

Saved By Grace Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Tim Bartels

Trinity 9, 2014

Luke 12:42-48¹

Part I

In November of 1835, a boy was born to proud Scottish parents. When the boy was a young child, the family moved to the United States hoping for better work. They settled in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. The boy got his first job at a cotton factory. From there he went to a series of jobs. He worked hard, gained experience, and learned to manage other employees. Eventually he managed a railroad company. During that time, he made wise investments. By the time we was thirty, he had a very wealthy estate.

In his thirties he co-founded his first steel company. Within a few decades, he created a steel empire. He did by earning top dollar and by minimizing waste in the workplace. From his earnings, he donated millions to charitable causes. A world famous concert hall in New York was named after him. His name was Andrew Carnegie. ² To be sure, Andrew Carnegie's estate, by human standards was a great achievement. Yet, the ownership of his estate lasted only a lifetime. In death, he had to leave behind his wealth. That is true for any man of wealth – the Bill Gates and the Phil Knights of the world. What 's true for man, though, is not true for God. Man is mortal. God is not. Man works to own. God is the owner. Man gives up his ownings. God doesn't. King David got that. He confessed, “all that is in heaven and earth is Yours.”³

It is, because God created all there is. He created the iron ore for Carnegie's production of steel. He created Carnegie's mind that could turn iron ore into a profit. He created the bodies of Carnegie's employees to work the steel mills.

God created *you*. So, we said with the psalmist, "You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb."⁴ God knit your bones and muscles together. He gave you your *body and soul*; your *eyes, ears and all your members*; your *reason and all your senses*.⁵ Your mind, your body; you intellect, your abilities; you interests, your skills – all of it comes *from* God. Your home, your property; your employment, your possessions; your family, your friends – all of it was *given* by God. Your time; your talent, your treasure – all of it *belongs* to God.

There is no doubt about it...*God* is the owner. The estate that he owns is the heavens and the earth and all that is in them – including you. He is *pictured* by the estate owner in today's text.

Part II

In it, the estate owner promotes an employee. He promotes him to the *vocation* of a steward. That is, he entrusts him with his estate. He does by "making him ruler over his household." Not only does he put the employee into the vocation of steward, he gives him a *job description*. He is to give the servants "their portion of food in due season." He is to make sure they are properly cared for.

When you think about it, that's the *vocation* God gave Adam, isn't it? God made Adam steward over his estate. He put the world into Adam's hands. Adam's *job description* was to multiply by having children; to subdue the earth; to have dominion over plant and animal life; to eat from plant life, *except from* the forbidden fruit. As descendants of Adam, his vocation has been passed on down to us. God has put us in the *vocation* of stewards, as well. God has entrusted into our hands his estate. That estate is the time, talent, and treasure given by God to us. What's more, he has given us a *job description*. He calls us to manage his gifts of time, talent, and treasure. He calls us to use them to *provide* a service to others in our jobs; to *care for* our families from our means; to *return* to him from our

treasure; to *help* others in need. In doing so, we are to be faithful and wise.

Part III

That is how we are to be...*but* there is trouble afoot. There was in our text. While the estate owner was absent, the steward rebelled. He said “in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming; and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and be drunk.’” That is to say, the steward sinned in his vocation. He abused the estate owner's employees. He acted *as if* he was entitled to the estate's provisions. Adam did exactly that. He *rebelled* against the estate owner, God. He abused his vocation. He wasn't true in his stewardship. He usurped God's authority. Adam did by *not following* the job description. He acted foolishly. He did by eating from the forbidden fruit. When he did, we all fell with him, beaten up by Adam's sin.

That means, Adam's fallen nature is ours. It is called our old Adam. Our old Adam asserts itself in our stewardship. It usurps God's authority. It says, “I will not have him Lord over me. I will be lord instead.”⁶ When we do, we don't follow the job description. We don't, because our old Adam *fails* to see God as the owner. Instead he sees self as the owner. So, our Old Adam *thinks* that we are free to use our time, talent and treasure as we see fit – not as God sees fit.

Someone put it like this “we often speak of *our* possessions. We talk about *my* life, *my* time, *my* money, *my* car, ”⁷ “We act as if we are *tenant farmers*, not stewards. A tenent farmer pays an agreed upon rent. He does for using the owner's land. After paying rent, he has a *right* to keep what he earns. Our old Adam thinks our relationship with God is like that. We give back to God some of our time, talent and treasure. After that, we can do as we please with the rest.”⁸

When we do, we fail to see that “even the rest belongs to God. *All* that passes through our hands is his.”⁹ We can only manage it. What's more, neither can we carry it to the grave. We can't *anymore than*

Andrew Carnegie could carry his estate to the grave. When we forget that, we make ourselves lords. We act unfaithfully and foolishly. We sin in our vocation as stewards. We rebel against the estate owner.

Part IV

Rebellion brings consequences. "The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Those are *chilling* consequences...even as death was for Adam's sin.

...and man objects. One atheist put it this way. Why should God care a fig for petty human wrongdoing? We make our pokey little sins into something much greater than they are. Adam's sin is no big deal. It's overkill to punish him with death.¹⁰

When we hear such objections, we need to remember the seriousness of Adam's sin. Adam's and our sin is the act of seizing *from God* his estate. It is an affront to the owner. It is an attempt to grasp from him his honor and glory. It is a *willful* act of rebellion. By that willful act, we made ourselves God's enemies. We put ourselves in a place punishable by death.

That's where our sin of attempting to grasp from God what is his, lands us. It does...and it doesn't do any good to plead ignorance, either. "But he who did not know, yet committed many things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten (albeit) with few." It's not that the ignorant *can't* know. They *choose* not to know. Romans puts it this way, "What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them" ...but they "suppress the truth."¹¹

In other words, *all* are unfaithful stewards. *All* set self up as lord. *All* the world stands guilty before God.

Part V

So...where is the gospel here? There *is* a faithful and wise steward, Jesus, whom the estate owner made ruler over his estate. That steward is Jesus. Jesus came down to earth, the Son of the estate owner, God. God formed his inward parts while in his mother, Mary's, womb; he knit him together in her amniotic sack. God wrapped himself in human skin. God lived among us as one of us. Of him, the estate owner said, "He is my beloved Son. In him I am well pleased."¹² The estate owner said that of no one else; not any time; not any place.

That means, as God's word says, that Jesus is the Second Adam.¹³ He is the *perfect* steward. He was entrusted with the salvation of mankind. Jesus *did* his job description. He gave his life to provide life for all. To be sure, he was true to his vocation. He did not act outside of it. He did what his Father asked. He used good judgment. He never sinned.

In that way Jesus could take the place of rebellious Adam, mankind...and that is what he did. Jesus bore mankind's stripes. He was "cut in two, at is were" for our rebellion against the estate owner, for our sins of mismanagement. Jesus was beaten with a scourge, nailed to the cross, put to death in our place, bearing our guilt. By doing so, the Second Adam, Jesus, cared for the first Adam; for mankind; for you. That is, Jesus *takes away* your sin; you are forgiven. He *credits* you with his righteousness; Jesus' perfect stewardship is yours. You *are spared* eternal death; heaven is open for you. Forgiven and saved, God sends you back to your vocation as steward. Redeemed and purchased by his blood, he calls you to "*live under him and his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness innocence and blessedness.*"

Part VI

After his death, Jesus was promoted, you could say. He was, because as the faithful and wise steward he rose, ascended and sits at the Father's right hand. At his right hand, Jesus "was made ruler over all the Father has; he put Jesus as head over his estate...for "sll things are put under Jesus feet."¹⁴

As we wait for his return, he is with you in word and sacrament. In word and sacrament, all he has he gives you. In him, you have more than Andrew Carnegie did in his estate or any other wealthy estate owner has ever had. You have forgiveness; and, with it you are a member of God's estate, heaven. It all goes to say, you and all you have belong to him who purchased and won you from sin and death. Amen!

¹References to the text (NKJ) will not be cited in the sermon

²The above two paragraphs are summarized from history.com/topics/andrew-carnegie-9238756

³1 Chronicles 29.11

⁴Psalm 139.13

⁵*Luther's Small Catechism, the First Article*

⁶*Making the Case for Christianity*, Korey Mass and Adam Francisco editors, CPH, p. 127 paraphrased

⁷*To Live With Christ*, Bo Giertz, Concordia Publishing House, p. 508

⁸ibid, paraphrase of p. 508

⁹ibid, p. 508

¹⁰ibid, pages 128-129 paraphrased

¹¹Romans 1.18,19

¹²Matthew 4.17

¹³Romans 5.14

¹⁴Ephesians 1.22