

Occupy Till I Come – Living as Faithful Stewards of Christ

A distraught man frantically rode his horse up to John Wesley, shouting, “Mr. Wesley, Mr. Wesley, something terrible has happened! Your house has burned to the ground!” Weighing the news for a moment, Wesley replied, “No. *The Lord’s* house burned to the ground. That means one less responsibility for me.” We might say, “Get real,” but Wesley’s reaction didn’t stem from a denial of reality. Rather, it sprang from life’s most basic reality – that God is the owner of all things, and that we are simply His stewards.

Jerry Caven had a successful restaurant chain, two banks, a ranch, a farm, and several real estate ventures. At age 59, he was searching for a nice lakeside retirement home. But *the Owner* had other plans. “God led us to put our money and time overseas,” Jerry says. “It’s been exciting. Before, we gave token amounts. Now we put substantial money into missions. We often go to India.” What changed the Caven’s attitude toward giving? “It was realizing God’s ownership,” Jerry explains. “Once we understood we were giving away *God’s* money to do *God’s* work, we discovered a peace and joy we never had back when we thought it was money!”

John Wesley and Jerry Caven have something in common that all of us need to cultivate: a life-changing understanding of God’s ownership and our stewardship.

How a believer handles the stewardship of his finances and possessions communicates much about his or her spiritual condition. To underscore how important the subject of money and possessions is to God, sixteen of Christ’s thirty-eight parables speak about how people should handle earthly treasure. In fact, our Lord taught more about such stewardship (one out of every ten verses in the Gospels) than about heaven and hell combined.¹

A Resolve to be made

¹ John MacArthur, *Whose Money is it Anyways?* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing), 3.

By faith in God’s promises and for the glory of His name, I will seek to become a better steward of the resources God has entrusted to me, starting today.

1. God owns everything

From beginning to end, Scripture emphasizes God’s lordship over, and [therefore] ownership of, everyone and everything.

Because He *is* sovereign Lord, He has the right and might to create all things; and, because He created all things, He is therefore the rightful Lord of and over all things:

- **Acts 17:24-25** – “The God who made the world and everything in it, being² Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”
- **Colossians 1:15-17** (LSB) – “Who³ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn⁴ of all creation. For in Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”
- **Psalms 24:1-2** – “The earth is the LORD’S⁵ and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.”
- **Psalms 50:10-12** – “Indeed⁶, 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.”

² This participle could rightly be translated, “Because/since He is Lord...”. See NET note.

³ Referring to Jesus.

⁴ I.e., rightful owner and ruler of. NLT = “and He is supreme over all creation.” Cf. **Hebrews 1:2**.

⁵ In the Hebrew, לַיהוָה (“to/for/of YHWH”) is fronted for emphasis.

⁶ “For/because” in an excellent translation. I have decided to translate *ki* as “Indeed/certainly.”

- **Deuteronomy 10:14** – “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”
- **1 Chronicles 29:11-12** – “Yours alone, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.”

2. Since God owns everything, we are but stewards of His property

A steward is “someone an owner entrusts with the management of his assets.” A *good* steward manages the owner’s assets for the owner’s *benefit*.

Joe Rigney writes,

We see from the creation account that **gifts are provision for mission**. **The call to have dominion is a call to exercise wise rule over God’s world as His vice-regent**. Man is an under-king, a steward of God’s creation, charged with establishing God’s rule and reign over the unsubdued earth. Thus, not only is man called to protect sacred space, but man is called to extend sacred space, so that **the earth is filled with God’s glory through a glorious society of His image bearers**. **To accomplish this task, man will need God’s wisdom.**⁷

Some Scriptures texts regarding our stewardship

- **1 Peter 4:10-11** – “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, **as good stewards of God’s varied grace**: whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

⁷ Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 84-85.

- **Leviticus 25:23** (NIV) – “The land is Mine and you are but aliens and My tenants.”
- **1 Corinthians 4:7** – “What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”
- **1 Chronicles 29:14, 16** – “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you...O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for Your holy name comes from Your hand is all your own.”
- **Haggai 2:8** – “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD of Hosts.
- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** – “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”
- **Romans 14:8** – “So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”
- **James 1:16-17** – “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

When we forget this vital principle, selfishness and sin rear their ugly heads.

- **Deuteronomy 8:2, 11-20**
- **Hosea 2:5, 8** – “For [Israel] has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’...Yet she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and I who lavished on her silver and gold, which they have used for Baal.”

- **Ezekiel 16:17-19** – “You also took your beautiful jewels of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore. And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set My oil and My incense before them. Also My bread that I gave you – I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey – you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the LORD.”
- **Matthew 20:1-15** – parable of the laborers in the vineyard
- **Matthew 25:18, 24** – parable of the talents
- Illustration of kids not sharing toys. Why? They forgot the toys aren’t theirs.⁸

Jon Bloom writes,

You are on assignment from God. This is why Paul says, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (1 Cor. 7:17). “You are not your own” (6:19). You are “a bondservant of Christ” (7:22) and a steward of the gifts you have received. Others need your gifts. That’s why you have them.⁹

Conclusion:

Biblical stewardship is an act of worship. God wants us to acknowledge His ownership over everything **by** demonstrating our stewardship. God wants us to be like Him, and we are never more like God than when we give.¹⁰

The Bible makes it clear that we are all stewards. The only question that remains, then, is are we *good* stewards, or *bad* stewards?

- **Luke 12:42** – “Who then is the faithful and¹¹ wise manager?”

⁸ This is just as hard for us adults to share ‘our toys’ when we forget that all we have ‘is on loan’ from God.

⁹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/steward-the-gifts-god-has-assigned-to-you>

¹⁰ <https://seminary.grace.edu/biblical-stewardship-stewarding-the-kingdom/>. James C. Petty writes, Giving turns out to the *primary* way that God expresses His goodness and love to us humans. In his James C. Petty, *Act of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2019), 181.

- **1 Corinthians 4:2** – “It is required¹² of stewards¹³ that they be found trustworthy.”

In the financial world, a good investment manager doesn't do with his client's holdings what he feels like. Why? Because he knows *those assets don't belong to him*; they belong to his client. Good stewards always act in the owners' best interests, not their own.

- A *good* steward makes it his aim to find out what that owner wants done with his assets, and then to prudently carry out his will.

A Resolve to be made

- By faith in God's promises and for the glory of His name, I will seek to become a better steward of the resources God has entrusted to me, starting today.

Jon Bloom's words furnish a wonderful way to close our study:

So, live your assignment. Steward your gifts to the utmost for the sake of others. Aspire to be the very best and most fruitful you that you can be for God's glory. Don't dishonor God by devaluing the gifts he's given you. Don't waste valuable time grumbling about gifts you don't have or resenting others for the gifts they do have, or even for the sinful pride they might exhibit. They're stumbling, recovering selfaholics just like you and God knows how to graciously oppose them (1 Pet. 5:5). Pray for them. There is no higher calling for you than to be you, and God will reward you beyond your wildest dreams if you faithfully steward your gifts for others.¹⁴

Soli Deo Gloria!!

¹¹ Literally = “Who, then, is the faithful steward, [that is] the one [who is] wise?”

¹² Literally = “what is sought”

¹³ NIV = “those who have been given a trust”; NLT = “a person who is put in charge as a manager”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Addendum:

John Wesley's 4 questions he asked himself before buying something:

1. In spending this money, am I acting as if I owned it, or am I acting as the Lord's trustee?
2. What Scripture passages require me to spend this money this way?
3. Can I offer up this purchase as a sacrifice to the Lord?
4. Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?

A suggestion to be considered

If as stewards our one goal is using the resources God has given us for His glory in furthering His kingdom, *and* if God has made it explicitly clear that He is doing this through the local church, we ought to make giving to a local church whose goal is God's glory in the advance of Christ's kingdom a priority!

- When we get saved, the church becomes our new family; thus, giving to others in the body of Christ ought to also be a priority (Gal. 6:10)
- Jamie Munson – “Not giving to your local church would be similar to a parent who works hard, earns a living, and then buys a bunch of new clothes for the kids down the street while his own children run around wearing grubby garbage sacks.”

As God's steward, what personal, spiritual, moral, and financial changes do you need to make to get ready to give Him a face-to-face account when He calls us to account?

- Matthew Henry: “It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day.”

Ecclesiastes 5:10 – “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.”

Proverbs 19:17 – “Whoever is generous lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed.”

Proverbs 22:9 – “Whoever has a good bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 – “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

Job 28; Psa. 104:24

Matt. 6:31-34.

Job 1:21; Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:21

Blomberg

The man of noble birth clearly represents Jesus, the Son of David, who departs into a far country to receive His kingship. During His absence He entrusts His servants with His possessions. When He returns as king (cf. Acts 1:11), He judges His servants. The faithful are rewarded most graciously. The unfaithful are condemned. Jesus' parable is intended to teach that since the Kingdom in its fullness is not coming immediately, but rather at His second coming, there would be a time of stewardship between the two. In Luke's mind, Jesus is "made king" via His resurrection/ascension. In v. 17 the disproportionate nature of reward shows the generous nature of the nobleman. The "ten cities" is a picture of "treasure in heaven" (12:33; 18:22). The parable is clearly a parable of stewardship.

What is a Steward? – "someone an owner entrusts with the management of his assets."

- A *good* steward manages the owner's assets for the owner's *benefit*.

Alcorn – there can be no understanding of stewardship *until* there is an acute awareness or *ownership*. The steward cannot do his or her job well without clearly grasping who owns – and who does *not* own – what is entrusted to their care.

- ➔ Includes not only money, but time, gifts, relationships, opportunities
- ➔ Seen from this perspective, stewardship isn't a narrow subcategory of the Christian life. On the contrary, stewardship *is all of* life; it must be central in our thinking and doing.
- ➔ However, as Blomberg says, "though one's entire life should be dedicated to God, a particularly telling area for determining one's religious commitment involves one's finances."

Newheiser

The answer to materialistic idolatry is learning to find satisfaction in Christ, who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35). He offers living water that will forever satisfy the thirst of those who drink (7:37-39).¹⁵

Financial struggles are often worship problems. And so, we need Christ to reorient our lives to Him.¹⁶

Scripture refutes the wrong beliefs and attitudes that lie behind financial folly.¹⁷

Money is very dangerous.¹⁸

Money itself is not evil; it can be put to good or bad uses. What matters is how you regard money in your heart.¹⁹

Christians [must] acknowledge that in the ultimate sense we don't own anything, because God owns everything – including us (see Psa. 50:10-12; 1 Cor. 6:20). We are merely stewards of that which belongs to our heavenly Master.²⁰

Munson

Everything we have comes from God and belongs to God: life, family, money, resources, time, job, talents...everything (John 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7). We are stewards of what God has given us. He owns it; we use it.²¹

Give what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose: [the need to cultivate] a lifestyle of generosity.²²

Budget for judgment day.²³

¹⁵ Jim Newheiser, *Money: Seeking God's Wisdom* (Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing, 2019), 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹ Jamie Munson, *Money: God or Gift* (Relit, 2010), 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 59.

²³ *Ibid.*, 83.

We put our money where our heart is.²⁴

MacArthur

How a believer handles the stewardship of his finances and possessions communicates much about his or her spiritual condition. To underscore how important the subject of money and possessions is to God, sixteen of Christ's thirty-eight parables speak about how people should handle earthly treasure. In fact, our Lord taught more about such stewardship (one out of every ten verses in the Gospels) than about heaven and hell combined.²⁵

One of the most lovely Hebrew names for God is *Jehovah-Jireh*, "the LORD who provides" (Gen. 22:14). God's provision for those who trust in Him is so characteristic of *His nature* that it is one of His names.²⁶

In *Luke 19*, we see that Zacchaeus' salvation immediately affected the financial area of his life. *The initial evidence of his transformed life was his completely changed attitude toward his money.*

The warning against loving money:²⁷

1. We begin to trust in it rather than God (Job 31:24-28; Pro. 11:28; 1 Tim. 6:17-18).
2. It deceives, producing a false sense of security (Matt. 13:22).
3. It tempts us to build our life on a fleeting, unstable foundation (Pro. 23:4-5).
4. It tempts us to pride (Pro. 28:11; Deut. 8:11-14).
5. It tempts us to steal from God (Mal. 3:8)
6. It tempts us to steal from others (1 John 3:17)

Loving money will make you behave like an unbeliever.²⁸

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Whose Money is it Anyways?* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing), 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-28.

Even with mankind's sinful excesses in handling the world's goods, God does not command us to stop using and enjoying them. The sin is not in enjoying the earth's bounty. The sin is overindulgence and waste – flaunting your wealth and engaging in a self-centered, compassionless consumption.²⁹

Petty

“Live to give.”³⁰

God is the original Giver. And because of the cosmic, unfathomable levels of gifting that God demonstrated as the Creator, the moral environment of the universe itself is one of giving. Giving turns out to be the *primary* way that God expresses His goodness and love to us humans.³¹

Creation itself was a massive project of pure giving...Creation was a free choice on God's part. The God of the Bible was and is infinitely satisfied in Himself. He has no need to express Himself in creation. He simply determined to give us a good universe as a gift from Him.³²

Though God showed Himself to Adam and Eve as the original cheerful Giver, they quickly joined the rebellion against this giving God. They doubted His good intentions – despite their glorious earth, a beautiful garden with all that they needed, free and unearned use and dominion over creation, open fellowship and conversation with God, and the gift of companionship with each other.³³

Tripp

Money is a powerful thing. It can be a blessing to us, or a cursing.³⁴ It can finance our allegiance to the Kingdom of God, or the kingdom of self.³⁵

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁰ James C. Petty, *Act of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2019), 181.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³² *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁴ Paul David Tripp, *Sex and Money* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 145.

Everyone's heart is mastered by something, and what masters your heart will shape your thoughts, desires, choices, words, action, and emotions.³⁶ My heart wanders, and therefore so do my eyes and wallet.³⁷

We need grace in order to properly value the grace we need, for it is only when King Christ is given the proper value in our hearts that King Money will have neither the power nor the room to rule us.³⁸

Money is not the problem, love is!³⁹

Rigney

The triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – out of love for and delight in His own fulness, freely chose to create the world as a fitting, narrative communication of His glory.⁴⁰

God enthusiastically endorses our joy and delight in all sensible pleasures, provided they are enjoyed within the boundaries established by the giver of every good gift.⁴¹

God has designed us so that *He* would meet some of our need *through other people*.⁴²

We see from the creation account that gifts are provision for mission. The call to have dominion is a call to exercise wise rule over God's world as His vice-regent. Man is an under-king, a steward of God's creation, charged with establishing God's rule and reign over the unsubdued earth. Thus, not only is man called to protect sacred space, but man is called to extend sacred space, so that the earth is filled with God's glory through a glorious society of His image bearers. To

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁰ Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 77.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 82.

accomplish this task, man will need God's wisdom. To be made in God's image is to fulfill our vocation as obedient priests, wise kings, and faithful prophets. This is our mission, given to us by our good and holy creator – to be fruitful and multiply and fill the world., to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over its creatures, to cultivate the land, work the ground, and keep and guard the garden from all evil and uncleanness, and to image God by obediently echoing His words and faithfully naming His world.⁴³

Blomberg

Israel's economic sins were never unrelated, however, to their idolatry; worshipping false gods led to selfish attitudes with respect to money.⁴⁴

God's people from both Old and New Testament ages will one day enjoy all the literal blessings of the land, extended to encompass the entire earth and eventually a redeemed cosmos. But in this age, before the coming of Christ, no predictions can be made as to the level of material prosperity God will grant any individual believer.⁴⁵

1. Material possessions are a good gift from God meant for His people to enjoy.
2. Material possessions are simultaneously one of the primary means of turning human hearts away from God. Wealth is very seductive.
3. A necessary sign of a life in the process of being redeemed is that of transformation in the area of stewardship.
4. Above all, the Bible's teaching about material possessions is inextricably intertwined with more 'spiritual' matters.

Alcorn

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁴⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 242.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Rosner (*Greed as Idolatry*)

Trust and confidence are core, defining characteristics of the greedy with respect to their wealth, of idolaters in relation to their idols, and of believers with God. Numerous texts not only observe that the rich trust in their riches but warn against such reliance as being incompatible with and an unacceptable alternative to trust in God.⁴⁶

Trust and confidence is a frequent description of what people do with their idols.⁴⁷ According to Job, to put confidence and trust in wealth is to be “unfaithful to God” (31:28).⁴⁸

Nothing is more fundamental to Old and New Testament religion than the rejection of idolatry.⁴⁹

When asked, ‘What constitutes a god?’, Luther, reflecting on the first commandment of his Larger Catechism, said, “Whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, *that* is your God; trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol.”⁵⁰

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Text: Luke 19:11-27

Luke tells us that Jesus gives this parable to correct the impression that the K of G would begin right away upon Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem.

⁴⁶ Brian Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 160-61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

- The common belief was that when the Messiah came, God’s Kingdom would be established physically upon the earth, w/ Jerusalem at its center (Isa. 2:2-4; 35:1; 65:17-25; Jer. 30-31, etc.)
 - Though Jesus the Messiah would be leaving for a journey, His *mission* was not to be halted, which is why Jesus uses this as an opportunity to teach His followers about stewardship.
1. V. 12a – Jesus is the heavenly nobleman; the distant country is heaven; He returned there to receive His royal authority as King of kings (via resurrection/ascension [Dan. 7; Phil. 2; 1 Cor. 15])
 - NLT – “A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king & then return.”
 2. V. 12b – He will return.
 3. V. 13 – While He is away, He entrusts His resources to His servants in order to further ***His*** interests
 - Cf. 20:10 – the reason He leases His vineyard out to His servants is **fruit**.
 4. V. 14 – Not all His servants like Him or His demands upon Him
 - Despite what people think, they are under Christ’s rule & fully accountable to Him.
 - Jesus is King of everyone in the world He created, just like Obama is president over the US.
 5. V. 15a – As promised, the nobleman receives His heavenly crown & returns
 6. V. 15b – Upon His return, His servants are called to account for their activity during His absence
 7. Vv. 16-27 – Two positive examples of good stewardship, followed by 2 negative examples
 - Faithfulness is rewarded
 - Rebellion is punished
 8. V. 26 – the lesson of the parable
 - Cf. 16:10-12

Which of these relationships with the nobleman describes YOU?

ESV SB

“To receive for himself a kingdom” means to receive authority over a kingdom. The kingdom that he is going to receive is not the far country to which he is traveling, but the land from which he started out. Since the country is “far”, it is clear that his return will not take place immediately. Those who fail to do anything useful w/ the resources, talents & opportunities God has given them will fall under His displeasure & may thereby indicate that they are not even true believers (Matt. 25:30). “Severe” does not mean selfish or unfair, but rather strict & holding to high standards (*austeros*). This is not a description of Christ, as vv. 17 & 19 show. It is obvious that this servant truly does not know his master very well (or is making up an excuse for his own failure.

NIV SB

“To have himself appointed king” seems a rather unusual procedure, but the Herods did just that when they went to Rome to be appointed rulers over the Jews. Similarly, Jesus was soon to depart and in the future is to return as King. During His absence, His servants are entrusted w/ their master’s affairs (cf. Matt. 25:14-30).

NLT SB

“His people hated him and sent a delegation.” This happened to Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, who violently put down protests after the death of his father. In response, the Jews sent a delegation to plead against his kingship before the Roman emperor. V. 17 – those who are faithful to Jesus in this life will receive greater responsibility here & great rewards in heaven.

Questions we as God’s stewards need to ask ourselves:

1. **WHAT** has God entrusted me with?
 - FedEx – just b/c God puts His money into our hands doesn't mean He intends it stay there.
2. **WHY** has He entrusted me with it?
3. For the glory of God in the furtherance of His kingdom, **WHAT** spending *habits* do I need to change so I can give more to the advance of the gospel, starting **today**?
4. What *excuses* for not giving need to be let go of?