

14th November 2021

Entrusted: Stewardship

Intro

- Welcome
- Last week, Steve started our 'Entrusted' series.
- He spoke about how we think we have ownership of our lives and the things in our lives, but actually all we have and all we are belongs to God and come from Him. (Psalm 24:1).
- It's a very different outlook to the world and to what most other people may believe.
- How we look after and steward what God has given us is our act of worship to Him and can also be a witness to the world around us.
- Romans 12:2- says we ought to offer our whole bodies as a living sacrifice and not conform to the pattern of this world... this is true worship.
- Let's not conform our thinking to the pattern of this world, but let's see our whole lives and stewardship as worship to Jesus.
- Stewardship means simply- how we care for something that is our responsibility.
- When I was a child, I used to collect beanie babies and I used to look after them really carefully. I used to put them to bed in my doll's bed and write Christmas cards for them and buy them Christmas presents.
- It's interesting how as humans we have a natural desire to want to take care of things, whether it's dolls when you're a child, or your pets or the material things around you.
- I wonder what it is in your life that that you take serious care of? Maybe it's even your garden or your house?
- I believe that God has put in us as humans the desire to care for things and for people.
- But we have to acknowledge that in caring for them, we honour God first and don't look to seek our own gain.

Genesis 1

- In Genesis, we read the creation story and see God's intention for humankind.
- In Genesis 1:26-28, God says, *"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*
- God creates men and women in his image.
- God blesses them.

- God instructs/commissions them to be fruitful, fill the earth and rule over it.
- **He entrusts to them stewardship of that which He has created.**
- Fast forward to Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.
- Jesus tells a parable about the importance of looking after and becoming fruitful with the things that God gives us.

Read

- Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Bags of Gold.

*“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. **15** To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. **17** So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. **18** But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’*

21 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’*

22 *“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see I have gained two more.’*

23 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’*

24 *“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’*

26 *“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.*

28 *““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.*

29 *For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

- I think that in some ways, this can come across as a bit of a harsh parable for the third servant. Jesus doesn’t mince His words, particularly in the final few verses.

- He is explaining the way of the Kingdom of God, God's rule and reign, and that it's really important how we steward the things that God gives us.
- If we are to draw a parallel between the master in this parable and God, here are 3 things that I think we can take and apply to our lives today...

1) God delights in giving us gold- verse 14 -

- What I mean is this: God delights in giving us the best- in the master giving his servants gold, he was giving them something very precious and very valuable.
- The value of what He entrusted to the stewards was very high.
- God wants to entrust things to us that have a high value.
- We know that the value that God has placed on creation and the people He creates is very high- God says in Genesis that what He creates is very good (Genesis 1:31).
- God sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place to demonstrate the value He places on every single human life (John 3:16) and the desire that we may know Him and have life in abundance (John 10:10).
- How much value do you place on your environment and the people in your life?
- How much value do you place on your own life?
- The more we see things and see people through the eyes of God, surely the more we want to steward and care and love people better.
- Do you see the things in your life or the people in your life with the same value that God sees them?
- Jesus placed value on those who the world didn't, like sinners, those who had illness, tax collectors etc.
- **And then when we do recognise their value, how we respond to what He entrusts to us is really important.**
- The man with the 5 bags of gold recognised their value and he put the money to work, gaining double the amount.
- So did the one with 2 bags of gold.
- I remember when I got my first job after gaining my degree... I didn't want to leave it until the last minute to start looking for a job and I felt it was really important to steward well my education and how I had grown as a person. I was thankful to get a job. Once I had started earning regularly I set up a standing order to my church and was able to pay for coffees and things for other people, as well as things for myself.
- I believe that how we use the gifts and passions that God has given us is really important.
- We were created to work, to work the land and also to use the minds and abilities that God has given us.
- Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

- We can do good works through our jobs, through our volunteering and through how we treat people and things that God has entrusted us with.
- Each one of us has been entrusted with different things... The Bible mentions gifts such as serving, encouragement and teaching. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12.)
- What gifts or people has God entrusted you with today? Is it your family, your parents, siblings, wife or husband, children?
- Are you placing as high a value on them as God places on them?
- Is it your job or your finances? How are you stewarding these areas of your life?
- Zechariah 4:10 says 'who dares despise the day of small things' and I sensed to share this verse as I was preparing. Let us not despise the small things that God has given us but let's invite the Holy Spirit to help us place the value on them that He places.
- May we recognise the high value of the things God has placed in our lives, and may we have the wisdom to steward them as God wants us to.

2) God delights in our faithfulness- verse 21

- The master's reaction to the servant who had doubled the gold he'd been entrusted with, was 'well done, good and faithful servant.'
- How much must God delight in seeing us use the gifts He has given us to serve Him and to serve others.
- I used to work with young adults aged 17-25 on a gap year programme. During the year, the young adults would get opportunities to use the gifts and passions that God had given them in schools or youth groups etc, and throughout the year we would share testimonies. Often when I heard them sharing how God had worked in their lives and what they had been part of, it would move me to tears. I would feel so proud of them for persevering and serving God with their year. And then I would think how much more their Heavenly Father was proud of them and pleased with their faithfulness to use the gifts He had given them.
- It must delight God when He sees His children stepping into the fullness of what He has for them.
- Today with our young people at Frontline Youth, when we see them step out and share a word or testimony, I feel so proud of them and I think how delighted God is with their faithfulness. At any age we can be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us.
- As children, we want to delight the heart of our Heavenly Father.
- *Colossians 3:23* tells us that whatever we do, work at it as if for the Lord, not human master.

- Wherever you are right now, can I encourage you to be faithful to God in that environment. You may feel that your job is not in 'Christian ministry' but God can use you powerfully where you are, in an office or a cafe and that is your ministry.
- Years ago my Mum got a job working in BHS cafe, when BHS still existed! She had teaching qualifications and lots of experience and on paper could have had a much better paid job. But she didn't complain that she was better than that, she took the job in the cafe and she was always telling me about conversations she had with colleagues in the cafe, opportunities to encourage them and even to pray for them. She always wanted to make sure that when she cleaned and did duties in the cafe, she didn't cut corners and that she showed integrity in her work. I believe her Christian witness in that job was really significant, and when she passed away some of her colleagues came to her Celebration Service. She always inspired me in how she stewarded whatever job or opportunities God put in front of her. I believe that when my Mum met Jesus, she would have heard those words, 'well done, good and faithful servant.'
- Let that be how we steward what God gives us. May we never think that a job or a person is beneath us. Let us work hard to be faithful to God in that place.
- It's a sharp contrast with the servant who simply hid the gold he'd been entrusted with in the ground and didn't even put it in the bank to gain a deposit.
- The master calls him wicked and lazy which might sound a bit harsh, but it's also quite sobering.
- I don't want to be sitting on something that God has given me and not using it.
- I don't want to be lazy or miss opportunities and the question we must ask is Lord, is there anything you have given me that you want me to use that I'm not using now?
- How can I be faithful to you where you have placed me?
- When we steward well what God has entrusted to us, He delights in our faithfulness.

3) God delights in giving us more- verse 23.

- Thirdly, when we steward well, God delights in giving us more.
- Notice that to the servants who had increased what the master gave them, he said, '*You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things.*'
- The master saw the faithfulness of the servants who had stewarded well, and because He knew he could trust them, he gave them more.
- Let us be people who God can trust with more.

- Luke 16:10 says, 'whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.'
- My husband Josh is really into growing things in our garden. He started growing herbs and I remember how they started out as small seeds in a pot. I was a bit skeptical as to how they would turn out but Josh was faithful in watering them and tending to it and because he was faithful, more grew.
- If we are faithful in the small things, I believe we will be amazed to see things in our life grow.
- Ephesians 3:20 tell us that God is the God of more- and He can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.
- But it takes us being faithful in the small. If we step out with our small, we can be amazed at how God does immeasurably more.
- As Home Churches have now started to gather, I wonder what God will do through us in our homes and streets?
- As we continue to be people that hear and obey the Word of God in our every day, I wonder what He will do that will amaze us?

God delights in giving us gold, God delights in our faithfulness and God delights in giving us more. So, how can we apply this to our stewardship today?

Application

1) Pray that God would help you to see the value He places on the things and people He has given you.

- There's a Christian song I used to listen to called 'Give me your eyes.' The chorus says:
- "Give me your eyes for just one second, give me your eyes so I can see, everything that I keep missing, give me your eyes for humanity.'
- Sometimes we might not see things as God wants us to see them.
- Let us ask the Holy Spirit to give us a love for the things/people we have been entrusted with. Romans 5:5 says that God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we want Him to help us love others.
- When we see God's way instead of our own way, it changes everything.
- What are the bags of gold that God has given you? Is it your job or the people in your job?
- Pray that God would help you to place as high a value on those things so that you love and steward better.

2) Take time to reflect on what God has entrusted to you.

- Take a moment to think, 'what have I been entrusted with?' Maybe this is something you've never really thought about.
- If we are aware of what has been entrusted to us then we can be more intentional in how we steward it.
- It sounds really simple, but having an increased awareness can help us to take care of things better.
- This caused me to reflect on what God has entrusted to me personally.
- Journal the things in your life. For example, money, salary, savings, possessions, family, friends, your car etc.
- Praying for people can also be a way of stewarding well. If we believe in the power of prayer, then we can intercede on behalf of friends and family and see God move in their lives.

3) Put some things in place to help you be a better steward.

- Do something differently where you need to.
- It was my birthday recently and I received a bit of money. My default is to treat myself but I felt challenged to give away some of that money to a charity that I support. It can be tempting to hold onto things for our own security or selfishness.
- Is there anything that you are holding onto for your own gain that God might be saying, let go of and think outwards?
- Maybe you need to set up a standing order to church or to a charity or some other need?
- John Wesley said this, which really cut to my heart: *'Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?'*
- How can we hold onto our money for our own gain, when maybe the very reason God gave it to us is so that we can bless others?
- In stewarding well, we can witness to the world around us. We can say something but if we put it into practise, it makes more of an impact on people.
- You may know about the Climate Change Conference that's just taken place in Glasgow, all about the importance of caring for the planet and what we can do to look after it better. (Point people to Catherine's blogs and Tearfund.) This is a very practical way that we can steward God's creation. Not littering, recycling, using cars less etc.

- I also felt to say this morning that there might be some people listening who have a passion for something and for years you've been saying you'll explore it but you haven't yet. Why not ask God to help you in that area and take a step of faith today...

Conclusion

Let us ask God to help us see the value He places on things, let us pray for the areas we have been entrusted with and let us put things in place today to help us be better stewards.

- Psalm 50:10 says, 'for every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills.' In other words, all that we have been entrusted with comes from our Heavenly Father.
- Remember, we are not owners of God's creation but we are stewards.
- We want to hear God say to us, 'well done good and faithful servant.'

- A Christian called Andrew Murray said, "The world asks, "What does a man own?" Christ asks, How does he use it?"

- How will you use what God has entrusted to you today?

- Pray

*"Stewardship is the use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals."- author unknown