

“Who is Steward?” Matthew 25:1-13 (11/9/25)

In just a few weeks, we will celebrate Thanksgiving, and soon after that, the Advent season begins. Before Advent starts, I’d like us to spend the next three weeks thinking together about Stewardship and Thanksgiving.

Stewardship is one of the most important ideas for every Christian to understand. It was also something John Wesley and the early Methodists emphasized deeply. Today, I want to talk about one simple question — Who is the steward? And next week, we’ll talk about how a steward should live.

When you hear that word, steward, what do you think of? For me, the first time I heard it was on an airplane. There are stewards and stewardesses who serve the passengers, right? So when I first heard this word in church, I thought it simply meant “someone who serves.”

But in the Bible, the meaning is much deeper. A steward is someone who manages what belongs to God. Now, in our modern world, we’re more familiar with the word manager. But the Bible doesn’t call us managers — it calls us stewards. Why? Because the two are very different.

A manager has some authority. They make decisions, set goals, and focus on results. But a steward acts completely according to the owner’s will. A steward’s only concern is what the master thinks. The success or failure isn’t measured by human standards but by the master’s approval.

So, when we say we are God’s stewards, it means we manage everything we have received from God — our soul, our body, our time, our energy, our money, our gifts — according to God’s will, not our own.

Then who is the steward? Simply, the answer is that every Christian is a steward because every Christian has received new life through Jesus Christ.

John Wesley said that God has entrusted to us our souls, our bodies, our possessions, and our talents — everything.

So we must use all these things in ways that honor God. That means even our breath, our hands, our voice, and our strength — all these belong to God. We are simply caretakers of what belongs to God.

Today's Scripture is one we know well — the story of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom. Usually, we read this passage as a reminder to stay awake and be ready for the end times. But today, let's look at it through the eyes of stewardship.

We can learn three things about stewardship through today's Scripture. First, God's steward is like the bride of Christ.

The Bible often describes our relationship with God in three ways: First, as a master and servant. Then, as a parent and child. And finally, as a bridegroom and bride. The first relationship is built on command and obedience. The second grows through love and understanding. But the third — the relationship between bride and bridegroom — is the most intimate of all. Two become one. The joy of one becomes the joy of the other. The pain of one becomes the pain of the other.

In the parable, all ten women were waiting for the bridegroom. Some were wise and prepared, some were not — but all were waiting. Likewise, all of us are stewards. Some serve faithfully, some struggle, but we are all God's stewards. And we are God's stewards, like the bride of Jesus: We don't work for God because we're afraid of God's authority. We serve God because we love God. We serve God as the bride of Christ — willingly, joyfully, and lovingly.

Second, God's stewards use God's gifts wisely. All ten virgins took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. They were not lazy. But five brought extra oil, and five didn't. To understand why that matters, we should think about what

lamps were like at that time. They were small clay lamps, about the size of our hand, filled with olive oil. The flame did not last long — people had to refill it often.

In Jewish wedding customs at that time, the bride would go out at night with her lamp to meet the groom. If her lamp went out, she wasn't considered ready or worthy to enter the feast.

So what does that tell us? The foolish ones assumed the groom would come quickly — “This much oil should be enough.” They worked based on their own thoughts and assumptions. But the wise ones prepared more oil. They were ready for whenever he came.

A good steward does not act based on assumptions. A good steward uses everything with God's purpose in mind — not “This should be enough,” but “I'll do my best until God's will is done.”

Third, God's steward lives for God's purpose. The parable shows us how to wait for the coming of God's kingdom. The ten virgins were all waiting for the same thing — the arrival of the bridegroom. Their goal was to enter the wedding banquet with him.

Let me give you an example. When I was younger, I thought airplane stewards were just there to make passengers comfortable. But when I served in the Air Force, I learned that flight attendants actually carry many responsibilities — for safety, for emergencies, for everything that happens on board. Their goal is clear: to make sure everyone arrives safely and comfortably at their destination.

In the same way, God's stewards have a clear purpose — to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ, to build up God's kingdom, and to help bring more souls back to God before that day comes.

This is my personal thought. When the five foolish virgins realized their

lamps had gone out, they left to buy more oil. Maybe they were afraid of being judged. Maybe they thought they had lost their chance. Their focus was on themselves, not on the bridegroom. If they had truly trusted his love, probably even without oil, they would have stayed and waited. Because what the bridegroom wanted most was not perfect preparation, but faithful waiting.

So, who is the steward? We are the stewards — every one of us who has received new life through Jesus Christ. Our emotions, our voices, our breath, our possessions — they all come from God.

When I worked as a hospital chaplain intern, I learned that even the ability to walk, to breathe, to move my hands — all of it is a gift from God. So we become stewards not because we have to, but because we love God. We serve as God's bride — sharing God's heart, hoping for God's kingdom, and managing all that God gives us with wisdom and care. We live as stewards with one great purpose — to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ.

So this week, I encourage us to fill our hearts with true stewardship. Let us remember that everything we have — and everything we are — belongs to God. Let us live as people who walk closely with God, as stewards who love deeply, serve wisely, and wait faithfully. Amen.