

1010

for

Week One

OPEN HEARTS

Firstfruits Giving



WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

Today we begin a three-week stewardship emphasis. The word stewardship is often seen as a dirty word—a gimmick to get people to dig deeper and “give ’til it hurts.” Nothing could be further from the truth! Instead, stewardship is a precious word that sums up the Christian life. It encourages us to be who we truly are in Christ: Precious people who have been richly blessed by a Father who knows how to give good gifts to his children!

Christians face a daily struggle. We have two paths set before us. The New Man, created within us at baptism, wants to live for Christ and the life that is to come. But our sinful nature focuses us on this life. That struggle pulls us in two directions when it comes to how we set our priorities or use our time. The struggle is especially noticeable when we wrestle with how to use the financial resources God has given us.



The Lord speaks about worldly wealth and possessions in over 2,300+ passages of Scripture. In other words, God speaks to us about worldly wealth roughly three times more often than he does about faith! Why? So that God can get to the “heart of the matter.” Money and possessions are God’s gifts to us. Sadly, human hearts often lust after these gifts and forget about the Giver. What heartache comes from a love affair with money and possessions! What good can result for us, for the Church, and for the world as we put the Giver first—offering back to him the FIRSTFRUITS of all that he has entrusted to us. God is many places. Second place in our hearts dare never be one of them!

Christ’s willing sacrifice for us is our motivation and inspiration to give back to God. May he open the hearts of his people to offer him our first and our best!

Our worth will follow this path.

Week One: OPEN HEARTS (Firstfruits Giving)

Week Two: OPEN MINDS (Proportionate Giving)

Week Three: OPEN HANDS (Sacrificial Giving)

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE

OPENING HYMN

All Depends on Our Possessing | CW421:1-4

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

DIALOGUE

M: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

C: **Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.**

M: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

C: **One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.**

M: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

C: **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.**

Psalm 24:1; 145:1,3,4,13

The rite of Holy Baptism may take place here.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

M: Lord God, heavenly Father, we humbly come before you today knowing that we have failed to speak lovingly, think purely, or act rightly. We have sinned against you and against others...

...in wasting the precious time you give us.

C: **...in our slowness and hesitancy to spread your Gospel.**

M: ...in the faithful care of our relationships.

C: **...in our restless and relentless preoccupation with worldly wealth.**

M: ...in caring for the bodies and minds you have given us.

C: **...in our refusal to make you our first priority.**

Silence for personal reflection

M: Hear our confession, for we have sinned and are in need of your mercy and forgiveness.

**C: Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: Amen.

1 Al - might - y Fa - ther, heav'n and earth
2 The wealth of earth, of sky, of sea,
With lav - ish wealth be - fore you bow;
The gold, the sil - ver, spark - ling gem,
Those trea - sures owe to you their birth,
The wav - ing corn, the bend - ing tree
So rich - ly fur - nished for us now.
Are yours; you are but lend - ing them.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: O Lord, giver of life and source of all love, we know that all we have received comes from your gracious hand. Help us to always use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send your Holy Spirit to work through us, that many more might come to know the saving riches of your Son. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of your Son in our hearts, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen.

The Lord asks his people to give careful thought about the relationship between their finances and their faith.

¹ In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest:

² This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.’”

³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴“Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”

⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. ⁹ “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.”

GOSPEL

Luke 12:13-21

Jesus teaches it is the height of folly to live for this temporal life, forgetting of the eternal life that is to come.

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’”

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’”

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

M: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise be to you, O Christ!

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

What Is the World to Me | CW477

SERMON

Giving to God Doesn't Make a Bit of Sense!

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Lord of All Good | **CW483:1**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Lord God, you created the heavens and the earth.

C: Every animal of the forest is yours as well as the cattle on a thousand hills.

M: Lord, from your hand comes boundless riches.

C: We thank you, Lord, for making us your stewards. We pray that you will grant us faith so we can please you in our stewardship.

M: Lord, help us to see the time, the talents, and the financial resources we have are a sacred trust from you.

C: We ask for your help, Lord, to use all our resources in worthwhile activities that will give you honor and praise.

M: Lord, help us to spend time in your Word and in prayer that you might nourish the faith you give us.

C: Please change us, Lord, from fear and selfishness to trust and generosity.

Special prayers and petitions may be offered here.

M: Help us, Lord, to be wise and fruitful stewards of the opportunities that you give us to use our gifts.

C: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Holy Communion may be celebrated here. If so, the presiding minister will direct the congregation to the appropriate pages of Christian Worship or Christian Worship Supplement.

BIBLE STUDY: Firstfruits Giving

I. INTRODUCTION

- ? What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”? When you heard that we would be talking about stewardship for three weeks, what was your response?

It is easy to think of “stewardship” as being a discussion about money. Consider the following quote:

Stewardship isn't a subcategory of the Christian life. Stewardship is the Christian life. After all, what is stewardship except that God has entrusted to us life, time, talents, money, possessions, family, and his grace? In each case, he evaluates how we regard what he has entrusted to us—and what we do with it.

(Randy Alcon in Money, Possessions, and Eternity, p. 140)

Stewardship = Management of the _____ of the

+ _____ + _____ + _____
that God gives me

- ? If “stewardship is the Christian life,” why will a modern stewardship study need to focus on money, perhaps more than ever before in history?

Psalm 20:7

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

- ? Complete: Stewardship does not just give the LORD honor. It demonstrates that we _____ him.

II. FIRSTFRUIT BASICS

**The focus of firstfruits giving is not
the _____ but the _____.**

Proverbs 3:9

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

- ? When God calls for firstfruits giving in that passage, what is the amount he asks for?

Deuteronomy 26:8-10

So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me.

- ? Again, no amount is stipulated for this firstfruits offering. What is stressed is the attitude. How would you characterize the attitude of the Israelite when he brought his firstfruits offerings?

Mark 10:21-22

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- ? This man had claimed to follow all of God's law. Was God actually *first* in his life? Give the reason for your answer.

The focus of firstfruits giving is not on _____ but on _____.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 24:1

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

- ?** Do you believe the passages above are literally true? If so, how does that have to affect the way you approach stewardship?

John 1:2

He [Jesus] was with God [the Father] in the beginning.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- ?** What do these passages teach us about how God gives.

God gave us his _____ and gave us his _____.

Romans 7:18

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Galatians 5:24

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

? These passages teach:

- *Through my sinful nature, _____ assures that God will always come anywhere but first.*
- *Through the Spirit we are _____ to give in a way that glorifies God—Creator, Savior, Spirit. As God’s children, he comes first!*

The Challenge

If you are not in the spiritual habit of giving to the Lord first, it is time to reconsider that habit. The First Commandment dictates that we are to *fear, love and trust in God above all things*. Firstfruits giving helps us do exactly that. It tangibly puts God first.

III. NEWS AND NOTES

- Every member will receive a *10 for 10* commitment card. Keep it in a safe place and begin to pray about it. Do not fill it out yet! Instead, this first week, invest yourself in praying about why you do or do not practice firstfruits giving. If you do, is your attitude correct? If you do not, ask yourself: does God ever command something that isn’t meant to be a blessing for me? *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10)*. That’s God’s promise to you!
- Over the next couple weeks, we will talk about how to respond to God’s love and grace in our stewardship. At the end of this three week emphasis members will be asked to fill out those cards, which are a ten-week giving plan.
- Additional devotional material has been/will be shared. Read. Ponder. Pray.

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace.
Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give ☩ you peace.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

All Depends on Our Possessing | CW421:5

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