**September 22nd 2024 Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Luke 11:11-13** 0738

**Theme: Stewards of God’s Gifts.**

May the grace of the Lord ever give us a great measure of His Spirit, that we may use the gifts God has given us wisely and to His glory. Amen. Dear Christians: Over the course of the past ten years or so, things have become increasingly difficult in the world. I believe this s because God is showing His wrath over the sin of this nation in particular, but also of much of the world. Similar to how the Ninevites in Jonah’s day were experiencing the wrath of God, but were to face even greater wrath if they did not repent at the preaching of Jonah. Now we know that they did, indeed, repent; yet our nation seems to be doing just the opposite. Instead of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God as a nation in general, we have rather doubled down on our sin and shame. Now I know that as individuals we do not own many of these sins; such as Homosexuality, abortion, and the like; we do dwell in the midst of these people, and as Isaiah lamented before the Lord, we dwell in the midst of an unclean people, and we are undone. God will always give the leaders that a nation deserves, and through those leaders, God often punishes a people for their transgressions. We should expect the same to continue n the coming months. I fully expect that the new president of our nation will be the woman who will continue the policies which are being used to punish transgression.

Now I am saying these things to help Christians understand what we are currently facing and what we will continue to face if there remains impenitence. But I am also using this to illustrate how God still cares for His flock even in the midst of evil. I want us all to think on the ten plagues of Egypt. The Israelites dwelt in the same land as the Egyptians, and while God cursed the Egyptians, some of the ten plagues were endured also by the people of Israel. However, God insulated them from bearing the brunt of those plagues, and completely shielded them at other times. Now as bad as it has been over the course of the past ten years, from my perspective, and from what have witnessed, God has shielded us from much of the evil that has befallen many. While it has been somewhat painful at the grocery store, we have still been given food. While many are losing their jobs, we all have very good jobs. While the pain at the pump has truly effected us, it has been bearable at least to an extent. Now truly I would be happy to have some relief from these things but I also than God that He has graciously watched over us to keep us in all our ways. He has guided us and protected us, and therefore we should be sincerely thankful. We hear in the book of Job: *“He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and n war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.” (Job 5:19-22)* These words from Job have both a temporal meaning and a spiritual one. They speak both to physical things and to spiritual things. In addition, though God has removed His Gospel from nations and people who have despised Him and His Word, He has nevertheless preserved it among us. These are gifts given unto us dear Christians, and lest we be thankless and entitled creatures, let us heed the Word of the Lord unto us, and be a people full of thanksgiving and praise for each one of them, but further to be a people who are good stewards of both the temporal and spiritual gifts He has given. Let us then see these things according to our text for today which is found in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse eleven.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most gracious and merciful Lord God in heaven, we come before Thee knowing that deserve none of the things for which we pray, neither do we deserve the gifts Thou hast given us. For this we thank Thee, and implore Thee to not turn away from us in our sin, in our thanklessness or our entitlement, but that Thou wouldst continue to grant them all to us for the sake of the bitter suffering and death of Christ for our redemption. Give us faith to believe, and hearts which yearn to receive Thy favor. O Lord, we pray for Thy Holy Spirit, grant that we receive a double measure, so that we may be good stewards of Thy temporal gifts, and the mysteries of Thy kingdom. Keep us from wasting Thy gifts on frivolous things, nor to only benefit ourselves, but to cherish it, use it wisely, and for Thy glory alone. Give us especially thankful hearts for the continued reception of Thy Gospel Word, for without it, we would surely be lost and condemned, for we are sinners. However, by Thy promise keep us steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Finally help us to trust in Thee all our days, that we may truly believe Thy precious promise: “All things work together for good to them that love” Thee. Grant all these things unto us in the name and by the mercies of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God, let us learn to be stewards of God’s gifts seeing first:

1. **Temporal gifts.** We read verses eleven through twelve of our text: **read verses here.** In teaching of the same topicthat we have before us in our text, Jesus once used a parable to simplify it for us sinful creatures, He said: *“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* Jesus here teaches both the temporal and eternal aspect of gifts, but for now we focus on the temporal. Gifts are given unto us, whether that be capacities for performing certain things, like the ability to be an artist, or the talent to be an author, or speaking ability; He might give us wealth, or a measure of wealth; He might give us hearts which empathize with the down trodden and the suffering. Whatever blessings and gifts He has given, especially to His Christians, it is expected that they will use them wisely and for His glorification. Specific examples may be helpful. When God blesses Christian men and women, He does so in sight of the upbuilding of His kingdom of grace on earth, and to have good done with those things. Thus when money is given, for example, it is often so given so that the Christian, by the Holy Spirit, will use that money to preach the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. It may come in the form of giving to support the ministry within the visible church, or to feed the hungry and thereby to shed forth the love of God in Christ Jesus. When God gives us work to do with our hands, we should faithfully do it, and not expect to receive something for nothing, thereby showing unto the world the renewed heart of a Christian. When God has given children they should be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. However if those gifts are received, and like the unfaithful servant, they are used for no good at all, but simply to satisfy the hunger of our own bellies, or worst to fulfill the lusts of our flesh, then those gifts have been wasted, and why would our Lord continue to provide those things to us? But will rather give them to another who will use them for good? In our text part of what Jesus is teaching is the truth concerning faith, which is defined as trust or confidence in God. The reason why we hoard the things we are given, or we use them on ourselves alone, is because we don’t trust that God will continue to provide as He has always done. We fear the events of the future and in so doing we cling and hold tight, we make provision for ourselves for the future. But if we would stop for just a moment and think on the grace of God, we would not be so quick to do so. God’s sent His own Son into death to rescue our souls, will He not also take care of our needs here in time? Of course He would! Jesus says in our text, that as earthly fathers we would never give a tone to our son who asked for bread, nor would he give a scorpion if his son asked for a fish. We would never give harmful things to our own children instead of beneficial things, and we are corrupt and sinful creatures. How much more will God, who is perfect and promises to always do what is best for us, give good gifts to them that ask? Thus do we see stewardship of God’s temporal gifts. Let us now see secondly stewardship of God’s:
2. **Spiritual gifts.** We read verse thirteen of our text: **read verse here.** In addition to, and much greater than, the temporal gifts of God, are His spiritual gifts that He gives unto His Christians by faith. The first and foremost gift, and the gift from which all others proceed, is the gift of the Holy Ghost mentioned in our text. The Holy Ghost then, dwelling in our hearts, gives other precious gifts, primarily the gifts of the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal salvation. Now these gifts, too, are to be used wisely and for the glory of God. Doing so is to be in genuine sorrow over sin, to fight against temptation, and to give glory to God for our eternal life, not pretending that it is of ourselves. We can use our own forgiveness to show others that they too can be forgiven and saved by the shed blood of Christ. However this forgiveness and salvation can be wasted just like the temporal gifts. For example, if we, through the pride of the Old Adam which still clings to us, begin to believe that our forgiveness is based not on Christ’s work, but our own, then we do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and do harm to God’s kingdom, rather than to build it up.

The Holy Ghost also gives particular spiritual gifts unto His children in measure, as He sees fit. The gift of tongues, of healings, or interpretation, and the like. These gifts, while still given today, are not seen as often as in former days. But is that because God no longer wants to give them, or because of the wicked of our hearts? And if we have received such a great and precious gift, it is to be used, again, for the upbuilding of God’s kingdom, and for His glory alone. In addition we are make good use of the Word of God among us. That means that we listen attentively when it is preached or read to us, read it reverently and humbly, and live according it. Let us then, dear Christians, be good stewards of God’s gifts unto us, never wasting them or using them for our flesh, but wisely distributing, and carefully using them for the Kingdom of God, and for His glory. May God grant unto us His Holy Spirit that we may be wise stewards of all things given unto us. Let us pray that the Spirit be given unto us in great measure, and that He work through us in all good things, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.