Incentives for Faithful Stewardship, Part 1

Luke 12:41-44

December 6, 2020

Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12. As you know, we've entered into a study on, it's, it's themed on the Lord's return, but it's a study really on readiness, in light of the Lord's return, and Christian watchfulness, which is the subject last week. Readiness, watchfulness, eagerness to see our Lord return in light of his soon return, his imminent return. That's what we read in, from the Apostle John, "Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." So when we have a focus on our Lord's second coming, it does things in our lives, it produces something in us, a commitment to holiness and purity.

Jesus made it clear, in the text we covered last time, we don't know when he's coming back. We know he's coming back, that's a fact, but we don't know when it's going to happen. It's gonna come at a time when you do not expect. It's as the song says,

"Maybe morning, maybe noon, maybe evening, maybe soon. Whenever he returns oh what a wonderful day that will be", for those who are ready for it. For those who are watchful for it, it will be a wonderful, blessed, glorious day, "because when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is."

And I personally long for that day, don't you? If you too long for Christ's coming, if you long to finally see the Christ that you have loved without seeing, to embrace the one that you have embraced by faith. That longing, that desire, it will be rewarded, and it's what keeps us ready, and waiting, and watchful, eagerly anticipating Christians; joyful, hopeful, always focused on the future, always focused on a future where God reigns and God rules in Christ.

So when Jesus says, "be ready for the son of man is coming at an, at an hour, you do not expect", our prayer is, keep us faithful. There are many who will not be ready when he comes, because there are so many who are not faithful today. We can see that, we can look around us. Some are slothful and lazy. Some are distracted, they're caught up in the matters of this world,

this life, always protecting where their interests here. Some are unbelieving altogether, make no profession of faith, their doubts about his coming or manifest in their behavior. They think they have no one to give account to, no accountability to God above.

In this text, to provoke the faithful to greater obedience, encouraging an attitude of watchfulness, and also to warn the unfaithful, Jesus responds to a question that Peter asks in verse 41, with another parable, that's the theme of the previous parable, but with another parable that highlights a principle of stewardship, and calls us to a faithful and wise stewardship.

Look at the text before you in Luke 12. Starting in verse 41 and I'll read through verse 48, even though we're not going to cover all those verses this morning. "Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable,'" The one he just told, "'Are you telling this parable," for us "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, "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."

A lot about beatings in there, huh? There are four types of people there, two different responses. The first response is a response of faithfulness, of fidelity, to do the masters will and there's a blessing. There's another beatitude there. Blessed are those servants. *Makarios* same word as we covered last time.

And then there there's another response. Really, it's a different levels of unfaithfulness, and there are three of those kinds of people. One in four, according to this parable, respond in faithfulness knowing that the Lord is coming.

You might see this whole text as incentives for faithful stewardship, because Jesus cites both positive incentives and negative incentives. There are blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience might very much like what we see in Deuteronomy, blessings for obedience to Israel and curses on disobedience. We're faced with two right here at the outset and we have to talk about this, it's right here in the text, it's kind of front and center, it's the context of the parable itself.

So, in this parable we're faced with two very important principles, two defining principles that should frame our thinking, and shape our perspective, and set our priorities, and direct our will, direct all of our behavior. One is the principle of lordship, and the other is the principle of stewardship. They really go hand in hand, don't they? Lordship,

the one to whom we will give an account, and the one who gave us our stewardship, the one we give an account to, he gave us a stewardship that we'll give an account for; so, lordship and stewardship.

Let's talk about stewardship first. Look in verse 42, Jesus is overt there and using stewardship language. The manager there, in the ESV, it's the *oikonomos* literally *oikos* is the word house and *nomos* is the word for law, so it's house law those two words brought together. This is a person who you could, you, you could think of it this way, the person who applies the rule of law to the household. He, he's there in the household as a manager, as a steward, and He's, he's ensuring good order. He's watching over finances, over operations, over how things are conducted, over morale even. This is the household manager. It's the, the, the chief steward of the master's estate. He watches over the master's holdings, protects the master's interests. The master is above all. He owns everything.

The *oikonomos* he's entrusted with the responsibility of administrating whatever the master puts under his care.

Sometimes he divvies it out, puts somethings under this man's care and somethings under another man. Sometimes he puts it under one man. Laborers this man, the *oikonomos*, he labors according to the masters will. He's attentive, he's diligent for the masters good.

This assumption of stewardship here is what informs Jesus' perspective. It's how he thinks about life, it's how he thinks about all the people in the world, as stewards. This is what drives his exhortation to us, and we need to think about this like he does because he sees things very clearly. Whatever we have, whatever wealth, talent, gifts, experiences, skills, opportunities, goods, advantages, privileges, whatever it is we have, whatever we call ours, we don't have any of that, as actual owners, but as stewards.

Never seen a moving van follow a hearse to the cemetery. We understand that, we get that. Our skills, and talents, and all of our experiences, and credentials, and accomplishments, all those things die with us, don't they? Our achievements erased, forgotten. Our ownership, on this earth of our stuff, that's

gone too. All of our stuff passes to somebody else. Solomon makes much of that in Ecclesiastes, saying, whatever you work for, it's handed off to somebody else who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish with what you worked so hard to get.

So our ownership is temporary. We get that, we understand that. God's ownership is permanent. It's permanent by virtue of the fact that he is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. It's permanent and it's his because he is the source of all things. He owns all. He's unchanging, that's never gonna change. He's sovereign, he's sovereign over all.

And that takes us to this principle of lordship, which is also here in the text. The ultimate lordship is God's lordship. He's the absolute, sovereign Lord, over all things. God is eternal. He has no beginning, no end. He always exists and never changes to exercise ownership and sovereignty over everything that he has created. As David said, Psalm 24:1, "the earth is the Lords. And the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell within." God adds his own testimony to what David wrote there in Psalm 50

verse 10. He says, "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. If I were hungry," thinking of their sacrifices, "if I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."

God's not being selfish there. As our kids would be when they say, mine, mine, mine, mine; that's not God here. He's just stating a fact. We're temporary owners. We're just passing through this world. Above us is the ultimate owner of all things. He is the absolute sovereign overall, and he gives to each of us as he sees fit. He distributes according to his will. Not according to your goodness, your greatness, not according to your intellect, not according to your power, your strength, your wisdom, your insight, no. He gave you that too. He gives to each one of us life, and breath, and everything he gives as he sees fit for his own purposes, for his own glory. Paul told the Athenian philosophers that "the God who made the world and everything in it, the Lord of Heaven and Earth," Acts 17:25, this is the God who gives to all mankind, and to all mankind he gives life and breath and everything.

In these parables, starting in verses, verse 35 and going to the end of this section, verse 48. Jesus has been using that familiar term *kyrios*, Lord, Master, and suddenly in these parables, he's really applying that to himself because he is the returning master. When he comes again in the second coming glory, it's gonna be clear who the master is, who the slaves are. He's used that term nine times in those verses. That's called emphasis folks. These parables portray the day when the son of man is going to come as Lord and he's going to recompense the world in judgment.

Jesus is the *kyrios*. He is on par with God himself as the master and the Lord overall. He's the one who stands in the place of God on Earth, rendering God's judgment to the earth. He's the *kyrios*. He's the one to whom the whole world and every single individual in it will give an account for the stewardship that they have received from God. Your life is not your own. Your stuff is not yours, it's his. Your breath is his, your life, your skills, your opportunities, your experience, your time, your imagination, your thoughts belong to God. You're a steward over those things.

So, the text before us is all about incentivizing our stewardship. It's about motivating us to think and act as stewards, and Jesus is here helping us to, to prepare to give a, a good account to him at the end. He's setting us up for success here in this text. He wants us to not shrink back at his return. He wants us to rejoice when he comes. He wants us to be like those men receiving their master home from the wedding feast. In the previous parable. And they're overjoyed to see the master. They're eager, they're waiting, they're expecting, they're watchful, they're excited for his return.

That's how he wants us to be. And that's my hope and prayer for all of us, is that we all recognize our stewardship in this life as well, and that we exercise that stewardship faithfully and wisely. I, I wanna see all of us, rejoicing together all gathered in the Grace Greeley section of heaven sitting together, praising the Lord together. Ren Merry, you can continue leading us in song as we praise the King of Heaven in his presence. I want us to be there rejoicing because we have executed our stewardship given to us in this time in this place. We've exercised our stewardship in a way that pleases the Lord.

So, as we go through this, think about your life. Think about your time. Think about your days, the hours that you have. Think about your weeks, budget 'em. Just do a little budget in your head and see where am I spending my time? What are my priorities? What do I give myself too? What am I too busy for? Because we wanna think about our stewardship, we have very little time, and I know that all the people who are definitely my age and older, but all of us will say, man the time flies by. You think you have so much time, when you're young. It just flies by. Every time I look in the mirror, I'm like who is that old guy? It's a good reminder that I have an account to give for my life, for the work that I do, and so do you.

So, we'll look at Peter's question here, and then Christ's answer, because he does answer Peter's question, just not the way Peter wants him to. Kind of like that. And as we look at Peter's question and then we see Christ's answers, answer, we're going to find incentives here for faithful stewardship. Incentives for faithful stewardship.

Four points in our outline for this morning. We'll see first, first couple points, we'll see the scope and standard of our stewardship. Scope and standard of our stewardship and then we'll see the sphere and the specter of Christ's judgment. The sphere and the specter of Christ's judgment. So, scope, standard sphere, and specter. Let's start with the first point. I'll remind you as we go through the, the points here, but let's start with the first point, which is Peter's question having to do with the scope of our stewardship. What is the scope of it?

In verse 41, Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" He's asking there about the scope of Jesus parable. Who's in the crosshairs of his teaching there? It's really a question about the scope of stewardship. And why is Peter asking this? What's, what's prompted his question here? As per usual, Peter speaks for the other men, he steps out in front, I mean, it's on all of their minds as they're listening, but he steps out and he speaks, he gives voice to what the other men are thinking. And they're thinking this, hm, Jesus is speaking in parables again and we understand, a couple chapters back, Luke 8:10, parables are for them. They're for the crowds, they're parables, when Jesus speaks in parables, it's too veil

truth from unbelievers, in the hope that some of those in the unbelieving crowd will be prompted by this parable and say, huh, there's something deeper here, that their faith will be activated that they'll come forward and, like the disciples have and say, tell us more. Tell us more.

Peter's always saying that, tell me more. So, quite naturally, Jesus, Peter is pressing Jesus for more information, he wants elaboration, and it's not Peter being impetuous or wrong, or out of place here, I mean, he is a disciple, he loves the Lord, he loves the Lord's truth, his teaching, he wants to understand. So he asks for more insight. "Is this, is this parable for us or for all?"

Now, it still raises a number of questions about Peter's question. Does us mean us leaders? Us Twelve apostles and, and then the other disciples that are all around us here, are they, these followers, are they the all? Or by us as he really incorporating all, him, himself, the Twelve and all believers? Is he saying, that's the us and then all is, the rest of the crowd. I mean, all believers have been the focus of his teaching

since verse 22, right? So if that's the case, all would refer to the rest of the crowd that's standing there, the unbelieving crowd.

Peter would assume obviously, he'd have assumed that he and the Twelve are within the scope of Jesus parable, that they're directly in the crosshairs, but now he's wondering how wide that scope is. How big is that bullseye, anyway? How far does the parable reach? So, since this whole section from verse 22 to 40, that's been addressed to all of Jesus disciples, perhaps Peter wants to know if Jesus refers only to the Twelve here and then, and then, or to all of Jesus disciples or we could look back to verses 13 to 21 and we could see, clearly Jesus, having been interrupted, he addressed the unbelieving crowd. So maybe Peter wants to know if unbelievers are included as well in the scope of Jesus parable.

It's not intuitive, intuitively obvious as we just read over the text here, especially since we see our Lord is not direct in answering Peter's question. But suppose for a moment, let's just suppose, that the widest possible scope is in view here that

Jesus does intend to include all people and every individual within the scope of the parable. We just said every human being has a stewardship from God. Whatever God is given to you, he expects you to use it according to its design according to its intended purpose for the fulfilling of God's purposes, which is to convey his goodness to you, and through you, to others, thus bringing glory to him. Great and powerful people, important and significant people, they have a stewardship from God, just like us little people do.

Pontius Pilate thought he had authority over Jesus' life. You remember that at the trial? Jesus corrected him. He said, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above." Paul, he lays out the scope of Pilot's authority and all government authority. Romans 13 is one of the passages. "There is no authority except from God. Those that exist have been instituted by God." They are authorities that God has appointed, verse 2, Romans 13, "They're God's servant for your good." That's the intended purpose of government, verse 4. "They're the servant of God and avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer," verse 4. "Authorities are ministers of God," verse 6, "and they attend to this very thing."

That's why we pray for them, 1 Timothy 2:1-2. We pray for all people, but we pray in particular for kings and all who are in high positions, because they have a stewardship from God, and it's a difficult stewardship, it's a complex one, as we're seeing in our world right now; one for which they will give an account to Christ and I think many of them don't realize that.

Whoever turns out to be our President on Inauguration Day in January. Whoever happens to be our governor at any given time, whoever serves as our lawmaker, our our, our lawmakers, our judges, our officials, all of our national, state, county, local officials, might not be too far in the future to say to add to that list to say, our global officials; they all have a very significant stewardship from God and they will all render an account for their stewardship to Christ. It's good for us to pray for them in that regard, and it's good every now and again for us to remind them of that stewardship that they have from God, and they will one day give an account to Christ.

What about the rest of us, though? I mean, we're just regular Joes, right? Plain Janes, Regular Joes of the world. Are the hoi polloi off the hook here? I mean, what stewardship really do us little people have; little people in fly over country, no power, no authority. Well, if a steward is someone who has received a gift from God, to use God's gifts, anything he gives according to its design, according to its intention, to enjoy God's goodness and then be a conduit of that goodness to other people, so that God is glorified, well then, I guess, everyone's on the hook, right?

For that, we all have an account for our stewardship to God. Are you an employee? Well, you have a stewardship of a job, and it's not been granted to you by Walmart, or McDonald's, or your Mor, Morgan Stanley brokerage firm, or whatever you whatever field you work in. God gave you that job as a gift of his grace and you will give an account to Christ for how you conduct yourself for the purpose of that job. Are you an employer? Well, there's a specific set of instructions for you as well in the scripture as a master, God has given you the stewardship of employees, of a business, of their income, their benefits, their health, their

work environment, their safety. Work is a stewardship from God and you will give an account.

Are you a husband? Then God has given you a wife and he's given you the stewardship of loving leadership to your wife. There's a whole lot packed into that. Are you a wife? Well, God has given you a husband and you have the stewardship of being his helpmeet, designed by God given by God to him to help serve his life, his work, his ministry, his purposes, to bring glory to God. The two of you together. Marriage is a stewardship from God, and you will give an account. You parents, God has given you the stewardship of parenthood, to raise those children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. You children, you too have a stewardship, from God, to honor your parents, to obey them when you're younger and then to honor them for a lifetime. Family that too is a stewardship from God and you will give an account.

Listen, the principle of stewardship hits us all. It doesn't matter if we're little people or big people. Means every individual in the world, kings and peasants, rich and poor, men

and women, old and young, great and small. Everyone, every individual will stand before Christ one day to give an account to him to answer for the stewardship of their life and of their responsibilities. Are you ready for that?

I wanna open a parentheses here, at this point, an important one to convey some gospel hope, because if you're like me hearing that, even as I'm speaking it, I'm condemned and convicted, right? If giving the account to Christ has you feeling a bit nervous, listen, that's a good thing. You feel nervous. If you feel nothing right now, woe be to you. May God give you grace and mercy so that you feel something, some amount of conviction, which is the Spirit's work to convict the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. May he convict you. But if you feel a bit nervous, it's a good thing. If we're honest with ourselves all of us are. Isn't it true? All of us come to the realization we've sinned, we've fallen short of the glory of God. Some degree, to many of us who have significant degree, we've, we've blown it in many things, and particularly in this issue of stewardship.

For some of you, this may be the first time you've realized you even had a stewardship. Oh, that's a thing. I can tell you growing up, I didn't hear a whole lot preached on stewardship only when it is time to build a building then you got a little giving thermometer on the side of the on the wall and everybody is given and the thermometer goes up and stewardship, stewardship, stewardship. And then they finally didn't get there, so they borrowed a lot of money and built a building anyway. You know how it goes. But that's stewardship month, right? Or stewardship decade or whatever it was. But you didn't hear stewardship like Jesus is thinking about stewardship.

We've been ignorant. We've been untaught in these areas and we need to learn. We have a stewardship, every single one of us and it’s granted to us by God above. We're gonna give an account to Christ one day and as we read, those who are not faithful in stewardship some level of punishment is going to ensue. Punishment awaits, “for the wages of sin is death.”

Listen, this is what the gospel is for. This is what the gospel is such a, such a joy to receive by faith, to know that even

though “the wages of sin is death,” and even though our stewardship failures merit death and judgment and punishment, “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.” God has not destined us who believe for wrath. He’s destined us for joy, for glory, for commendation when he comes. The one who will one day judge our stewardship, today that same one can become your Savior. If you'll put your faith in Jesus Christ, you can know for sure, know for certain, that today “he's born your griefs, he's carried your sorrows, that for your sake he was stricken smitten by God and afflicted. Jesus Christ was pierced for our transgressions. He's crushed for our iniquities, and upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and by his wounds we’re saved, we’re healed.” And we have nothing but joy to look forward to at his coming.

Beloved, believe that. For you who know him, for you who know the cross and what it, what it provided for you, an atonement for your sins, for all your fails of stewardship, you're also covered with the righteousness of Christ because he performed his stewardship perfectly.

So, let's close that parentheses now. We need gospel hope in times like this, don't we? Realize though, that these thoughts about stewardship are warranted by the text in asking about the scope of stewardship responsibility, here, Peter brought up more than he knew. He didn't know what he was getting himself into or us, frankly. You'll notice, though, Jesus didn't answer Peter's exact question, not directly. He took a more indirect approach. Jesus didn't tell Peter what Peter thought he needed to know in the moment, instead, Jesus told Peter what Peter actually needed to know in the moment, but he did answer Peter's question. He's just making Peter work a little bit harder to discern the answer and the work that he puts into it is going to pay dividends. Same thing for us.

So on to point two in our outline. Jesus wanted Peter to think about his own stewardship and he wanted to think about number two, the sphere of stewardship. The sphere of stewardship. What is the sphere of stewardship? Since all authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to Christ, that means that all people everywhere are accountable to Christ for the stewardship that they have in this world. Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:30 to 31, he said, "God commands all people everywhere to repent."

All people everywhere, not just those who've heard the gospel, not just those who grow up in evangelical churches. All people everywhere, they're all commanded to repent.

Because he's fixed a day, on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this he's given us assurance, assurance to all by raising him from the dead. John describes that day in Revelation 20, that day when Christ ascends the Great White Throne, to judge the living and the dead, great and small, all of them standing before the throne. It says there that "the books were opened and another book was open, which is the Book of Life. But the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. According to their works, they were judged. The sea gave up the dead, who were in it death and Hades gave up the dead, who were in them. They were judged. Each one of them, according to what they had done."

You wanna be judged on your merits. Right, there it is. As Christ reviews the record of their deeds. They will be judged according to their deeds. Under the omniscient gaze of Christ,

they'll be judged with absolute impartiality. They will see the exacting justice and complete fairness of Christ. You want to talk about social justice? Here's Christ applying it. Here's equity, here's fairness, here's justice when Christ comes and judges every man, every woman according to what he's done. Everyone will get what his or her deeds deserve.

Though, technically, Christ's answer brilliantly leaves this scope of this text open-ended. It's open-ended, could apply to anybody reading this under a stewardship from God, and that's everyone. Everyone reading this can see they are going to be held accountable, but, as believers, we can dial this in a bit, we can narrow the focus, narrow the scope based on the parable Christ gives.

What duty has Christ given us to perform? What's the sphere of our stewardship as believers? Look at verse 42, Peter said verse 41, "'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?'" Verse 42, 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?'" What's the

answer? Put simply, the sphere of our stewardship is the master's household. Our specific task in this sphere of stewardship to ensure the household has its portion of food at the proper time. It's very simple. We, with believing eyes, can see more clearly than an unbeliever can see in this text. An unbeliever, at least, could see from this text that there's the master's household is anything that the master owns.

So the whole world is under the scope of his responsibility as stewardship. But here, with believing eyes, we see something that they can't see. We can see this narrowed down and the master, to the master's household that we're part of and our task is to ensure that the masters' household has its portion of food at the proper time. When Jesus answers Peter's question, you remember Peter's questions is prompted by another parable, and Jesus answers with yet another parable, but he uses the same imagery of household stewardship.

The world in the first century, you understand was run by slave labor. I won't get into all of that, but as we, as we know it's run by slave labor built on the backs of slaves, there are free

men, and freed men, and all the rest. Roman citizens, but mostly slaves are doing the work of the empire, and as we said, the *oikonomos,* the household steward, he was a slave, he was a skilled slave, a trained one, an educated one, but he was still a slave and Jesus pictures the household manager as the slave who has the stewardship over the rest of the slave's staff.

Word for household Jesus uses here. It's not the usual word. A word that comes from the word for house, which is, *oikos*. The word that Jesus uses here to talk about the household is the word *therapeia*, from which we get our word therapy. So technically *therapeia* refers to medical treatment. Jesus' use of this word had to have warmed the heart of the good physician, Luke, who's writing this. We see that word *therapeia* used as medical treatment in Luke 9:11. It's also used of healing, like the healing of the nations in Revelation 22:2. But the way that Jesus uses the word *therapeia* here, it's a metaphor to refer to the entire slave staff. They are the *therapeia;* collectively they are the *therapeia* in that household. The slaves here are portrayed here as, they're serving the purpose of providing intimate daily care, private service to their master, therapeia to the master.

So the household manager as chief steward, he oversees all of them. He cares for all of them. He makes sure they're well fed, well provisioned, completely provided for. Notice the word translated, their proportion of food. That's the word *sitometrion*, which refers to a ration, a regular allowance. It's, it's measured out portions of grain or food. One commentator says these rations on Roman estates were, were either served out daily, or weekly, or monthly. So it's a portion of the master's goods that are seconded to the servant of the slave in order for him to be able to do his job. Most of this has to do with food. Food that they could eat, provide for their families with, food that they could even sell, or provided for other necessities in life, and that's Jesus' concern here.

Jesus tells Peter the sphere of his stewardship is the household. Then that's why I believe that Jesus here has subtly narrowed the focus of stewardship to the sphere of the church, which is the special purview of believers. In the New Testament, Paul often uses the image of a household to refer to the church. The church is "the household of faith" in Galatians 6:10. It's the "household of God" in Ephesians 2:19. "Church of the Living

God," verse, 1 Timothy 3:15. "Pillar and buttress of the truth", Peter 2. 1 Peter 4:17, he says that, "it's time for judgment to begin at the household of God." So it's commonly, this picture, this image of the church itself.

So we can discern here in Jesus' answer, that Peter wants us, wants, he wants Peter to see, I should say, 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. This is brilliant.

Again, it's his wisdom. He doesn't limit the scope by what he says, even though he emphasizes it, he doesn't limit the scope to Peter and the Twelve, even if they're the ones who are immediately in view, Jesus sees Peter in the Twelve, but he, he sees through them and he looks beyond them to see all of his

shepherds, all elders, all pastors, all teachers who will serve his local churches down throughout the church age.

It's kind of like looking through a telescope and seeing things in the foreground, the middle ground, and the far ground, he sees it all. What's their specific duty in the household of God? Jesus wanted Peter to take good care of his slaves. Take good care of them. Make sure to give them their portion of food at the proper time. It's something we all need to understand, don't we?

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. He wants to make sure that they're well fed, that they're properly cared for, that they're lovingly attended to. Remember when Jesus restored Peter after his denials? In John 21, he restored him into ministry, tenderly. Remember what he told him in John 21:15-17. He challenged him three times, one for each denial;

challenged him three times, “Peter, do you love me?” Do you love me? Do you love me? Peter said, yeah, I, I love you, I love you, I love you. And Jesus said, Okay, then, here's how you show it, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep, tend the Good Shepherd’s sheep. To have his flock, under, his, under Peter’s care, to feed and care for the sheep that Jesus died to save, what a tremendous privilege and beloved, that privilege has come to us.

So it's the faithful steward who understands this, who understands that those sheep were precious enough as a gift of the father to the son. They're precious enough for Jesus to go to the cross and die for, to suffer a humiliating death of shame and scorn, pain, suffering, not just what man could do to him, but what God did in pouring out his wrath. Christ went through that and he didn't grit his teeth and say, okay, let's get this over with. Hebrews 12 says he did that, why; For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame. Listen, he pursued you and me in love. If we understand this about our Lord, it gives a whole new understanding to our stewardship, doesn't it? The faithful steward who shares the heart of his master. Such a steward will be honored to receive even more

responsibility from the master, because he'll prove himself faithful. 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. I've just been watching; it's just been amazing over the years to see this church so faithful, serving, giving of skill, competency, time, energy, experience; all to serve the chief purpose of this church, which is to be a pillar and buttress of the truth. All to serve the ministry of the Word of God. All to make sure everyone is properly fed. It's not just the pastors and teachers and those who are official, in official shepherding roles who do that. It's all of us, right?

Ephesians 4:11-16, all of us would be equipped by the pastors, and teachers, and evangelists, 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, this church, saturate our lives, saturate our hearts. We'd be a Word-driven church. We're all doing that and I'm so grateful, and I just I'm so grateful for new people who have been coming in, you're joining this work in progress.

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? Shouldn't say, how do we measure ourselves? What's the standard he's gonna use? It's probably more important, right?

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 prop, 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 not just thinking wise thoughts. It's putting it 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, right? You got great character, right? And you can't be someone who works, works, works, but your character is deplorable, and everything you do causes more problems. right? 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, aren't they? Faithfulness and wisdom, faithfulness and wisdom.

Faithfulness here is the word *pistos*, which often means believing in, in the context. But here in this context, it 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 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.

So Paul thought of his stewardship, right? 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it's required of stewards that they be found", what? "Be found faithful." 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 ramen, but listen, regularity, faithfulness in feeding, that's what's more important than grand once in awhile, right?

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 studied 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 magazine, 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 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, the, 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, that 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?

I just mentioned this as an aside, as I was preparing this section of my notes, I was thinking of Barrett Barth who's a chef professionally, and, and a hearing, some of the things that he has survived for hundreds of people coming in for a meal and he's got to provide for all these people at once. He controls the whole kitchen. He has to think about planning, and shopping, and preparation, and nutrition, and, and what's going to be good and bad, and I mean, he makes all these, a number of decisions. You think, Oh he cooks food. No, no, he, he, he does a whole lot. He runs a kitchen, he runs a staff, he, he plans, he shops, he provides, he puts things toge. It's takes wisdom, and it takes, and that keeps on coming.

I know it's his job. He gets paid for it, but he's paid to be faithful, but for us as stewards we are faithful as a principle of worship to the Lord. 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 overall 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 they're 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?

What is such wisdom here in 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.

If we're honest, that can be encouraging and also a little intimidating, right? Especially when we consider all those punishment verses coming to greet us next week. I think the attendance will be down next week, right? So for today, let's just focus on the encouraging part here. We'll save the intimidating part for next time, but it's also good incentive for wise stewardship. So come back.

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, *specere*. *Specere*, 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 that 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, to be set over all of his possessions. I mean, that's a bit magnanimous, isn't it? 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 Josephs' position of prominence in Egypt, right? set over Pharaoh's, 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 Twelve 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 been 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 a reward of stewardship part.

The promise there is not only to the Apostles because Christ rewards faithfulness and endurance as, 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 to 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 hundred fold and 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, 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 Christs' 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," it's 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 will 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, 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, right? 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, as 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, of blessedness, I mean 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 ,when the Lord, 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 are stewardship exercised 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. That we would think much of Christ, that we would fix our eyes on him, that we would love him and long for his return, for the fellowship of his company and that 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.