

Dear Friends,

*“Who is a Christian Steward? One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response).”*

Perhaps we have all read this parable from Matthew 25:14–15, 19–21:

*Jesus told his disciples this parable: “A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one— to each according to his ability. Then he went away.*

*After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’”*

We know the rest of the story. The servant who was given two talents made another two and the master gave him great responsibilities, too. The last servant put his master’s money in a hole in the ground. When the master came back he returned the money, but without interest. The master got angry with this third guy and threw him out into the cold where there was wailing and grinding of teeth.

God has given us the role of being stewards of creation. Everything we have, own and possess we look at as being ours, but it really belongs to God. Unfortunately, we tend to look at what is ours and say we can do whatever we want with our possessions. This thinking is in error because God says, “be fruitful and multiply.” God has given us a tremendous abundance of good things and even though we can claim ownership,

everything still belongs to God. We are simply stewards of all that belongs to God.

So, how do we make God's blessing grow? It's simple: we keep what we need for ourselves, and then we give away the rest. What could possibly motivate us to do such a thing? We would consider it admirable and kind to say that we are charitable and generous with all we have, and that would be reason enough. With this kind of attitude we could do away with the need for charity because there would be no more poor people. There would be no more starvation, homelessness, and people living on the fringes of despair, because everyone would have all that they need. But the problem with this way of thinking is that we're simply giving the rest of what we don't need for ourselves. If you think about it, that's not really charity because we're still thinking of ourselves first. Besides, with all the poverty that still exists in the world, it is obvious this giving of what we have left does not work.

So, love of God is what motivates us to be generous. Instead of giving what we have left over, we offer the best of what we have: the best of our talents; the best of our time; and the best of our treasure. How often do we make a charitable contribution before we pay the rest of our bills? How often do we think about volunteering before we think about what we have left of our free time? How often do we consider the fact that we have an abundance of gifts that we can give because God has blessed each of us with tremendous skills and talent? What we have, we give away, and God makes it grow. It all happens through love. God, in deep and abiding love for us, gives us all we need. We, in our love for each other and for God, are generous with our gifts. The more they are shared, the more abundantly they grow in value. And when we share what we have in love and peace, we hear God say, "Come and share your Master's joy."

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel