

## Faithful Stewardship – Abraham Style

★ **He used what he had.** (vv.8-16)

★ **He gave from his own.** (vv.17-24)

In the name of Jesus, our Champion Redeemer, dear family of God:

What is it about stuff that never seems to satisfy? Someone could give you a credit card to the most fabulous stores in Minneapolis, and you might wish it were for New York instead. You just bought a new iPhone, but the newer ones sure look mighty fine, don't they? "No, I'd rather have an Android!" Teenager, you work hard to buy your first car, but it's really hard not to envy classmates whose parents buy them nicer ones. We live in the most prosperous country ever. Why so much discontent?

If you trust in Jesus as your Savior, you have a huge advantage. You know the God who made all things and gives us all we need. He even says, "*Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*" (Psalm 37:4 NIV84) God the Holy Spirit gave us guidance today to "*delight yourself in the LORD*" by honest stewardship (Amos 8:4-7), stewardship of faith and prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8), and far-sighted stewardship (Luke 16:1-13), like the dishonest manager in Jesus' parable. He's not telling us to be dishonest, of course, but to use what you have. That's **Faithful Stewardship – Abraham Style**.

★ **He used what he had.** (vv.8-16)

Drive up the freeway, exit at Hinckley, and go right. A little east is another temple to never having enough. They're commonly called "casinos." We have no Bible passage that says gambling is a sin. It is theoretically possible for a Christian to set a budget and practice good self discipline. It is also true that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*" (1 Timothy 6:10 NIV84)

Not long ago a local Lutheran congressman was also his church's Treasurer. He dipped into funds to pay off a debt, planning to pay back the church by winning. His felony cost him his job, church, family, freedom. Jesus told us again in today's Gospel: "*No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*" (Luke 16:13 NIV84) God's **Faithful** managers honor Him in their heart of hearts.

Not every believer gets to live in a country with decent law enforcement. Flash back to ancient times in the Promised Land, and you'll find the father of all believers in very different circumstances. This is before the Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham. We can use either name today. He was more than a successful rancher. "*Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.*" (Genesis 13:2) God promised him the whole land wherever he walked, but Abram was generous. He gave his nephew Lot first choice so their herdsman would stop quarreling over grazing and water rights. Lot went east toward Sodom, right into the heart of gross immorality and the path of invading armies.

Four kings out of Mesopotamia, one of whom may have been the great Hammurabi (Amraphel), pillaged and plundered along the King's Highway to the east of the Jordan. Sadly, no local king could stop them. Swinging up from the south, the four took on five kings, including those of Sodom and Gomorrah. A field of tar pits and slime bogs is not a great place to fight. Many died there; the rest fled to the hills. Abram's nephew Lot was caught up in the violence. He and his family were taken captive with all their possessions. No cell phones, so someone escaped to run and tell Abram the bad news.

This Hebrew rancher was also a warrior who would not wait for wicked Canaanite kings. He trained his own strike force, ready to roll at a moment's notice. A recent documentary on ancient battles said very little about how far Abram's commandos pursued the four Mesopotamian kings. What

impresses military historians is that Abram attacked at night. Apparently, no one else did. But Abram trusted in God who created day and night, who never sleeps, who protects His own in darkness or light. Abram routed them way up north near Dan, then kept pounding their fleeing forces past Damascus.

See how to practice **Faithful Stewardship – Abraham Style?** **He used what he had.** No waiting around to win the lottery. No wringing his hands and blaming the government. God gives His gifts to all. We just need God to open our eyes to opportunities and grant His wisdom to pursue. ***“For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.”*** (Proverbs 2:6-8 NIV84) Use what you have. You’ll always have enough because you have God. Practice **Faithful Stewardship – Abraham Style.**

### ★ **He gave from his own. (vv.17-24)**

Where he came from, only God knows. Luther thought he was Shem (*LW*, Vol. 2, pp.381f), the oldest son of Noah. That’s Jewish tradition too, and quite possible. Since Shem went on living about 500 years after the Flood (Genesis 11:10f), he would have been around for most of Abram’s life. ***“Salem”*** was most likely Jerusalem. There our text says Melchizedek was king and ***“priest of God Most High.”*** The New Testament letter to the Hebrews mentions Melchizedek several times as a prototype of Christ. Jesus is our Great High Priest ***“in the order of Melchizedek,”*** without beginning or end, by ***“the power of an indestructible life.”*** (Hebrews 7:1-3,15f) Melchizedek brought out refreshments; Abram gave a tithe.

Notice there was no command stated here for Abram to give a tenth. In fact, it would be another 700 years before the tithe was codified in Moses’ Law at Mount Sinai. Christ came and fulfilled God’s Law, giving us full credit by faith in His righteous life. God made a gift of our guilt when Jesus’ blood washed away all our sins. We live in glorious New Testament freedom, no longer slaves of “do this” and “do that.” Now the Gospel says, “Done!” All is “done” perfectly by Christ. In God’s New Covenant of pure grace He says, ***“Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”*** (Hebrews 10:17 KJV)

You get to decide the size of the tithe, but look at the promise. The LORD says, ***“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*** (Malachi 3:10 NIV84) Any bulging closets among us? Waistlines? Garages? God has been good to us. Even better than things, ***“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV84) **Faithful Stewardship** is rich in good deeds. We give from our own.

In about 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when I got my first job, my father sat me down with ten dimes. “Give the first to God,” he said. “You can spend the other nine.” My kids I sat down with ten dollars – adjusted for inflation. “Give the first to God,” I said. “Put the second in the bank and have fun with the other eight.” Reviewing with one of my used-to-be teenage daughters, she smiled respectfully then replied, “Dad, I do it a little different. I give the first to God, put eight in the bank, and spend my last dollar.” Teach your children well, whatever the amount, in true thanks. For Zacchaeus that was 50%, 100% for the widow whom Jesus praised in the temple as more generous than all the rich who gave from their wealth.

From father Abraham we also learn how to say, “No,” to money. Now there’s a new concept. It’s not that Abraham wouldn’t receive gifts. He accepted food and drink from Melchizedek and protected the rights of his allies to their fair share. But from the wicked king of Sodom, Abraham refused ***“even a thread or the thong of a sandal.”*** The godless always want to steal glory from God. Abraham wouldn’t have it. He refused the evil king’s gifts lest the man brag he’d made Abraham rich. **He gave from his own.** He did not wait for the big win or whine about other people’s money. That’s **Style in Stewardship.**

In protection, in providence, in generous offerings, my dear friends, you can’t outgive the Giver. But as one of our former members liked to say, “It sure is fun to try.” God just wants your cheerful heart. In the light of God’s grace, that’s a gift you can keep giving every day. Amen.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net) .  
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126