

## **God's Stewards: Living in the Present, Looking to the Future**

Consecration Sun., PWAP #3 – 2/14/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.  
Text: Matthew 6:19-21 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 21, [Jesus said,] **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”**.

### **Introduction**

✘ This morning we wrap up our *People With A Purpose* series of sermons on “Living as God’s Stewards” by considering the important concept that, as God’s stewards, we Christians live our lives differently than those around us who are not believers in Christ. We live, knowing that God, in His Son Jesus, has prepared a place in heaven for us in eternity. But at the same time we are firmly committed to living here and now in the role that He has for us under His gracious rule our lives.

→ It is not two different lives or views though. Christ has made us His disciples already. He has grafted us into His body, the Church, by baptism in a uniquely physical and spiritual life both here and now, and forevermore; in a bond that we dare never try to separate. For it is part and parcel of the wondrous mystery of belonging to Christ Jesus and living in His grace today and forevermore.

### **I. Christians are Dual Citizens**

✘ I don’t know if any of you remember a time when your mothers were screaming frantically at you because they caught you doing something you shouldn’t have been doing, but I sure do. Did you ever hear them ask this question: “What on earth are you doing, for heaven’s sake?”

→ If we put that question another way, it is a very important question for me to ask of you today, “What are you doing on earth here and now, that will make a difference for all eternity in heaven?” Of course, I’m assuming with that question that all of you right now today have a confident hope of living beyond this present life in heaven, right?

✘ I’d also like to assume that none of us here wants to be so “heavenly minded” that we aren’t of any earthly good. At the same time, it’s never a good thing, as a Christian, to become so “earthly minded” that we are of no heavenly good either.

→ So what we’re uncovering here today with this stewardship principle, is that we Christians live each day with a necessary; a godly tension in place. You and I are of course citizens of this world – we reside physically in a particular town, county and country. But at the same, as Paul tells us in Philippians 3:20, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”.

✘ This is not a curse or something to be ashamed of or hide from others as too many believers end up doing. No, it’s a very good thing!

→ We know it has to be because the eternal King of heaven created the here and now on this very earth for us; for our daily lives! And He cares so much about us and this earth that He chose to enter this world and become one of us.

→ Yes, He did it, in spite of our continued abuse of both His creation and His commands regarding how we are to live together in His creation, as His creation. Think of it – He who gave us our lives and placed us in this world, willingly gave up His life; being abused and tortured and denied the very right of earthly citizenship, to the point of being nailed to a cross, in order to take the punishment for sin that should have been handed out upon us.

✘ And He did all of that why? In order to preserve our citizenship in His eternal, heavenly kingdom.

## II. Too easily we focus on earthly treasure.

✘ In our Gospel Reading this morning, Jesus calls you and me to reflect upon our priorities in this life of dual citizenship, and to consider, “What are my treasures? And where do I consider them to be?”

→ Of course He knows all of us intimately. And so He knows the earthly temptations that we face regarding our “treasures”. That’s why He says in verses 19-20, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

→ You can’t hide the truth of what’s going on in your heads and hearts folks. Jesus knows that it’s way too easy for us to get caught up in working for status and stuff. As earthly beings we naturally want more earthly stuff – bigger, better, the latest, the newest, the coolest stuff. In fact, huge amounts of the time, treasure, and energy that God has given us is consumed primarily in our desire to build, supply and maintain our own individual earthly kingdom, right?

✘ But Jesus concluded in verse 21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”.

→ It’s so sad to consider how many of our hearts have lost our unique dual reality as Christians and have instead become focused and trapped into an exclusively world-focused existence. So many of our relationships with family members and friends and even fellow believers are going, or have gone down the tubes because our sinful hearts can’t stop clinging to the “stuff” and the “ideals” and the “justifications” of this world – making them our treasures that we want for ourselves.

→ This is why, in part that Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs”. Just think how many wars and divorces and other conflicts would have ended early or never even taken place in this world if the pursuit of money and the selfish acquiring of stuff wasn’t such a focus; wasn’t so important to us that we are willing to fight and cheat and compromise even our faith rather than give them up or use them for the glory of Christ.

✘ When we allow the things of this world to become our treasure, then those things become for us our god or gods. And when we do that folks, our dual citizenship is put at great risk, and guess which citizenship we are at risk of throwing away at that point? Yes, it is our eternal place in heaven.

## III. Live faithfully in both citizenships

✘ In today’s First Reading, Paul directs the young pastor, Timothy in his teaching and preaching, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Tim. 6:17–19).

→ I already know what most of you are thinking in response to those words. “Well, I am certainly not one of those who is ‘the rich in this present age’.” But the truth is, when compared to the majority of people living on earth, you and I are rich, even in the things of this world; even if you are the one with the least here among us today.

→ In our Second Reading this morning, Peter tells us that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night and that all of the material things to which we so easily have become attached will go up in smoke. Then he asks, us, his readers to consider, since this is the case then what type of people ought we to be in holiness and godliness? In verse 18, he teaches us that our focus; our true “treasure” instead should be to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord...Jesus”.

✘ That’s the “stuff” that is of the greatest value and worth both here and now and for eternity. What Peter’s talking about is those things connected to our faith in Jesus; things like loving others with the same love that God has given us; seeking to do good; to be rich in good deeds and generous with the things the Lord has gifted us to have, so that other people might be blessed by it as well.

→ You see, making Jesus and the things of Jesus my truest treasure, means that my heart is with Jesus in both realms of my citizenship. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”, said Jesus (v.21).

#### **IV. Committed: living in the present, looking to the future**

✘ So, how do you and I store up treasures in heaven as Jesus calls us to do? The first part of that is living a life committed to Jesus. But you can’t just flip a switch and decide to do that. It has to be done for you – and it has been done by Christ at your baptism. Now by His power, you and I live committed lives – lives that we commit to Christ today with a faithful eye always on our future.

→ As stewards, this means a fundamental shift in our mindset. The more we mature as Christians, the more we move from just “giving to a need” to now “needing to give” out of love for Christ. And I’m talking not only about the giving of money or goods, but even more about needing to give of ourselves; of our time and our talents.

✘ When that need; that core desire wells up inside of a Christian to give to others for no other reason except that Christ has already given you more than you need, then all kinds of wonderful and creative ways of giving just come bubbling and pouring out!

→ Some people make this a part of their estate planning, adding to their wills that a certain portion of their belongings will be donated to a special charity or cause or church for the furtherance of the Gospel here on earth, even while they are now in Paradise with Jesus.

→ Others commit chunks of their free time to volunteer efforts in helping and serving those who are in need in the community or in building relationships with their neighbors so that they can eventually share their faith with them or invite them to come and hear about Jesus at church.

→ This is why today, on Consecration Sunday, we set aside a portion of our Service today, and even hand out a commitment; pledge card. So that you can prayerfully consider your own “need to give” back to Jesus and His ministry – yes in your financial offerings so that His Church here can continue in His ministry in this place, but also in your offering of time and talents for the glory of Christ today and in the future.

#### **Conclusion**

✘ You and I, friends, are truly blessed! We have a God who loves us so much that He willingly gave His life, paying for all of our sin when we deserved it not. On top of that He invites and gathers us here in His Divine Service so that He can feed us spiritually with His Word and Sacraments; both creating and sustaining our faith in Christ.

- And He graciously supplies us with all that we have in this life; even more than we need for this life. And then, thanks to Jesus, He gives us the assurance that we will, one day, have an eternity to be the recipients of His love without any sin to spoil it.
- ✘ The icing on top of the cake then, is this: we are gifted by God to be able to rejoice in all of His gifts right here and now. I mean to truly be happy each and every day because of our Lord's abundance of grace. That's our treasure from God! That's where our heart finds its home today and forever.
- Now that we know there is more than we could ever need. In Christ, we need to give it away in love and joy, as His *People With A Purpose*. Amen.