

Sermon Outline 2 – Modeling Generosity

Ownership and Stewardship

Today we will consider the concept of ownership. God is the owner of everything. We'll talk about possessions and our relationship to them.

Stewardship is . . . taking care of God's business.

Stewardship is . . . caring for God's possessions.

Stewardship is . . . the use of our money, but more than that.

Most of us here today are not billionaires. Most of us here today are not millionaires. But many of us can claim to be "thousandaires"! Having more than \$1,000 in net assets makes me wealthier than many of the people living in the world today. In fact, compared to much of the world, we are filthy rich. So are you if you came here today in a car and have enough groceries in your pantry to keep you alive for more than 7 days!

I want to take you back to an exciting book of the Bible, Leviticus 25:8-13. God was building his people. He had chosen and rescued the Israelites and was giving them basic rules for living together as a society, living healthy and living holy. Chapters 17 through 26 are known as the holiness code.

Practical rules like:

Don't keep your hair a mess (Lev. 10:6)

Don't eat the bats (11:19)

Lots of things about stealing, lying, cheating your neighbors or even slandering them.

It has lots of instructions about who you're not supposed to mess around with, and interestingly, a prohibition for selling land permanently: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers" (Lev. 25:23).

Here's are the earlier verses in chapter 25:8-13:

⁸"Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. ¹¹The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹²For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

¹³"In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property."

The LORD is Majority Shareholder

In this book, the Lord establishes himself as owner of everything. We might call him the "majority shareholder." According to Investopedia, a "Majority Shareholder" holds 51% or more of the company's

stock. We might even call God the “sole proprietor,” except that he invites us to participate in his ownership. Our partnership is limited though. God is the owner of everything, especially the land.

It was a different mindset than we have about our possessions. They had no fee simple ownership of the Land. They saw God as the owner and it was their responsibility to use the land wisely for a while.

Jubilee was an interesting set of instructions for their society. Jubilee means “a trumpet blast of liberty.” In the midst of lots of specific rules about “resting” (resting for the people and resting for the land), God instructs his people to have a giant “slate cleaning.” All debts are cancelled and prisoners are set free. (We’re not talking murders and rapists—that was basically taken care of with capital punishment.) This was for the people who were in bondage financially, having settled debt with a form of slavery, All the land goes back to the original families.

If you had sort of lost out in life’s race then this was a chance to get a new beginning! It was a point of hope.

We live in a dog-eat-dog business world where rich can get richer and poor can get poorer. And God is stating that as the chairman of the board, he is in control. And since he’s in control, he is going to hit the re-set button on wealth! God established Jubilee—a Ctrl-Alt-Del on the universe—and everybody gets a fresh start!

Want to do it here today? Let’s all throw all of our assets into a pile and divide them up evenly! Would you win or lose? All the college students would like that! There go the student loans!

There isn’t much evidence that the Israelites actually obeyed these rules. But it is clear that the Lord gave them so that they will know that he is in charge!

You’ll never get to where you need to be in your spiritual walk with Jesus Christ until you recognize God’s ownership of everything, and let him own all of you.

I hope you are getting the picture. Now I’m going to tell you about one person in Scripture who “got it”—King David.

Towards the end of his life, David embarked on building a temple to the Lord. (Not that God really needed His people to build him a dwelling place! He’s the owner of everything, after all!)

In the end, David didn’t have the privilege of building the temple, but he laid the groundwork for his son Solomon,

As David made preparations for building the temple, he gave gold, silver, bronze, turquoise, marble—all items that represented great wealth.

David acknowledged that he was giving back what God had given him, saying, “But who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1 Chron. 29:14).

His example inspired the leaders of the tribes of Israel to give faithfully as well. He challenged them to give to this cause as generously as he had given. They answered the call, giving “freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD” (1 Chron. 29:9).

We are mostly Americans, and in our society we have an unhealthy relationship with “stuff” and ownership.

In our culture we tend to have too much and want even more.

According to CreditCards.com, the average debt load in the U.S. is \$15,950 per household with a credit card. And, according to the U.S. Census department, the U.S. median income is just over \$53,000 a year. As a society, it would take a third of a year’s salary for the average person to pay off the personal credit card!

The growing phenomenon of storage units is another expression of our sickness. We pay more to store stuff than the stuff’s worth!

And boy do we buy unnecessary stuff! Here are some examples of really hard-to-justify expenditures.

Color Changing Shower Head

Turn your morning showers into a fun experience with the color changing shower head. Requiring no batteries or power, this unique shower head uses water pressure powered LED lights to transform the water into a cornucopia of color. \$39.99

Dolphin Power Boat

Tear up the seas like never before with this dolphin-shaped power boat known as the Sea Breacher! This species defying aquatic vessel is capable of submerging and launching at a high speed into the air like a real dolphin. Jet skis just became obsolete. \$65,000

Aquarium Coffee Table

No bachelor pad would be complete without an over-the-top item like an aquarium coffee table. Both stylish and functional, this coffee table aquarium comes complete with decorative aquarium plants, lighting, filtration pumps, and everything else you’ll need. \$660.20

Think you need any of these things? If you go out and buy one, you might want to hide it from everyone at church, since we had a good time mocking them!

We become unnaturally attached to our stuff. If you’ve been to an auction, perhaps you’ve watched people go through the painful process of liquidation. Sometimes they mourn it is like they are losing part of themselves. But after it’s all over, when the stuff is gone, there is a freedom! Missionaries experience it! It’s a lesson learned that earthly possessions weigh us down.

Luke 12:15 records the words of Jesus: “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” Then he tells a parable of a rich man who had more grain than he could store. He planned to build larger barns, and “eat, drink, and be merry.” (vv. 19). “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?’” (vv. 20).

We all need to think about what will happen with “our” stuff after we go to heaven. Once we’re there, I don’t suppose we’ll care a bit! But for now, consider what the Lord has laid on your heart.

Another parable that applies to our topic is the parable of the bags of gold. You'll remember this one. A man going on a journey entrusted bags of gold to three servants. The first had five bags, put the money to work, and earned five more. The second had two bags, put the money to work, and earned two more. But the third dug a hole in the ground and hid the money. The master commended the first two servants but was upset at the third, saying "you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest." The servant who did not steward the money well was thrown out of his master's household. I wish this parable had a happier ending! But the point is that stewardship of God's resources is important business.

God expects us to be wise with his possessions and to steward them well. We are never going to achieve spiritual maturity until we recognize that God is the owner of everything. It takes a mindset of God's ownership. He's the chairman of our board!