2025-08-10: 1st Sunday of Mesore - Stewardship

Visual Aid

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/errr849iohyvaoo4do91l/Stewardship.pptx?rlkey=74vvntrmijvdl3ssurzfl3y4h&dl=0

Background

Today is the 1st Sunday of the Coptic Month of Mesore and the Church arranges the readings of the first three Sundays of this month to speak about how the Lord cares for His Church.

Introduction

Today the Gospel Reading according to St Luke showed us one of the very important parables that the Lord preached: The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers. The Lord said this parable near the end of His ministry in Jerusalem and its meaning was very clear to the Pharisees and Chief Priests and Scribes - so much so that they sought to lay hands on Him after hearing it.

A vinedresser planted a vineyard. Then he leased it to some vinedressers, and went away for a long time.

When it was vintage-time, when it was time for the vineyard to produce fruits, the man sent his servant to go and get some of that fruit. The vinedressers beat the servant and sent him away. So he sent another servant... again, they beat him and sent him away empty. Then he sent a third... again, they wounded him and cast him out.

So the man sends his son, and the gospel says specifically: "his beloved son" - but when the vinedressers saw him, they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. And the Lord tells them "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others."

And the chief priests and scribes UNDERSTOOD the Parable, so they said "Certainly not!"

They understood that:

- The man refers to God
- The vineyard refers to Israel
- The vinedressers refer to them, the keepers of Israel in that day
- The servants refer to the prophets

- The son refers to the Lord Jesus Christ

The message of the parable was that God had entrusted them with a vineyard, a promised land, a nation, a people. And when God sent His servants, the prophets, they persecuted them and cast them out and rejected them. And that now God sends His Son - His beloved Son - and He is rejected, and He will be killed. And God will destroy them and give the vineyard to someone else.

And the Lord drives home the idea by referring to the prophecy of Psalm 118 - "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."

This is the prophetic meaning of this parable. The Lord prophesies His death at the hands of the Jewish people, and the giving of the Heavenly Kingdom to others; to Gentiles. We, the Christian people. The New Israel.

There is also a spiritual meaning. These wicked vinedressers were evil stewards. The owner of the vineyard leased it to them - he made them stewards. He entrusted them the care of his vineyard, the responsibility of it, and they were evil in their stewardship. What about us? Are we good stewards? What does it mean to be a steward? What are we stewards of?

The Concept of Stewardship

A steward is someone who is entrusted with responsibility over something... a business, a piece of land, a vineyard. The steward is not the owner, but the owner entrusts him with the stewardship.

St John Chrysostom says: “A steward’s part is to administer well the things committed to his charge: not to say that his master’s things are his own; but, on the contrary, that his own are his master’s.”

So the key word in stewardship is "I am not the owner"

We are not the owners of:

- Our life
- Our money
- Our health
- Our intellect
- Our children - "behold children are the inheritance of the Lord"

Sometimes we conduct our lives as if we are the owners, not as stewards. We are stewards for God. God is the owner. We are born with nothing on our backs, nothing in our hands... and when we leave this world, we will take nothing with us... whatever we have here is given to us from God as a stewardship.

Today we will discuss three principles of stewardship.

1 - What God Gave Us is Good

The vineyard that the Lord planted was not just a basic vineyard.

"There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country" (Matthew 21:33)

The Lord gave these stewards something that is good and something that can bear fruit. If the man hadn't set a hedge around it, it would be exposed to thieves or wild animals. If he hadn't dug a winepress, there wouldn't be anywhere to gather the harvest. If he hadn't built a tower, there wouldn't be a place for watchmen to guard against danger. The man prepared everything perfectly so that the vineyard could flourish. And THEN he gave it in a stewardship.

The Lord has made me steward over many things, and equipped me with much to be fruitful. But my job is to bring those fruits for God's glory.

The Lord when He created the heavens and the earth, at the end of each of the six days, He looked and "saw that it was good" (Genesis 1)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17)

What am I a steward of?

- My body
  - "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:19-20)
  - The Lord gave me a body and I am leasing it for my time on earth, for my sojourn.
- Money
  - "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase" (Proverbs 3:9)
  - The money in my account and the possessions in my house are not mine. I'm not the owner of them. They belong to the Lord and he gave me stewardship.
  - You might say - what do you mean it's not mine? I worked hard for it... who gave you energy to work hard? Who gave you the job in the first place? Who gave you the mental capacity to work and to make decisions? Who gave you the breath of life and woke you up in the morning for work?
  - It's not mine. I'm not the owner. But I'm entrusted with it to use for God's glory.
- Talents
  - "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)
- Intellect
  - "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6)
- Time
  - "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16)

    - Every moment I have, every second I am alive, every day that I wake up - is another opportunity the Lord is giving me.
- If I am a parent, I am a steward of my children
    - "Behold, children are the inheritance of the Lord, the reward of the fruit of the womb" (Psalm 126)
- If I am a servant in Sunday School, I am also a steward of the children in my class
    - St Paul today talks about his ministry of preaching the gospel as a stewardship. He says...
- If I am a manager at work, I am also a steward of the employees that are under me
- If I am a leader in a club at school or on a sports team, this is a stewardship

The Lord has given me a good vineyard. He entrusted me with many things to be steward of them.

2 - Faithful and Wise Stewards

What does the Lord expect me to do with my stewardship? "Who then is that faithful and wise steward" (Luke 12:42)

Faithfulness and Wisdom

“It is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2)

An owner of a business who wants to hire a manager will look for someone who is faithful and wise.

- Wise means he will make good decisions and turn a profit.
- Faithful means he won't steal that profit.

If he is wise but unfaithful, then he will make good profits and then steal it for himself. If he is faithful but not wise, then he will honor you and support you and be loyal, but he will not make a profit. He won't bring fruit. But you want someone who is faithful and wise.

The faithful and wise steward of God will use his gifts to make a profit and render that profit to the Lord - to give glory to God.

- A steward that is not wise will not know how to use his gifts.
- A steward that is not faithful will use his gifts for his own interests, and not for God's glory.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

This is what the Lord expects from us. We are stewards of our body, our time, our money, our talents, our intellect, our health, our jobs, our educations, our children - but we must be faithful and wise.

- Money
    - Someone is entrusted with money.

    - If he isn't wise wise with money, he will throw it all away. Maybe he will gamble it all away. Maybe he will spend every dollar that he earns without saving anything. Maybe he buys things he doesn't need. He uses money based on his desires or how he feels in the moment... without any thought or planning. So his money is fruitless. Lacking wisdom.
    - On the other hand, someone who is wise with money but is not faithful - he will use that wisdom to multiply his wealth for selfish gain. He ignores the needs of others. He ignores the purposes of God. He seeks only to build up his own wealth and possessions and a bigger house and a nicer car and a fancy watch and the newest phone. Not faithful.
    - The faithful and wise steward realizes that money is a tool entrusted to his stewardship by God. It is not the end, but it is a means. He spends it carefully. He saves it. He gives generously. He invests it in things that further God's kingdom, and not in businesses that promote evil. The faithful and wise steward honors the Lord with his possessions and with his money.

- Intellect
    - Someone is entrusted with intellect.
    - If he is not wise, then he will be misled. There are people who in High School or College started to learn Philosophy, and were misled. Or who got deep into the sciences and Evolution and Cosmology - but because they lacked wisdom and discernment, they were misled. Or as St Peter says, they follow after cunningly devised fables... they heard a video on TikTok or Instagram about some strange doctrine... but it sounds legit. Maybe it is supported by Bible verses (as all heresies are)... So they follow it. And they are not able to bring fruit from their intellect. Lacking wisdom.
    - If he is not faithful, then his intellect becomes self-serving. To put many degrees and certificates on the wall. To have many books and academic papers in my name. To make a name for myself. The intellect and the education becomes the end, not the means. Not faithful.
    - The faithful and wise steward realizes that intellect is a tool entrusted to his stewardship by God. It is not the end, but a means by which to glorify God. It's a way to learn more about the Lord and to engulf myself in His word. To learn apologetics and how to defend the faith. To serve those who have intellectual blocks to the faith - lost sheep who are struggling with atheism and they need someone who can give them intellectual arguments. To evangelize and bring people to the knowledge of the Truth. To start businesses that support the community. To invent new products and ideas that can help the needy. The faithful and wise steward will use his intellect for God's glory.

- Health
    - Someone is entrusted with health.
    - If he is not wise, he will neglect his health and his body. Overworking himself, ignoring rest, eating and drinking unhealthy. He will not see fruits.
    - If he is not faithful, then the health becomes self-serving. Again, it becomes an end. Take care of my body, exercise, eat well, rest - but it is vanity. It's so I can take

pictures for instagram. So I can glory in my own appearance. Or it takes over my life - I can't make time for God, but I can make time for the gym.
    - The faithful and wise steward realizes that his health and his body are entrusted to his stewardship by God. They are not an end, but they are a means to glorify God. They use their health to serve others - to ask about people, to visit the brethren, to serve the sick, the perform acts of mercy in the community.

- Time
    - We are all entrusted with time.
    - If we are not wise, we procrastinate. Or we overcommit. Or we waste hours on distractions - scrolling through reels/shorts. Hours and hours on video games. Hours on watching movies and TV Shows. Hours and hours on watching sports. Excessively sleeping. Lacking wisdom.
    - If we are not faithful, then we will use our time for personal ambition. I am extremely productive in planning, scheduling, accomplishing many things... I don't stop and I don't waste a second... but it's all for my own ambition. Or for my own comfort. Or for worldly gain.
    - The faithful and wise steward understands that "the days are evil" and "redeeming the time." He invests his time in spiritual matters. He has a time for work and a time for rest. He has a time for his spiritual canon. He has time for his family. He has time for his friends. He has time for God. The faithful and wise steward redeems the time.

- The same goes for my talents, my job, my education, my children. All of these gifts that I am entrusted with, I must be faithful and wise.

Why? What is the result?

3 - Stewards Are Accountable

Stewards are accountable. "Give an account of your stewardship"

If we know that God will ask us "How did you spend your time?" we will be careful to spend our time in a way that glorifies God.

If we know that God will ask us "What did you do with your money?" we will be careful to use our money to glorify God.

If we know that God will ask us "What did you do with your children?" we will be careful in raising our children to be well-balanced in their spiritual life, in their education, in their social life.

If we know that God will ask us "How did you deal with your employees?" we will careful to treat our employees with respect and honor them and give them a fair wage and serve them.

The Lord will ask us - "I gave you money, children, family, intelligence, health, career, talents, time... what did you do with these gifts? Did you waste them? Did you bury them? Or did you produce fruits glorifying God? Give an account of your stewardship."

If the Lord asked me right now, "how did you use your time last week?" - What would I say?

If the Lord asked me right now, "what did you do with your children this summer?" - How would I respond?

Let me put these questions at the front of my mind, knowing that I am a steward and that stewards are accountable. It's a good exercise at the end of each day, and at the end of each week, and at the end of each quarter and year to give account of my stewardship. To look at all that the Lord has entrusted to me and ask myself these questions.

Conclusion

In today's parable, the Lord warned the wicked vinedressers because they failed in their stewardship. They received a good vineyard that was protected and provisioned and able to produce fruits. But they were not faithful. They were not wise. And instead of rendering fruit for the owner, they kept it for themselves.

We also are entrusted with a vineyard - a good vineyard that is prepared for us. Our life, our time, our money, our talents, our intellect, our health, our relationships, our children, our jobs, our employees. These are not our own - they are God's, and He gave them to us for stewardship... to tend them and to return the fruit.

One day, the Lord will ask each one of us: "Give an account of your stewardship." God forbid that we show up before Him empty-handed. But if we are faithful and wise in our stewardship, we will hear those fateful words, the reward of faithful stewardship: "Well done good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

May the Lord grant all of us to hear those words, and may He give us faithfulness and wisdom in dealing with our stewardship, lest we become like those evil vinedressers.

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