**Stewardship – Whose Is It, Anyway?**

**Sermon**

Scripture: Psalm 24:1

My niece, Kezia, and nephew, Isaac, were fighting over a mug. My nephew was holding on to the mug while his sister, who is four years older, attempted to take it from him. He yelled, “Mine!” She responded, “No, it’s mine!” They went back and forth each claiming ownership of the cup. Finally, my niece declared, “It’s neither yours nor mine. It’s *God’s* cup—but God gave it to me!” Then she snatched it from him. He began crying while she walked away with the cup.

As I contemplated the fight between my niece and nephew, I thought about us as adults. While we may not often verbalize ownership in that manner, the way we react and/or treat God’s resources reveals that we also tend to forget who the real owner is and our role as stewards.

• The dictionary definition of stewardship is “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.”[[1]](#endnote-1)1 • In Christian stewardship, it could be stated that stewardship is “the careful and responsible management of all that God has given us—our tangible and intangible possessions.” Thus, it’s obvious that the “something” is not the property of the person managing it.

**God is Creator and Owner**

• In Genesis 1:1, we are told that God created the heavens and the earth. God created the earth out of nothing. He spoke everything into existence, except for man.

• God *formed* man from the dust of the earth and made provision for man even before he was created. God provided a beautiful garden as a home and food for Adam. God gave him a wife to begin his family. Adam was formed healthy and strong.

Because God is Creator, that makes Him owner of everything on earth—including man. God owns the land, animals, gold, and silver, and everything is made out of these resources.

God has given man the knowledge, ability, and wisdom to develop the natural resources that He placed on the earth to make things that are useful for our everyday use. God created plants and animals which we use for food and have creative ways of reproducing the food. From plants we get wood which we use for building our homes.

• Although mankind makes a lot of things, God is still owner of all things. Psalm 24:1 reminds us that the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. God provides, protects, sustains and support.

**Mankind’s Responsibility**

 God created mankind to steward His creation (see Gen 1:26). In Genesis 2:15, mankind was given employment.

• “Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. they will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground,’” (Genesis 1:26, NLT).

God provided a home (garden), food (plants), occupation (tending the garden), family (wife), and ability. Yet, regardless of how much we accumulate while we care for God’s property, it does not make us owners.

• Mankind’s ability to possess does not grant entitlement or ownership. We are *stewards*, responsible to care for all in our possession and treat it as directed by the owner, or how we know it will please to the owner.

 God has given knowledge that mankind is now able to produce and reproduce. In days of old, people rode on donkeys. No one could claim creation of a donkey! People dug holes for their feces, ate directly what they grew, carried water from wells. We have advanced since then, and we continue to advance.

 • This generation has surpassed all others in the following:

* Technology
* Transportation
* Infrastructure
* Medicine
* Standard of living

Advancements in technology enable us to speak to someone anywhere, in any continent, instantly. We can even have face-to-face conversations with anyone around the world. Advancements in travel allow us to ride trains and fly in airplanes. Advancements in medicine has given life back to those who otherwise would have died from such diseases such as polio and smallpox. Advancements in our standard of living allow us to build and live in houses and mansions, rather than in tents. Knowledge has increased, and mankind has the ability to become builders, engineers, technicians, manufacturers, and leaders. Yet, in spite of all these advancements, it is God who has given us these abilities. Even these we do not own.

**To Have is to Owe**

• “To have is to owe, not to own,” (Unknown). The American economy is a prime illustration of having and not owning. Although you live in a residence you call “home,” it is not really yours. If the mortgage is not paid, the bank will repossess the home. The bank owns it. But God owns the bank!

I grew up in a small community where residents built their homes without acquiring a mortgage. We used our savings and current earnings toward the construction of a home. Back then, the villagers were skillful and constructed the buildings themselves with the help of family and friends. Even without a mortgage, they still were not owners. God still is the owner.

No matter how much we accumulate, we are not owners. To have property and wealth means we owe. God is the owner, so we owe what we have to God.

• For example, take an accountant who is employed by someone else. He or she analyzes data inputted by another. He or she creates reports using the employer’s computer. Information belongs to the company. The printer belongs to the employer. The paper for the printer belongs to the employer. Therefore, the employer owns the report generated. The accountant cannot claim ownership of the report.

Have you ever seen a mother give birth to baby fully clothed, or with tools in his or hand? Didn’t think so! Neither have you seen a dead man holding on to his property as he goes to his grave.

• First Timothy 6:7 tells us that we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we will carry nothing out of this world, either.

• With the exception of time, God gives resources to every man in different proportions:

* Time
* Talent
* Treasure
* Temple

And we are to maximize their usefulness so we may honor Him, care for our needs, and care for others’ needs.

**God is Not Needy**

Psalm 50:12 says, “If I were hungry I would not tell you; for the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness,” (NKJV).

God does not need anything from us. Some may wonder why give to a God who has it all? Think of a child who gives a gift to a parent. Parents appreciate gifts from their children, even when *they* are the provider of that gift. • Returning gifts to God is an act of obedience. It keeps us in relationship with Him. It recognizes Him as Lord and Provider. It reveals our trust in Him as our Provider. It is great to be a channel of blessing.

The words to the hymn, “We Give Thee But Thine Own,” (*SDA Hymnal*, 670), is a beautiful statement of God as Owner and we as grateful children returning to Him what He has given us.

• (verse 1)

“We give Thee but Thine own,

Whate’er the gift may be;

All that we have is Thine alone,

A trust, O Lord, from Thee.”

• (verse 2)

“May we Thy bounties thus

As stewards true receive

And gladly, as Thou blessest us,

To Thee our first-fruits give!”

**A Steward’s Job Description**

• Below are general descriptions you will notice on a job posting for a steward:

* Follow safe and proper procedures in the course of daily work
* Perform duties as instructed
* Arrive on time and demonstrate effective time management
* Improve skills and abilities through continued learning
* Work well with others

These same descriptions apply to us as stewards of God’s property. Notice the description does not entail owning and possessing; it uses the words follow, perform, demonstrate.

• A steward’s attitude reflects:

* Gratitude
* Contentment
* Loyalty
* Generosity
* Charity
* Compassion
* Obedience

He/she cares for all in their possession, maximizes use of resources, and gives to others. He/she is ever mindful of the source of his/her blessing.

• Deuteronomy 8:18 states, “Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today,” (NIV).

**Summary**

Effective management of God’s resources benefits us, not God. When we are faithful in small things, God will entrust us with bigger things.

One of my favorite Scripture texts, which highlights King David’s attitude toward God, is found in 1 Chronicles 29;14, “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,” (NIV).

I have chosen to adopt this attitude of King David. When I give to God and to others, I am reminded of my upbringing of poverty and when my family was recipients of the generosity of others. Today, God has blessed me with health, strength, and abilities with which I can earn and give to Him and others. Like David, who am I, that I should offer so willing?

• So, I ask the question of myself and I ask it of you: Is it mine?

My energies

My labor

My mental capacity

My car

My house

My phone

My children

My body

The fact is, they really aren’t “mine.” They are God’s. He gave them to me and is allowing me to hold them! And there is blessing even in the holding.

**Quiz – True/False**

1. When God gives us gifts or property, we become owners.
2. We manage our gifts based on how we feel.
3. God is Creator; therefore, He is Owner.
4. Man has the ability to produce using God’s resources.
5. God owns natural resources, man owns technology.
6. God gives equal resources to all men.
7. Health, strength, abilities, and wealth are given to us by God to be used for His glory.
8. All those who return tithe are faithful stewards.
9. God is Owner of our houses, cars, children, and cell phones.
10. After Creation week, God ceased from creating.
1. 1 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stewardship>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)