

Luke 12:41-48

“Faithful and Wise Stewards”

August 17, 2025

1. Intro

- a. The reign of King Ahaz over the land of Judah was one of the worst time periods in all of Judah's history
 - i. 2 Kings, chapter 16, tells us that Ahaz reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem
 - 1. And in those sixteen years, he committed all sorts of atrocities against his God
 - a. He sacrificed burnt offerings at all the high places set apart for the foreign gods
 - b. He followed all the ways of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was soon to be destroyed
 - c. And verse 3 tells us that he even burned his son as an offering, an absolutely despicable act before the Lord
 - i. But King Ahaz's treachery reached the lowest of depths when he went to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria
 - 1. He saw the elaborate altar that the king of Assyria made his sacrifices on
 - 2. And then he came back to Jerusalem...
 - a. He had a replica of the Assyrian altar made for himself
 - b. He took out the altar God had prescribed for His Temple
 - i. And put the new altar in its place
 - ii. Thus desecrating the house of the God of Israel, and leading the people into unrestrained idolatry
 - d. The reign of King Ahaz was NOT to be commended
 - 2. Incredibly, however, by the mercies of God, Ahaz's son Hezekiah was a different story
 - a. Hezekiah began to reign at the age of 25, and he turned Judah back to the Lord
 - i. He tore down the high places where the pagan gods were worshiped
 - ii. He returned to the commands of God
 - iii. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord prospered him in everything he did
 - ii. But there was one problem... Hezekiah had a thorn in his side – at least in the early years of his rule
 - 1. For apparently there was still an employee in Hezekiah's government – an employee who had likely been appointed by his father, Ahaz
 - a. This man was named Shebna, and he was the steward over the king's household
 - i. We don't know a lot about Shebna, but what we do know about him isn't good
 - 2. We first encounter Shebna in Isaiah, chapter 22
 - a. Typically, high ranking officials were initially named in the Scriptures as the son of so-and-so, in order to validate their lineage
 - i. But Shebna's lineage is not given to us

1. Plus, his name is believed to be an Aramaic name, and not a Hebrew name
 - a. So many commentators believe that Shebna was actually a foreigner
 - b. Quite possibly even an Assyrian, whom Ahaz had come to befriend in his journeys to Damascus
 - i. And this foreigner, this Assyrian possibly, was now steward over the king's house
3. And the Lord was not pleased
 - a. In Isaiah 22:15-16, God says to Isaiah,
 - i. *¹⁵Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: ¹⁶What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a dwelling for yourself in the rock?*
 1. The tombs of those days that were cut out of the stone in the high places in Jerusalem were reserved for the kings and princes
 - a. JEWISH kings and princes
 2. And God says to this foreign steward, "What have you to do here, Shebna?"
 - b. And he goes on in verse 17,
 - i. *¹⁷Behold, the Lord will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you ¹⁸and whirl you around and around, and throw you like a ball into a wide land. There you shall die, and there shall be your glorious chariots, you shame of your master's house.*
 1. Shebna had cut for himself a tomb fit for royalty
 2. He had amassed for himself glorious chariots to parade around in
 - a. And the Lord said to him, "You are about to be whirled around and around like a ball on a chain, and then hurled into foreign land where you will die
 3. The Scriptures tell us that, in later years, Shebna was demoted to the role of Scribe in Hezekiah's government
 - a. But Jewish tradition says that he was eventually struck with leprosy, and then sent back to Assyria where he died as both an outcast and a traitor
- iii. Shebna's story is not a pleasant one, nor is it a familiar one
 1. But I believe the story of this wicked steward serves as a powerful illustration for our passage for this morning...
 - a. As we look now to Luke 12:41-48
 - i. If you were with us last week, you'll remember that Jesus was teaching the great crowds around him about the hour of his return
 1. He told them very clearly that no one knows when that hour will be
 - a. It may come in the second watch of the night – it may come in the third watch of the night
 - b. It may come in the days of the Apostles and the early church – or it may tarry thousands of years into the future

2. So what do we do in light of the fact that we have NO IDEA when the master of the house is going to return?
 - a. We stay dressed for action, and we keep our lamps burning!
 - i. We gird up our loins and walk in humble and faithful obedience to the Word
 - ii. And we endure all the way to the end, making sure that we have plenty of oil for our lamps, no matter how long the master delays
 - ii. So Jesus gave them these words of encouragement and exhortation
 1. And then Peter asked in verse 41,
2. Luke 12:41-48
 - a. *41... "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" 42And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 47And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. 48But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.*
3. Well, the first thing we have to do in looking at this text is to figure out if Jesus answered Peter's question!
 - a. As we typically see from Jesus, the answer isn't quite as straightforward as we would like
 - i. Peter asked a simple question... "Lord, is this parable for us – your twelve Apostles? Or is this for everyone?"
 1. Jesus could have given a simple answer, couldn't he?
 - a. "Yes, Peter, this parable is for you twelve... listen closely."
 - b. Or, "Yes, Peter, this parable is for EVERYONE to hear, so all you crowds around us, listen up!"
 - i. Either one of those would have given Peter a direct answer to his direct question
 1. But instead, Jesus expands upon the parable from last week
 2. And he adds more details to the story
 - b. In verse 42, Jesus asks Peter, *"Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?"*
 - i. Now, the ESV translates Jesus as saying, "Who is the faithful and wise manager..."
 1. But the idea behind this word for manager is the role of the STEWARD that had existed throughout ancient Israel...
 - a. One to whom all the affairs of the household were entrusted to in the master's absence
 - ii. And I believe we can pretty clearly infer that Jesus is speaking of the Apostles as the stewards in this verse
 1. As the Gospels unfold, and as the story of the early church is revealed in the book of Acts, it is clear...
 - a. The Apostles were given unique authority within the household of God

- i. After Judas hanged himself for his betrayal of Jesus, Acts chapter 1 tells us that the eleven chose another to take his place, a man named Matthias
 - 1. And now that their numbers were brought back up to twelve, the church began to explode in the very next chapter, with THREE THOUSAND people added to the church on the Day of Pentecost
- b. And at the end of chapter 2, we read that everyone in the early church was now absolutely devoted to the teaching of the Apostles
 - i. The Master, Jesus, had set the Twelve as stewards over his household
 - ii. They were now entrusted to give his household, the church, their portion of SPIRITUAL food at the proper time
 - 1. And by all outward accounts, both from the Scriptures and from church history, it appears that the Twelve were indeed GOOD stewards of all that the Lord had entrusted to them
 - a. They were both faithful and wise as they ran the house in the Master's absence
 - i. So, we could leave it at that, that Jesus' words here were indeed just meant for Peter and the other eleven
 - ii. We could affirm that they did a great job
 - iii. And we could move on to the next passage
- c. The problem is, we are going to run into this idea of a steward MANY more times throughout the New Testament
 - i. In a few weeks, when we get to Luke, chapter 16, Jesus is going to again give a parable about a rich man who has placed a steward over his household
 - 1. We won't go into detail on that parable this morning, but Jesus uses this parable to teach the people about the dangers of wealth...
 - a. And the spiritual reality that we cannot serve both God and money
 - i. A good steward will understand these things
 - ii. A bad steward... will not
 - 1. And what we see in both Luke 15 and 16 is that the intended audience for THIS parable, is not just the Twelve, but now the audience is also the Pharisees and the Scribes
 - 2. And this parable is meant to be a condemnation against their very POOR stewardship of what had been entrusted to them
 - iii. So yes, the Apostles were meant to be faithful and wise stewards of God's household
 - iv. But now we see that the religious leaders of Israel had ALSO been expected to be faithful and wise stewards of God's household...
 - 1. And they were failing in the role that had been given to them
 - 2. So now we can move on, right?
 - a. When it comes to stewarding the household of God, the Apostles and succeeded where the Jewish religious leaders had failed
 - i. So cased closed... we've answered Peter's question
 - 1. Well, not according to the Apostle Paul!
 - b. Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 4
 - i. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul had just been warning the Christians in Corinth to not get caught up in popularity contests

1. Everyone in the church had their own favorite leader in the church, and therefore division was running rampant in Corinth
 - a. So Paul warns them of the dangers of this worldly way of thinking, and then he says to them in chapter 4, starting in verse 1...

d. 1 Corinthians 4:1-6

- i. *¹This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and **stewards** of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover, it is required of **stewards** that they be found faithful. ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. ⁶I have applied all these things to myself AND APOLLOS for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.*

1. Well, our definition of a steward is expanding, isn't it?
 - a. Paul affirms in verse 1 that he is considered to be steward of the mysteries of God
 - i. In other places in the Scriptures, Paul equates the mysteries of God with the Gospel...
 1. The Gospel that explains that Christ has come to break down the dividing wall between the Jew and the Gentile
 2. The Gospel that explains that salvation is available to ALL who put their faith in Jesus
 - b. So Paul is given the authority to be a steward over all of these things, even though he IS NOT one of the Twelve Apostles
 - i. This makes sense when we think about Paul's story though, doesn't it?
 1. Paul might not have been one of the Twelve, but Christ did indeed reveal himself directly to Paul
 2. It's believed that, in the three years that Paul spent in Arabia after his conversion, that this was when he was caught up into the heavens...
 - a. And he not only saw Jesus, but Jesus directly discipled him, just as he had done for the Twelve
 3. So Paul refers to himself as an Apostle, although in his own words, he was one "untimely born"
 2. But look at verse 6...
 - a. Paul ALSO applies all of these things, including the title of STEWARD, to Apollos as well
 - i. Apollos was not one of the Twelve
 - ii. He did not get caught up into the third heavens where he was given revelations by Jesus himself
 1. Apollos was simply a Jewish man from Alexandria who had a passion to share the Gospel
 2. And he had a passion to strengthen the churches
 - a. This was what he did in Ephesus
 - b. And this was what he would do in Corinth as well

- b. Apollos became an influential and eloquent leader within the church
 - i. He was seen by many as both faithful and wise
 - ii. And here, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul says that Apollos is to be seen as a steward in the household of God
 - 1. This falls right in line with what Paul will say later on to one of his own faithful disciples, a man named Titus
 - a. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Titus, chapter 1
 - i. Titus comes after the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy, and before the book of Hebrews, just to help you get to the right place
 - 3. In Titus, chapter 1, Paul is giving Titus very clear instructions about appointing leaders in the churches on the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean Sea
 - a. And Paul says to Titus, starting in verse 5,
- e. Titus 1:5-9
 - i. *5This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— 6if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*
 - 1. Well, now we are given a much more broad definition of a steward, aren't we?
 - a. Paul is calling Titus to appoint very specific men to be overseers in the churches of each town
 - i. These are the elders of the church... the shepherds of the church...
 - 1. What we would call the PASTORS of the church
 - b. And in verse 7, Paul says that these pastors of these local churches are to be God's STEWARDS, and as such, they are to be above reproach
 - i. They are to lead their families well in the Lord
 - ii. They must be humble and self-controlled
 - iii. They must be lovers of good, and holy, and disciplined
 - 1. And they must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine within the church
 - a. In other words, to use the words of Jesus back in Luke 12,
 - i. They are to be faithful and wise stewards, who will give the people of the Master's household their food at the proper time
 - 2. Just as a side note, I pray that you as the congregation would spend MUCH time reading and studying passages such as this one in Titus 1...
 - a. And the corresponding passages in 1 Timothy 3, and 1 Peter 5
 - i. As an overseer, or elder, of this church... as a STEWARD of this church... I need you all to hold me accountable to these passages
 - 1. And to help rebuke and correct me when I stray from these qualifications
 - ii. But I also need you to ready and study these passages, because as we grow numerically here at Forest Hills, we are going to need MORE stewards

1. We are going to need MORE elders, more pastors, to help shepherd the flock that Christ himself is bringing through our doors
 - a. And ultimately, it will be YOU, the members of Forest Hills, who appoint those stewards
 - b. So don't just read these words from Paul to Titus as some good individual instruction that he gave to his friend
 - i. Read these words as instructions given to EVERY church, including our own
 - b. Start praying for a looking for men who are above reproach, for they will need to be above reproach if they are to be faithful and wise stewards over God's household
3. So, have we exhausted this definition of a steward yet?
 - a. We know that we can apply this title to the Twelve, with Matthias as Judas's replacement
 - b. We know that we can apply this title to the Scribes and the Pharisees, as examples of how NOT to be faithful and wise stewards
 - c. And now we know that we can apply it to every pastor within a local church, as they have ALL been entrusted to steward these wonderful resources of God's own house
 - i. But there is one more passage that we will look at this morning...
 1. Turn to 1 Peter, chapter 4
 - a. Head right in your Bible from Titus, just a few books over, and you'll find Peter's two letters to the churches
 - i. We'll look at 1 Peter 4:7-11...
- f. Peter starts out by saying in verse 7...
 - i. *7The end of all things is at hand;*
 1. I'd say that when we come across statements like that, it's a pretty good time to pay attention to what comes next!
 - ii. *... therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11whoever 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.*
 1. Peter's words in this letter are meant for every Christian, in every church, throughout all of history...
 - a. And he says to ALL OF US in verse 10 – we are ALL stewards!
 - i. If you are a shepherd and a leader in God's household, then steward the grace that has been given to you WELL...
 1. As you faithfully proclaim the Word of God
 - ii. If you ARE NOT a shepherd or a leader in God's household...
 1. Guess what? You have still been given gifts by the grace of God!
 - a. Gifts that are to be used in the service of others
 - i. So steward those gifts WELL

2. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the gifts of grace are wide and varied within the whole scope of the church
 - a. But it cannot be ignored, if you have received God's grace in ANY way, then you are now a steward in the household of God
 - i. And therefore, we can say with full certainty that our passage for this morning back in Luke chapter 12 applies to EVERY SINGLE FOLLOWER of Christ
 1. It doesn't matter if you are the pastor of the church, a worker in a kids' class, a secretary, or the guy that changes the lightbulbs
 - ii. If you are a follower of Jesus, then you have been given the grace of God
 1. And you are now expected to steward that grace
- g. You are expected to steward that grace with FAITHFULNESS
 - i. It's not always going to be easy, friends
 1. As the Master delays in his coming, it will become increasingly easy for us to start getting annoyed with our fellow stewards
 - a. As the Master tarries in his return, it will become increasingly easy to start treating one another poorly
 - i. This is why Peter reminds the normal, everyday Christian to be self-controlled and sober-minded
 1. Because it is going to get more and more tempting to loose control with one another, and be rash and judgmental
 - ii. This is why Peter reminds us to keep loving one another EARNESTLY, and to show hospitality to one another WITHOUT GRUMBLING
 1. Because as Jesus said in Matthew 24, as the end draws near, the love of many will grow cold
 - ii. This is why Peter reminds EVERY follower of Jesus to use our gifts to serve one another as good stewards of God's grace
 - b. For it isn't going to get any easier, my friends
 - i. As we've seen, just in the past decade, the divisions IN THE CHURCH are getting deeper and deeper
 1. And so, if we are to good stewards in the household of God, we must be FAITHFUL in our stewarding
 - a. No matter how long the Master takes to return
 - h. But in addition to being faithful, we are also called to be WISE as we steward what God has given to us
 - i. And the wisdom that we are called to steward by MUST come from the Scriptures, and not the wisdom of this world
 1. The wisdom of this world says that it is absurd to believe in a God who has created a set of moral absolutes, where right is clearly right, and wrong is clearly wrong
 2. The wisdom of this world says that it is folly to believe in some fairytale where the most powerful God in the universe took the form of a Spirit, and then made a virgin become pregnant with His very own Son
 3. The wisdom of this world says that it is ridiculous to believe in a God who would hold the entire human race GUILTY over the sin of one man in the Garden, Adam...
 - a. And that our only hope of forgiveness and freedom comes through this supposed God-man that was born from the virgin

- 4. The wisdom of this world says that it is downright evil to follow a religion where this God who impregnated this virgin through His Spirit, would then demand the life of His own Son as a payment for sins that he never even committed
- 5. The wisdom of this world looks at these Scriptures that we hold up as the very Word of God, and they mock and ridicule it as a bunch of manmade fiction that has led the masses astray for centuries
- ii. My friends, if we are to be good stewards of all that God has given to us, then we must look at all of this supposed wisdom of the world for what it is...
 - 1. It is folly!
 - a. For the Lord has indeed declared that He is God, and there is no other
 - b. He has indeed declared that what he has purposed will come to be, and no plan of His shall ever fail
 - c. From the foundation of the world, he has declared that His grace and glory would be shown through the virgin birth of His Son, and His Son's redemptive and atoning death upon the cross
 - d. And in HIS wisdom, He has declared that His Son will purchase for himself a people
 - i. And this people would be called HIS church
 - ii. And as this church walks in the fear and wisdom of the Lord, as imperfect as we are, HE will cause His church to grow!
 - i. And so, Christians, each one of you is a steward of the grace that God has given to you
 - i. You have been called to steward it with faithfulness
 - ii. And you have been called to steward it with wisdom
 - 1. And if you choose NOT to steward what God has given to you, then Jesus himself says that there will be consequences
 - a. When we begin to mistreat our fellow servants, either with our words or our actions... or even with our thoughts
 - i. Then things will not go well for us when our Master returns
 - b. When we begin to abdicate the roles and responsibilities we have been given, both inside the church and out in the world,
 - i. And we exchange those roles and responsibilities for gluttony or drunkenness, or ANY OTHER form of self-indulgence
 - 1. Then things will not go well for us when our Master returns
 - c. For those who choose to disregard the Master's commands completely, Jesus says that they will be put with the unfaithful
 - i. They will be lumped in with the unbelievers
 - 1. For what believer could TRULY experience the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and then choose to say, "Nah, no thanks. I'm going to walk over here instead..."?
 - d. Some will get severe beatings, some will get a light beating
 - i. What's the difference, you ask?
 - 1. Well I would ask you, does it really matter?
 - a. If the options are...
 - i. A... Severe beatings from the Master
 - ii. B... Light beatings from the Master
 - iii. Or C... the Master rewards the faithful and wise steward by setting him over all his possession... I'm gonna go for option C, aren't you??
 - iii. Here is the truth my friends,

1. MUCH has been given to each of us in this room
 - a. We have all received great financial blessings from the Lord
 - b. We have all been given great religious freedoms from the Lord
 - c. We have all been given decent enough health from the Lord
 - d. We have all been given a pretty incredible church family to be a part of
 - i. In other words, MUCH grace has been given to each of us
 1. ESPECIALLY for all of us who bear the name “Christian”
2. And so Jesus would say to each of us this morning,
 - a. Much has been given to you, stewards, therefore MUCH will be required of you
 - i. Much has been entrusted to you, and therefore MUCH will be demanded from you
 1. These are the words given to us by Jesus, the One who has purchased us by his very own blood
4. We'll close this morning by going back to the example of Shebna, in Isaiah 22
 - a. Shebna had been entrusted to be the steward over the household of the king
 - i. When he was serving under an evil king, it didn't matter so much how Shebna lived his life
 1. But when Hezekiah came into power, and he brought godly reformation back to the land...
 - a. Well, now all of Shebna's selfishness was exposed
 - i. The way he was trying to exalt himself into positions of authority had been revealed
 - ii. The way he was reveling in the riches of this world had been called out
 1. Instead of bringing glory to his master's house by being a faithful and wise steward, Shebna was cast down, for he had brought shame to the house of the King
 - b. Isaiah goes on to tell us that a new steward would be put in Shebna's place, a man named Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah
 - i. Eliakim would steward the household of Hezekiah with great faithfulness and wisdom
 1. He would bring honor to the house of the King
 - ii. And Isaiah writes in verse 22,
 1. *22And I will place on [Eliakim's] shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*
 - a. Nearly 800 years later, these same words would be written once again in the Scriptures
 - i. As Jesus himself commands one of his messengers in Revelation 3:7,
 1. *7... to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.'*
 - b. Eliakim would serve as a wonderful steward in the house of David
 - i. But Eliakim was just a man
 - c. The Holy One, the TRUE One, the Lord Jesus himself has now been given the key to the house of David
 - i. He was not given this key by any earthly king – it was given to him by his Father in heaven
 1. It is Christ who opens the doors of the Kingdom – it is Christ who shuts the doors of the Kingdom

2. And YOU, Christian, have been given the awesome responsibility to be a steward within that Kingdom
 - a. So how will you steward the grace that has been given to you, friends?
3. I pray that you will steward it with much wisdom and faithfulness
4. I pray that you will steward it with much joy and enthusiasm
5. I pray that you will bring great honor to your Father's house
 - a. As you steward his house well, in eager expectation of the return of His Son!