’s been exciting. Before, we gave token amounts. Now we put substantial money into missions. We often go to India.” What changed the Caven’s attitude toward giving? “It was realizing God’s ownership,” Jerry explains. “Once we understood we were giving away *God’s* money to do *God’s* work, we discovered a peace and joy we never had back when we thought it was money!”

John Wesley and Jerry Caven have something in common that all of us need to cultivate: a life-changing understanding of God’s ownership and our stewardship.

How a believer handles the stewardship of his finances and possessions communicates much about his or her spiritual condition. To underscore how important the subject of money and possessions is to God, sixteen of Christ’s thirty-eight parables speak about how people should handle earthly treasure. In fact, our Lord taught more about such stewardship (one out of every ten verses in the Gospels) than about heaven and hell combined.¹

A Resolve to be made

¹ John MacArthur, *Whose Money is it Anyways?* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing), 3.

By faith in God’s promises and for the glory of His name, I will seek to become a better steward of the resources God has entrusted to me, starting today.

1. God owns everything

From beginning to end, Scripture emphasizes God’s lordship over, and [therefore] ownership of, everyone and everything.

Because He *is* sovereign Lord, He has the right and might to create all things; and, because He created all things, He is therefore the rightful Lord of and over all things:

- **Acts 17:24-25** – “The God who made the world and everything in it, being² Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”
- **Colossians 1:15-17** (LSB) – “Who³ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn⁴ of all creation. For in Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”
- **Psalms 24:1-2** – “The earth is the LORD’S⁵ and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the seas.”
- **Psalms 50:10-12** – “Indeed⁶, every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is Mine.”

² This participle could rightly be translated, “Because/since He is Lord...”. See NET note.

³ Referring to Jesus.

⁴ I.e., rightful owner and ruler of. NLT = “and He is supreme over all creation.” Cf. **Hebrews 1:2**.

⁵ In the Hebrew, לַיהוָה (“to/for/of YHWH”) is fronted for emphasis.

⁶ “For/because” in an excellent translation. I have decided to translate *ki* as “Indeed/certainly.”

- **Deuteronomy 10:14** – “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”
- **1 Chronicles 29:11-12** – “Yours alone, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.”

2. Since God owns everything, we are but stewards of His property

A steward is “someone an owner entrusts with the management of his assets.” A *good* steward manages the owner’s assets for the owner’s *benefit*.

Joe Rigney writes,

We see from the creation account that **gifts are provision for mission**. **The call to have dominion is a call to exercise wise rule over God’s world as His vice-regent**. Man is an under-king, a steward of God’s creation, charged with establishing God’s rule and reign over the unsubdued earth. Thus, not only is man called to protect sacred space, but man is called to extend sacred space, so that **the earth is filed with God’s glory through a glorious society of His image bearers**. **To accomplish this task, man will need God’s wisdom.**⁷

Some Scriptures texts regarding our stewardship

- **1 Peter 4:10-11** – “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, **as good stewards of God’s varied grace**: whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

- **Leviticus 25:23** (NIV) – “The land is Mine and you are but aliens and My tenants.”
- **1 Corinthians 4:7** – “What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”
- **1 Chronicles 29:14, 16** – “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you...O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for Your holy name comes from Your hand is all your own.”
- **Haggai 2:8** – “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD of Hosts.
- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** – “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”
- **Romans 14:8** – “So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”
- **James 1:16-17** – “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

Whenever we forget this vital principle, selfishness and sin will rear their ugly heads.

- **Matthew 20:1-15** – parable of the laborers in the vineyard
- **Matthew 25:18, 24** – parable of the talents
- Illustration of kids not sharing toys. Why? They forgot the toys aren’t theirs.
 - Just as hard for us adults to share when we forget that all we have ‘is on loan.’

Conclusion:

The only question that remains, then, is are we *good* stewards, or *bad* stewards?

- In the financial world, a good investment manager doesn't do with his client's holdings what he feels like. Why? Because he knows *those assets don't belong to him*; they belong to his client. Good stewards always act in the owners' best interests, not their own.
- A *good* steward makes it his aim to find out what that owner wants done with his assets, and then to prudently carry out his will.

A Resolve to be made

- By faith in God's promises and for the glory of His name, I will seek to become a better steward of the resources God has entrusted to me, starting today.

Soli Deo Gloria!!

Addendum:

John Wesley's 4 questions he asked himself before buying something:

1. In spending this money, am I acting as if I owned it, or am I acting as the Lord's trustee?
2. What Scripture passages require me to spend this money this way?
3. Can I offer up this purchase as a sacrifice to the Lord?
4. Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?