

STEWARDSHIP 2: MANAGING RESOURCES (TILLING AND KEEPING)

Stewardship Sermon • October 19, 2025

Genesis 2: 15, Luke 16: 10-12

By Pat Berger

Adam knew, as we all ought to, that the land where he had been placed belonged to God. Adam's task was to till it, to prepare that land for seed and for growing. And he was to keep it, or to manage the land in such a way that it would be productive, for God. All that we have been given, too, belongs to God, and we also need to use it productively, for God and for the Kingdom. And when we talk about stewardship, we need to remember that what we are promising to give to the church is also God's, and has been, from the beginning. Everything that we are and everything that we have belongs to God, now and always.

As we read in our Bibles, at first, for that first person, all that there was, was: a man, and the land that he could see. He needed to cultivate it, or till it as in the words we are working with today. And he needed to tend it, or keep it, as in today's words. At that point, that was all that had been asked of him. And then came the animals, which Adam got to name; they didn't belong to him, but he got to name them. And there came one who was more like him, the woman: Eve. They, and all of those who followed, knew that who they were and what they had was gift from God.

We do better in thinking about stewardship when we remember that, just like in those very first days, all that we are and all that we have belongs to God. One of the resources said that tilling means to make something productive. When we till the soil, it is an effort to make it more productive. Our energy and our environment need to work this way also.

We need to make our lives, too, productive for the Kingdom, and all that we have, not just our finances. When Wayne and I were about to attend our first worship service as a married couple, I was writing out our offering check, and I asked him how much I ought to put on

the check. He looked at me with a puzzled look on his face, and said that at home, they had always given ten percent. Since he was self-employed, I spent an amount of time each week figuring out what that meant for our offering check. Which reminded me of my Dad working on the budget for our church. He seemed a bit frustrated at that one evening, and I asked what the problem was. He looked at me with a bit of a growl on his face, and asked me, "How am I supposed to come up with a budget when what they put on the amount line is 10%?" My Dad worked for the government; we knew how much he would make. Most of the people in that church at that time were farmers; they did, indeed, give 10% of their income – and what that amount might be, would be an unknown until at least harvest time! If tilling meant productive, though, and keeping meant protection, that church definitely benefitted from all that they did. Making a budget wasn't easy, and everyone gave their 10%, and most years it worked out just fine.

Stewardship means wise, intentional use of all of our resources. It does not encourage wasting or neglecting that which we have been given. "Where am I, or are we, being wasteful?" we might ask. How can we better use all with which we have been gifted? Our reading from the Gospel of Luke this morning talks about this. "Whoever is faithful in little will be faithful in much." How we have acted with all that we have been given will show how we might receive in the future. And this doesn't refer simply to the things in our homes or our families; God's creation and how we treat it is a part, too, of how we show our love of God. And Luke continues, the one who is not faithful with what is given will not be trusted with more.

We can learn, then, that stewardship is both calling and privilege. One author wrote, "To manage resources faithfully is to live out the image of God – creative, caring and generous." So perhaps during this time of Stewardship this year, we could ask a bit more of ourselves. Maybe it will be something you do in your yard or even in someone else's yard. Maybe it will be something you do for or with our church, or a group in which you are involved, or for or with your community. Of course, we hope that you will be filling out your stewardship card

and returning it for our Stewardship Committee – and stewardship is so much more than just that. It is how we live on and care for this earth; it is loving our neighbor and honoring our Creator. Let's allow our tilling and keeping to reflect our Creator's own heart.

Let us pray.