

## Incentives for Faithful Stewardship, Part 2

Luke 12:41-44

Look at Luke 12. Starting in verse 41, I'll read through verse 48, "Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable,'" The one he just told, "'Are you telling this parable for us or for all?' And the Lord said, 'Who then, is the faithful and wise manager whom his master will set over his household? To give them their portion of food at the proper time. Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, "My master is delayed in coming."

"And he begins to beat the male and female servants and to eat, and drink, and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and in an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. Everyone to

whom much was given of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much. They will demand the more.

So we can discern here in Jesus' answer, that he wants Peter to see, that all believers, all Christians, are in the scope of this text. All believers serve in the sphere of their stewardship. They serve the household of faith, as their special charge, as the great privilege and responsibility that's theirs. This is a blessed stewardship, that we have as Christians, isn't it? I believe, though we can narrow this even further. Dial it in even tighter.

I think Jesus has the apostles in mind here, in specific; yet it's not to the exclusion of all disciples, it's just to the emphasis in the lifting up of the apostles. Christ has built his church on "the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets," Ephesians 2:20, "Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone." And that foundation, that's been provided, for the church, to be built upon, is a foundation of truth, the word of God.

Now that the ministry of the New Testament apostles and prophets has been completed, now that it's come to an end, which it came to an end in the first century, in the completed canon of Scripture, when the Apostle John put down his pen, Revelation 22. That's fear of responsibility. The stewardship of feeding the household falls to, Ephesians 4:11, other men who are gifted there, the evangelists and pastors and teachers. They're listed as alongside the apostles and prophets. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers, they're the ones who continue that Apostolic ministry, and that's why Jesus answers, as he does.

If we're gonna understand the heart of our Lord, if we're going to serve him well, if we're going to fulfill our own stewardship in the household of God, we need to understand what makes our Lord tick. He has a heart to care for his people. He loves them and he wants to make sure his sheep are well fed, that they're properly cared for, that they're lovingly attended to. To have his flock, under his care, to feed and care for the sheep, that Jesus died to save, what a tremendous privilege. Beloved, that privilege has come to us. Plain and simple as that.

You don't have to be a pastor or an elder to serve that task, to make sure the sheep are well fed. Ephesians 4:11-16, all of us would be equipped by the pastors, and teachers, and evangelists. We're, we're, to be equipped to do the work of the ministry, and that work of the ministry, is all about growing to maturity in the Word of God. The Word of God would saturate our lives, saturate our hearts. There's so much to do, so much to proclaim; such goodness of our Lord to proclaim.

And that's what we want to do, is take the gifts that he's given, and use them according to their design, according to their intended purpose, to convey to us God's goodness, so that we can be conduits of God's goodness to other people; all for the purpose of bringing glory to God, in the name of Jesus Christ. That's what we get to do. That's our stewardship. Fantastic. So how do we know, if we're doing that well? How do we measure ourselves? What is the standard? We've seen the scope and sphere of our stewardship.

Let's look at a third point: the standard of Christ's judgment. The standard of Christ's judgment. Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the Lord

said, look at verse 42 again, "Who then, who therefore, is the faithful and wise manager whom his master will set over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time. Blessed is that servant." What servant is blessed? The one who is faithful and wise. "Blessed is that servant, whom his master will find so doing." So it's not just thinking thoughts of faithfulness. It's putting into practice, right? Blessed is the one who not only hears, but does the Word. "Blessed is that servant, whom his master will find, so doing when he comes."

Two aspects of stewardship here. The standard that Christ is going to use to judge our stewardship. First, it's our character and second, it's our works. Our character and our works. When judging our stewardship, Christ examines our character and our works. So you can't be somebody who says, you know what? I'm brimming with character, even though I do nothing. Well, let people discover that by doing something. And you can't be someone who works, works, works, but your character is deplorable, and everything you do causes more problems. You can't be that person either. Both things go together, character and works. That's how Christ judges our stewardship.

First notice matters pertaining to character. They're virtues: faithfulness and wisdom. Faithfulness, here, describes someone who is characterized by constancy. It's someone who is reliable, dependable. Someone who is worthy of trust. So you could see using the word trustworthy. It's really important, isn't it? To be dependable, faithful, reliable, when it comes to feeding people food. The one who appoints you to feed others, and those who need to be fed. They are alike. Very fond of those who attend to that duty, with faithfulness and regularity.

A mom who prepares one grand, eight course meal for her family, once every six months. Not so good, right? You need that mom who's constant in the kitchen. Just taking care of the kids, taking care of, I know, it's sometimes just PB and J and bananas, and sometimes it's Rahman, but listen, regularity, faithfulness in feeding, that's what's more important than, grand once in awhile.

Wisdom. Wisdom is the word *phronimos*. It's related to the verb *phroneo*. *Phroneo* means to think, to understand, to ponder. It's about a quality of the thought life. It's thoughtfulness that comes from steadied insight. So you might call it, applied

intelligence; the skillful use of knowledge. Wisdom, which is prudence, which is sensibility, again, a very important quality, when combined with faithfulness, because whoever is assigned to feed and care for the rest of the household servants, needs to use both things, when it comes to feeding. These virtues go together, faithfulness and wisdom, in the stewardship. Both are required to fulfill our stewardship. The Lord has given us, namely, to give food to household slaves at the proper time.

Every faithful mother knows there's no glory in this. There are no accolades coming for faithful peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. In the faithful, wise feeding of a family, there's no one there to put her on, you know, some magazines number one woman of, of, the year. Every faithful pastor knows this, too, as well as, every faithful Christian; many of whom work behind the scenes. No one seeing what they do, except Christ, serving the word of the flock. There's no glory in it, no prominence to be gained, just a lot of hard, faithful work.

Wise work. To feed others faithfully requires a commitment to faithfulness as, a as a virtue that pleases the Lord. Faithfulness is required to tend to a rather mundane and

monotonous task. There's no glory or prestige in feeding, feeding, feeding, feeding. Faithfulness is required to tend to a never-ending task. I mean feeding your family, it seems to have no end. Like laundry, no end. But where did all these dirty clothes come from. Didn't I just do this load of laundry? Only when people die; they have no longer have a need for food, right? That's not a very cheery thought. I can stop feeding my kids when they're dead. No, that's not how you think. I could eat multiple times a day. I kind of require it, depend on it.

Faithfulness is required to tend to important vital tasks, though right knowing. The feeding of hungry children, or in this case hungry slaves, or in our case, a hungry church. It's a will of a good, kind hearted master. That's faithfulness. Wisdom is required for our stewardship too. To feed any sized household, particularly larger households, wisdom is required to feed a family, to feed a church, in a way that pleases the Lord. Wisdom required for thoughtful scheduling. Note, to give them their portion when? At the proper time, not whenever you feel like it, at the proper time.



So wisdom's required for that, wisdom's required for the logistics, for the planning, for the shopping; make sure the family or the slaves, even when they come in for the food, that they stay the most productive. That the slaves file in at certain mealtimes, so they can get back out and do the master's work. So everything remains efficient, productive.

Wisdom is required for proper nutrition. Making sure his slaves are well fed. They're healthy. They're strong for their tasks. They're not undernourished or malnourished, in some way. There's proper meal planning required. Preparation, shopping, all that to ensure that the master's resources are not squandered in laziness, or frivolity, or foolishness. It's hard work. Isn't it?

The standard by which Christ will judge our stewardship, when it comes to our character, it's the virtues of faithfulness and wisdom. Notice those two virtues produce, the fruit of good works. Verse 43, "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing or doing thus when he comes." What are they doing? Faithfully, wisely, feeding the household, tending to their needs, as good shepherds.

Faithful shepherds are like faithful moms. They're always at it. They're always feeding sheep, and so they're always dirty, aren't they, Right? They're getting their hands dirty. They're in it. They're wise. They're skillfully applying the truth to the sheep. They're not just taking, a one size fits all approach, to all the different kinds of sheep, and all the different kinds of needs. They tend to specific needs in specific ways. Just as a mom knows, every single one of her children is different; she tailors her counsel, tailors her correction to each one individually, with care and wisdom.

Same thing as us in the church, as stewards here. These are the works that Paul had in mind when he was thinking about the coming judgment of Christ, over his apostolic leadership and stewardship, and over all of our stewardship. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he's done in the body, whether good or evil." Can translate the word evil, as worthless, or whether good or *phaulos*, worthless. He's thinking: and the things I've done in the body, with this body, with this life that I have, have I been faithful in feeding the flock? Have I been wise in tending to the flock?

Ah, such wisdom here, and Jesus' answer to Peter, the standard of judgment for our stewardship, it's not at all related, is it, to status, or title, or position, or wealth, or intellect, or power? It's not related to any of that stuff. Since it's about faithfulness, since it's about wisdom in applying God's word, carefully, listen, this is a one size fits all standard of judgement.

We've seen the scope and standard of our stewardship. We've seen the sphere of Christ judgment. Fourthly: The specter, the specter of Christ's judgment. Those of you who hear the word specter and think, I'm talking about a ghost or apparition, that is one meaning of the word specter, but there's another meaning, and that's the one I'm using here. The word specter is from the Latin *spectrum*, which is formed from a Latin verb, *Spectare* means to look at, to regard, and so the noun, spectrum, means, what you look at. It refers to an appearance of something.

That's what I'm interested in here; the specter of Christ judgment is when it appears, when it comes. For faithful Christians, that is a time of great, great reward, of joyful

reunion with Christ, of remuneration from Christ, and reward from Christ, because of faithfulness and a job well done. Verse 43, "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes truly. I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions."

Another beatitude from our Lord. Once again, I mean, isn't that a bit grand for the likes of little old me? That's why Jesus has introduced this beatitude with that familiar refrain, "Truly, I say to you". Truly, he says the same thing back in verse 37, "Truly I say to you". He's asserting in the strongest way possible, even placing an oath on himself to speak truth. This is veracity. This is surety of his promise.

I'm telling you, this is happening. Those servants who are ready, waiting watchful, when he returns, verse 37, Jesus promised them a joyful reunion. Close and intimate fellowship with himself. You notice the reward fits their expectation. The reward fits their heart's desire. They long for him, and so what do they get? All of him. To those stewards who are faithful and wise in their stewardship, their reward fits their work as well. Verse 44, when he returns, having performed a faithful and wise

stewardship, when he returns, Jesus promises them even greater responsibility, even higher stewardship, more honor, higher privilege than they had before. He'll set him over all of his possessions.

Any Bible student is reminded of Joseph position of prominence in Egypt, set over all Pharaoh's possessions. Pharaoh said, "You shall be over all my house," over all, "and all my people shall order themselves as you command, Joseph. Only as regards the throne, will I be greater than you." Pharaoh set Joseph over all the land of Egypt. He put his own signet ring on Joseph, that's authority, that's power to get things done. He clothed him in royal robes. He adorned him with golden jewelry. He bestowed honor and glory upon Joseph. Set him over the land of Egypt, and said to Joseph, "I'm pharaoh, but without your consent, no one lifts a hand or a foot in all of Egypt."

That's the picture here. Not word for word, not thought for thought, but that's the picture that Jesus just put in the minds of his 12 apostles and ours too. Later in Luke 22, when we get there, we'll see this, in verse 28-30, Jesus said to the twelve he said, "You are those who stayed with me in my trials." That

is to say, they had been faithful, loyal. "You were those who've stayed with me in my trials, and I assigned to you, as my father assigned to me, a Kingdom. That you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom." That's the rejoicing in table fellowship part, "And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." That's the reward of stewardship part.

And the promise there is not only to the apostles, because Christ rewards faithfulness and endurance, as principled, paramount, virtues for his stewards. Paul told Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we will also reign with him." Turn over to Matthew's gospel. Just briefly. Matthew chapter 19, verse 28-29, Jesus extends the promise, from the twelve, he extends it in kind to other believers as well.

He says, "Truly," there it is, "truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." So that's for the twelve. And then verse 29, "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life."

Look, even though we Christians, us believers in the Church Age, we're not gonna ascend these same thrones, that are assigned to the Lord's twelve apostles, but we will occupy, see if you can get there quickly, to 1 Corinthians chapter 6, just so you can see that for yourself, but see that we're going to occupy a place of judgment, as well, in Christ's future economy. Paul says there in 1 Corinthians 6:2 and 3, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" He's saying this to the church; believers in the church age.

Don't you know that believers, saints, will judge the world, if the world will be judged by you? Are you incompetent to try trivial cases? In other words, don't go to law with a believer, when you have a church. "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" Verse 3. We're to judge angels? I can't even fathom that. I can't even imagine that. I can't even picture that. What in the world am I going to be saying to an angel? How much more, than matters, pertaining to this life?

Like, the highest court in the land shouldn't be the Supreme Court. In a sense, it ought to be the church. Don't

believers have wisdom from God? Don't believers have a book of judgements, of laws, of case law, of everything in the Scripture? Why is it we treat the church with such mean judgement? And to think it can't adjudicate its own matters, its own affairs.

We have no idea, do we? What's in store for us, in the end? But knowing the character of the Lord and what we've seen already, we can trust that whatever this is gonna look like, it is going to be good. It's gonna be worth waiting for. It is worth delayed gratification. Jesus doesn't throw around this term *makarios*, blessedness, lightly, casually. He doesn't make solemn oaths in a flippant way. "Truly, I say to you." He's very serious about giving us every encouragement to stay ready, and waiting, and watchful, and faithful, in the stewardship that he's given to us.

Listen, if we attend to the scope and the sphere of our stewardship, with an eye to Christ, the standard of Christ's judgment, of our stewardship, encouraged along by this magnificent promise of *makarios*, of blessing and blessedness, I



means being granted the unimaginable honor of an even greater, more glorious stewardship in the life to come.

Listen, we cannot fail to find every incentive here, every good and godly enticement to invest well now, being faithful wise managers, who exercise our stewardship of the gospel and of this church, with shepherding concern. Paul told the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, he said, "Let others regard us as servants of Christ, and as stewards of the mysteries of God." Such a high and holy privilege. May we be found faithful, always faithful.

So when the Lord comes, as he brings to light things that are now hidden in darkness, and as he discloses the purposes of the heart, then each one of us will receive his commendation from God. Did you catch that? Not condemnation? "There is therefore in Christ no condemnation" right? Romans 8:1. No condemnation. Rather, for our stewardship, each one will receive his commendation, from God.

Let's pray. Our Father, we are so thankful for the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. What wisdom, and insight, and

carefulness that he keeps us encouraged, incentivized in our stewardship. There may be many today who have never really thought very carefully about this matter of stewardship that their life and their, their, their, energy and their time, their breath, even their thoughts. Our stewardship, exercise toward you. But they will one day give an account to Christ. How little we think of that and how often we ought to.

So we pray Father that, in the name of Jesus Christ, for your sake, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you would grant us that gift. We would think much of Christ. It would fix our eyes on him. That we would love him in along for his return for the fellowship of his company. And then you would help us. To rejoice in doing his will to feed and care for the flock that you've given us. This is our stewardship. This is our charge. Christ commissioned us to make disciples, to evangelize, to teach. And that's our charge. What a joy we have. I mean even our even our work life is, it pales in comparison to that stewardship that you've given us here in the church.

We just ask that you would keep us faithful. Help us to be wiser still as we study the word and grow in maturity. Help us

to rejoice doing this together, partnering together for the sake of the gospel, step by step with one another in lockstep of one mind, in one heart, and one spirit in full unity depth of doctrine and great harmony and joy. Please make that, the signal of this church. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.