

**September 18, 2016**  
**Stewardship is a Choice**  
**#2. What Kind of Manager Are You?**  
**Scripture: Luke 12:16-21 & Mark 12:41-43**

This month we're talking about a particular word that the New Testament uses to describe Christians. It's the word "manager". Some older translations translate the New Testament Greek word for "manager" as "steward".

As Christians, we are managers or stewards of the time, talents, gifts, and treasures that God has given us. That ranges all the way from caring for creation, working to bring justice to the oppressed, and using the individual talents God has given us, to make a difference in the church and in the world for him.

A key Scripture is First Peter 4:10 (NLT):

**Each one, as a good manager (steward) of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he (or she) has received from God.**

This morning we're going to look at four stories in the Bible of people who managed what God gave them. These stories will help us understand the theme of this series, that "**Stewardship is a choice**".

What we do with what God has given us, is a choice that we all have to make in life.

The first two stories are negative ones. They are about the person who does little with the much they have received. This is the person who has been blessed with many things but is doing almost nothing with them.

Here are four characteristics of that kind of person so you'll be able to identify them when we get to the actual Scripture passages.

First. They have a "*me first*" attitude. Their major consideration is, "*What's in it for me?*"

Second. They all have an opportunity to share their blessings with others, but they all choose not to.

Third. The choice they made was a bad choice. They chose to be a bad manager.

Fourth. There were consequences that resulted from their poor stewardship. That makes sense. There are always consequences to any action we take.

The first story is in Luke 12:16-21 (NLT). As I read it, listen to how many times this wealthy farmer uses the words "I", "my" or "myself"

**16 Then (Jesus) told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"**

**20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'**

**21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."**

This rich person made the classic error of a bad manager. He forgot that God is the owner of all things – our time, our talents, our treasures, our property, and our families - and that we are simply managers of God's blessings.

That wrong understanding made him selfish and self-centered. He never thought about using his wealth for the good of others. He chose to be a bad steward, and as a consequence, God tells him his life is forfeited. It's a clear example of, "*You can't take it with you.*"

As Jesus said in Matthew 6:21(NLT):

**<sup>21</sup> Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**

There was a news story this summer about Harry Potter author, J.K. Rowling who was recently removed from the Forbes list of the "World's Most Wealthy People". It seems Forbes removed her from that list because she gave too much money to charity! That tells you something about our prevailing cultural values, doesn't it?

Now let's turn to Mark 10:17-22 (NLT). It's another story of someone who did little with much.

**<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

**18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.’”**

**20 “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”**

**21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”**

**22 At this, the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.**

The story raises the question for us of why it is so hard for the person who has been given much to be a good manager of those things. I think there are two basic reasons.

First, their wealth and possessions gives them more options than the average person, it enables them to be more self-reliant, and this range of choice often leads them to having to choose between their “stuff” and spiritual things.

I think we see that in this country. The wealthier we have become as a nation the fewer people seem interested in spiritual things. Our wealth makes us self-sufficient, so we decide that we don’t need God! Big mistake! And our increasingly troubled society is, I suggest, the result of that trend.

Second. Those who have much, also tend to have the greatest control and power in society. Money and power tend to go hand in hand. That’s why the disenfranchised tend to be the poorest people in our society. When someone is used to having this kind of power and control it’s hard to let go and to let God.

OK. Now let’s look at two positive examples of good managers, or stewards, of God’s blessings. These are people who did much with the little they had. These are the people, who Scripture says, pleased God.

The first person who did much with little was a widow. Mark 12:41-43 (NLT):

**41 Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put**

**in large amounts. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.**

**43 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions."**

The second person who did much with little was a young boy in the story of the feeding of the 5000. Let's start at John 6:5-9 (NLT):

**5 Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" 6 He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.**

**7 Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money to feed them!"**

Now get this final verse:

**8 Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 9 "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"**

If we'd been there, wouldn't that have been our attitude as well? What are we going to do with so little? Well read on:

**10 "Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward, he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. 12 After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." 13 So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.**

There's our stewardship lesson again. It's not how much or how little you have that's important. It's what you do with what you have. The widow gave all she had and in God's scheme of things that made it an enormous gift of generosity. The young boy was willing to give all that he had to Jesus, and a miracle resulted. God can always take and multiply anything we give him.

There are two things, though, that the person who doesn't have very much must avoid.

First. You have to avoid thinking, "*I don't have much, so I can't do anything.*" That's just not true. If it was true, Jesus would have refused both the widow's gift and the young boy's gift. He didn't.

Second. Never despise what you do give. As long as your heart is right, so is any gift of your time, talents or treasures.

There's a true story about a plain, ordinary Sunday school teacher called **Mr. Kimble**. In 1858 Mr. Kimble shared the good news about Jesus with a shoe salesman. The salesman gave his life to Christ. His name was **D. L. Moody**, who became a great evangelist.

Through Moody's influence, a small town pastor named **F. B. Myer** preached on the campus of an American College and led a student **J. Wilbur Chapman** to Christ.

Chapman later became involved in the Y.W.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association) and hired a former baseball player named **Billy Sunday** to do evangelistic work.

Sunday held a revival meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina.

As a result of that crusade, a second crusade was held in Charlotte with an evangelist named **Mordecai Ham**.

During that Crusade, a young man gave his life to Christ. His name was **Billy Graham**, who has been a modern day Paul, leading millions of people around the world to faith in Jesus in our day and generation.

And all this happened because a faithful Sunday school teacher named **Mr. Kimble** used the little he had, to do as much as he could, for the Kingdom of God. And so can you! And so can you!

When we are good managers of what God has given us, miraculous things can happen. So remember this. Stewardship is always a choice.

## **Prayer**

Generous and Gracious God, thank you for every blessing you have ever given us.

Creator and Owner of all things, teach us to be good managers of your gifts to us.

May we manage our money and possessions well, and so always be mindful of the needs of others.

May we manage our time well, so that we may be good stewards of both our bodies and our spirits, and generous in helping others.

May we manage our talents and gifts well, using them to bless and serve those who cross our path.

And in doing all of these things, may we be inspired by the life of Jesus who became a servant of all, and may we be led by His Spirit to live lives that truly make a difference for your Kingdom.

In generosity, then, let us reach out to those in need.

In love, let us love the unlovable.

In compassion, let us strengthen the weak, give hope to the dying and comfort to the mourning.

In mercy, let us forgive those who sin against us and seek paths of reconciliation.

Almighty God, we live in a world filled with so much need where it is so easy to become overwhelmed.

Encourage us again with the story of the widow and the young boy who simply did what they could, so you could do what you do best – send showers of blessing.

Hear these our prayers in Jesus Name. Amen.

## Notes

New Living Translation (NLT)