

Sunday by Sunday

(Reflections on Stewardship, based on the RCL gospels, Year A)

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Advent 1 - Matthew 24:36-44

Today's gospel, marking the beginning of the new Church year, sounds pretty scary! Jesus reminds us that things can change very quickly and that there is a need to stay alert. As one who wants to live as a faithful steward, how does my life show that I am alert and participating in bringing God's dream for creation to reality?

Advent 2 - Matthew 3:1-12

Like so many prophets before him, John the Baptist called on people to change their ways. And the proof of these changes would be seen in the fruit borne out in their lives. Simply saying that we are stewards isn't enough, is it? It will be seen in the fruit of our own lives. What kind of fruit do others see from the way you live?

Advent 3 - Matthew 11:2-11

Jesus answers John's question by pointing to the signs that God's dream for creation are there for all to see. God's dream for creation is that all live in "shalom," a well-being that takes in everything and everyone. As one who wants to be a faithful steward, what am I doing to help make this dream come true?

Advent 4 - Matthew 1:18-25

God speaks to Joseph by means of a dream. Joseph pays attention to that dream and changes his own plans. The Bible often tells us of God speaking to individuals through dreams. As a faithful steward, what do you do with your plans when God speaks to you in some way?

Christmas - Luke 2:1-14, Luke 2:8-20, John 1:1-14

The story of Christmas tells us of the birth of Jesus. One commentator has referred to this story as the story of the birth of a possibility. A faithful steward is one who asks: What possibilities are waiting to be born in me? And, how can I help in making these possibilities real?

Christmas 1 - Matthew 2:13-23

Once again God speaks to Joseph through dreams. And again, Joseph pays attention to these dreams and bases his actions on them. There is a cost that goes along with this. Joseph and his small family have to leave the familiar and go into the unfamiliar. As a faithful steward, how willing am I to leave what is familiar and go into what may make me feel uncomfortable?

Christmas 2 - John 1:(1-9), 10-18

John tells us very clearly that no one has ever seen God. He goes on to say that Jesus, who is nearest to God's heart, has made God known to us. It seems that a faithful steward would intentionally try to have a relationship with Jesus, so that s/he could know more about God.

How's my relationship with Jesus?

The Epiphany of Our Lord - Matthew 2:1-12

This gospel story tells us that Jesus didn't come to earth to be the exclusive property of a select group of people. His arrival was made known to all peoples. Some, those who were "on the fringes," so to speak, went to great lengths to get to know him. As a faithful steward, to what lengths am I willing to go in order to get to know Jesus?

The Baptism of the Lord - Matthew 3:13-17

"This is . . . my Beloved, on whom my favour rests." How would we feel, how would we react, would we live, if we were to truly let these words soak into our lives? It seems to me that we would see just how deeply these words could be lived out by observing the life of a faithful steward,

2nd Sunday after Epiphany - John 1:29-42

John points the disciples to Jesus, who invites them to come and spend some time with him. As they spend time with him, they begin to see and understand what it means to be a steward, that is, one who cares. Do we care enough to spend time with Jesus so that we can point him out to others? Are we "walking advertisements" for living the kind of life Jesus would have us live?

3rd Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 4:12-23

After Jesus has accepted his mission in life, which is to proclaim the God's "kingdom" is now here, he goes around telling others this news. What does it mean for us to now be living in this "kingdom"? How can those around us tell that our lives reflect this reality? A faithful steward not only has an intellectual understanding of this reality, but actually lives it out.

4th Sunday after Epiphany - Matthew 5:1-12

Want to know what God's dream for all creation looks like? Study today's words from Jesus. A faithful steward not only strives to understand these words, but also lets them be a guide in the way s/he lives. Am I willing to let my life be turned upside down by allowing myself to be guided by what is important to bring God's dream to reality?

Last Sunday after Epiphany (The Transfiguration) - Matthew 17:1-9

Three disciples have a "mountain top" experience with Jesus. However, that's not where they remain. They head back down the mountain, to where they live out their daily lives. A faithful steward knows that life is not lived as a series of mountain top experiences, but rather somewhere below. Sometimes, life down below gets pretty rough. How's it going for you?

Ash Wednesday - Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

"Don't be such a show off!" Jesus warns the people back then. What a stark contrast to this day and age when the prevailing attitude is one of: "If you've got it, flaunt it!" The faithful steward lives a life guided by the knowledge that it's more important to help God's dream come true than to live up to this world's expectations.

Lent 1 - Matthew 4:1-11

How many of us find ourselves in some kind of wilderness these days? How many of us feel pulled towards the many attractions of our day and age? Jesus also went through similar temptations, but was able to withstand them. A faithful steward lives a life following the example of Jesus. Take these Lenten Days to explore just how you're doing as a Disciple, one who follows the example of Jesus.

Lent 2 - John 3:1-17

Jesus came to earth to help in God's "rescue mission." In other words, Jesus came to help work out God's dream for creation. A faithful steward looks for ways through which s/he can also assist in helping to bring God's dream closer to reality. How are you doing?

Lent 3 - John 4:5-42

"God is not tied to place, and those who truly worship God must worship him as he truly is, without regard to place." How many of us feel that we can only truly worship God in that space we call "our Church"? We know this to be questionable, and yet it seems so difficult for many to actually put this into practice. The faithful steward is one who realizes that God is not tied to a single building, not matter how beautiful or nostalgic it may be.

Lent 4 - John 9:1-41

The Pharisees (those "in the know") seem to think they've got all the right answers. The blind beggar (who has been "on the sidelines") seems to recognize who Jesus really is, and what he's about. What kinds of implications are there in this story for those of us who consider ourselves to be faithful disciples and stewards?

Lent 5 - John 11:1-45

"Many . . . who . . . observed what Jesus had done came to believe in him." It seems so much easier for them, back then, to believe. But, what if you were able to see something similar happen right now. Would you believe? A faithful steward is one who believes that their role is to help God's dream for creation come true. What are you doing to make the dream a reality?

Sunday of the Passion, with the Liturgy of the Palms - Matt. 2:1-11, Matt. 26:14-27:66

Both of these passages (one quite short and the other very long) describe some of the very intense situations in the life of Jesus and some of his followers. Many church-goers seem to opt for attending services this day and then again on Easter Day, skipping the in-between "stuff." A faithful steward accepts the reality that at least some of life is lived out in the intense situations and doesn't avoid them.

Easter Day - John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

"The disciples had locked the doors for fear." "Don't be afraid." So much of our modern culture, especially in this part of the world, seems to be based on fear. What would life be like, both personally as well as corporately, were we to live "AS IF" we had nothing to fear? As faithful stewards and disciples can we at least try during these 50 Easter days?

2nd Sunday of Easter - John 20:19-31

"I came so that they can have life and have it to the full," says Jesus earlier in John's gospel.

Today we hear that these are written so that “you will come to believe . . . and . . . have life in his name.” A faithful steward shows this full life by the way they live out their daily lives. As they say: “There’s no life like it!”

3rd Sunday of Easter - Luke 24:13-35

Isn’t it interesting how these two disciples of Jesus don’t recognize him at first? They come to recognize him after he has “interpreted every passage of scripture” and then took bread, blessed and broke it, and “started passing it to them.” Jesus makes himself known to us in many ways, but a faithful steward will always look for their clues by referring to scripture and taking part in the Eucharist.

4th Sunday of Easter - John 10:1-10

Jesus is the ultimate steward. He cares for the sheep, i.e., what has been entrusted to his care, with utmost regard for their welfare. As people who want to be his disciples, ought we not to take his life as an example, a template, for our own actions?

5th Sunday after Easter - John 14:1-14

Jesus tells Philip that anyone who believes in him will be able “to perform even greater feats” than he himself has. A faithful steward lives AS IF they have not only heard this message, but have also accepted it as a basis for their day-to-day interactions with those around them.

6th Sunday after Easter - John 14:15-21

Jesus promises his disciples that he will go on living in and through them. A faithful steward hears this and allows her or himself to be used as a channel for Jesus in our own world. So, what characteristics of Jesus are going to be seen by what you do and say?

7th Sunday after Easter - John 17:1-11

Jesus is leaving this world. He will no longer be physically present to his disciples. It is now up to them - to you and me - to be the ears, the eyes, the feet, the hands of Jesus in this world of ours. And, oh yes, it’s also up to you and me to be the heart of Jesus here and now. Tall order? Not for the faithful steward.

Day of Pentecost - John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

The gift of the Holy Spirit, given to all who live as faithful stewards, can be both a blessing and a curse. A blessing, in that the Spirit does indeed offer us a source of sustenance for our journey. A curse, in that the Spirit forces us to see the choices we make which are contrary to God’s dream for all creation, thereby not allowing us “off the hook” for them.

Trinity Sunday - Matthew 28:16-20

“So long as this world continues its course,” says Jesus to his followers, “I’ll be with you day in and day out.” We know that the realities of life in our world are sometimes very difficult to bear. How fortunate the steward who faces these with the knowledge and assurance that Jesus accompanies them!

2nd Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 7:21-29

The words of today's gospel tell us plainly that, as the familiar Christmas song puts it: "Words are not enough!" The faithful steward is the one whose actions reflect the words. In other words, the faithful steward is the one who not only "talks the talk," but who "walks the walk."

3rd Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 9: 9-13, 18-26

Isn't it ironic how those who were deemed to be on the "outside" - sinners and toll collectors - always seemed to find where Jesus was and wanted to be near him. As a faithful steward, how much time do you make to be with Jesus on a regular basis?

4th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 9: 35- 10:8 (9-23)

What humble beginnings for Christianity - twelve people who went out, equipped with their marching orders from Jesus. And look at the impact those twelve had on the rest of the world! How often do you hear: "We don't have enough." (people, money, space - you name it!) Today's gospel teaches us that great things can and do come from very little - something a faithful steward needs to keep in mind.

5th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 10: 24-39

In the latter part of today's gospel Jesus speaks words that sound pretty harsh to our modern ears. "Who do you love more than me?" he asks. "If there's anyone you love more than me, you're not worthy of me!" As faithful stewards, how do our lives show that Jesus is at the very center of all we say and do?

6th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 10: 40-42

To whom do we give, and why? Jesus reminds us that the faithful steward who gives even a minute amount to someone who is a follower will not go unrewarded. In and of itself, that ought to be enough to encourage each of us to be generous in our giving.

7th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

It's difficult to find many these days who don't feel "overburdened." We all seem to have a great deal on our "plates." Jesus reminds us that the faithful steward is the one who comes to Jesus and asks him to share the burden.

8th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

Ever stopped to ask yourself just what kind of soil the word finds in you? Know how to find out? It's very simple, really. Just take a look at your life - how much and what kind of "fruit" do you see being produced regularly?

9th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

How do you help "good seed" to not only take root, but to grow, and keep on growing in your life? Jesus suggests that the faithful steward is the one who listens to the words his words and allows them to guide all of her or his life.

10th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

Heaven's imperial rule, also known as the kingdom of heaven, seems like a pretty interesting and exciting place to be. The faithful steward is one who does what they can to help this part of

God's dream come closer to reality each and every day. How are you helping it come about?

11th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 14: 13-21

The familiar story of the loaves and fishes, seen through the eyes of a steward, serves as a reminder that from seemingly small and insignificant beginnings, great things can happen. Why, there are even leftovers! Do you see God's abundant generosity in your world?

12th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 14: 22-33

Does your life ever feel like it's being pounded and tossed around? Do you feel like you're sinking, with no way of being rescued? Sometimes, it does get that bad, doesn't it. The faithful steward knows not only when to ask for help but, more importantly, who to ask.

13th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28

"Your trust is enormous," says Jesus to this Canaanite woman. A faithful steward is one who is able to show enormous trust in Jesus. If you were asked about your level of trust in Jesus, just how would you respond?

14th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 16: 13-20

Peter responds to the question of Jesus with what some might call an inspired answer. Jesus is God's anointed - God's chosen one. If someone was to ask you, as a follower of Jesus, and (hopefully) as a faithful steward, who or what would you say Jesus is?

15th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 16: 21-28

"You aren't thinking in God's terms, but in human terms," says Jesus to Peter. The faithful steward is one who seeks to discern God's "terms" and allows these to guide their own thoughts and actions - minute by minute and day by day.

16th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 18: 15-20

Some people say that they can't see or find Jesus anywhere in their lives. In today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that he will be found wherever two or three are gathered together in his name. Sounds like Jesus likes to be among company. How often do you gather with others "in his name"?

17th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 18: 21-35

Who says stewardship has nothing to do with anything but money? This story clearly tells us that stewardship and forgiveness are interwoven. Jesus reminds us that the faithful steward is the one who cares so much for others that they are able to forgive - even when they might feel they are owed much!

18th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 20: 1-16

"I'll pay you whatever is fair," says the owner of the vineyard to those he hires. However, by the end of the day, the payment hardly seems fair to those who have worked under the hot sun all day long. God's generosity knows no bounds. How many times do you think to yourself: "God's not being fair to me"? Think again!

19th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 21: 23 -32

Jesus speaks about John the Baptist to those who "have it made." They didn't listen to John's

message which advocated for justice. However, says Jesus, the toll collectors and prostitutes did. And they (as we all know) didn't "have it made." Are there connections between stewardship and justice? You be the judge.

20th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus hits the ranking priests and the Pharisees right between the eyes with this story. After all, they expect to inherit what they think is rightfully theirs. A faithful steward knows that in order to be given God's domain they have to live a life which shows that they merit it.

21st Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 22:1-14

There's a certain "edge" to this story, isn't there. "Many are called, but few are chosen." We now these words only too well. Some even use them jokingly. Do you think Jesus was joking? A wise steward will not only listen to these words, but take them to heart.

Harvest Thanksgiving - Luke 17:11-19

The story of ten people being given a very precious gift, and only one of them having what we might call the common courtesy to say "Thank You" to the giver. A faithful steward knows where the gifts they receive come from, and more than that, they know how to say "Thank You." Do you?

22nd Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 22:15-22

Imagine, trying to entrap Jesus with a riddle. How laughable, we might think to ourselves. And yet, don't we often do the same kinds of things? A faithful steward knows only too well that absolutely everything belongs to God, and that the steward's task is to take care of those things God has given to their charge.

23rd Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 22:34-46

There's an order to these two commandments: love God first, and then love your neighbour AS you love yourself. The wise steward is the one who tries to obey and follow these each and every day of their lives. How are you doing?

24th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 23:1-12

"They're all talk and no action," says Jesus of some of the leaders of his day. Stewardship is not about being all talk. Rather, it's about letting our actions speak for us. What would your actions say about you?

All Saints - Matthew 5:1-12

Today's passage could be seen as describing the characteristics of what it takes to be a faithful steward. Can you see yourself in any of the descriptions Jesus offers? If so - congratulations! If not - why not?

25th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 25:1-13

Sounds like Jesus is offering a lesson on good and prudent stewardship in today's gospel. In thinking about your own life, would you say that your decisions and actions reflect wise stewardship choices? If they haven't, don't give up - it's never too late to change choices and

actions.

26th Sunday after Pentecost - Matthew 25:14-30

There's a lesson for each of us in the story Jesus tells. Whether we care to recognize them or not, each of us has been given one or more gifts (abilities, skills, talents). It seems to me that one of the points Jesus is trying to make here is that it's what we do with our gifts that will determine how God deals with us. So, what are you doing with what you've been given?

Last Sunday after Pentecost: The Reign of Christ - Matthew 25:31-46

Stewardship can be defined very simply as "taking care." In today's gospel passage Jesus talks about people who take care of other people, namely those who are hungry or thirsty, those who are foreigners, those who lack clothing, as well as those who are sick or imprisoned. Thinking about that list, you might want to ask yourself: what kind of a steward am I?