

Sermon

- Over the next two weeks, we will be looking at Stewardship.
- Stewardship is simply supervising or taking care of something within our control – eg, money, time, personal health and wellbeing, the environment, our relationships, the mission of God...
- We all steward our resources on a daily basis when we plan our budget, when we plan our diary, when we eat well and exercise regularly...
- All of this is stewardship because it is overseeing or taking care of the people and the things and the opportunities that we've been given.
- God gave humanity stewardship over creation and all that is within it (Genesis 1); Jesus has given us stewardship over the Mission of God and all that it involves (Matthew 28).
- So wise stewardship is at the heart of discipleship because it involves us looking after something that God has created and given to us – whether it's creation itself, the church, you, your relationships, your spiritual gifts, your finances.
- All of this has been created by God and given to each of us to manage, oversee, take care of.
- Therefore, wise stewardship is not an obligation, or something we do out of guilt or fear.
- Wise stewardship is a privilege, it is a joy and an honour because God has entrusted us with something that is beautiful and fragile and important.
- In the past stewardship has been reserved only for talk about money – give the church your money!
- But it is so much more than money, or giving, it is graciously, responsibly, diligently overseeing and taking care of everything that God has created and given to us.
- Wise stewardship is at the core of discipleship.
- This week we are going to consider how Jesus was a wise steward of what He was given.
- This story today follows on from last week – Jesus fed 5000 +; sent the disciples across the lake, a storm arose He walked towards them on the water and calmed the storm.
- After that event, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees about defilement.
- Then Jesus ministers to a Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter of a tormenting demon.
- Now, as I read this familiar story today, I invite you to notice what qualities you see in Jesus that enables Him to be a wise steward:

“After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. ³⁰ Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, ³¹ so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” ³³ The disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” ³⁴ Jesus asked them, “How many loaves have you?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” ³⁵ Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, ³⁶ he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷ And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ³⁸ Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹ After sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.” (Matthew 15:29-39)

- When Jesus had previously fed 5,000 men + women and children, it was near the north coast of Lake Galilee, where the people were mainly Jews (14:13-21).
- Now in this story, He fed 4,000 men + women and children on the east coast of Lake Galilee, where the people were mainly Gentiles.
- Although both miracles are performed in the same way, and are signs that Jesus possesses supernatural power, in the first story He seems to be concerned that the disciples should understand how utterly dependent upon Him they must always be, if they are to do what He would have them do.
- In this story, Jesus seems to emphasize His open, attentive, and responsive heart that flows from His compassion.
- We are familiar with the miracles of this story – healings, feeding the multitude with a little, but the heart behind the miracles is often overlooked.
- This is a powerful illustration of the heart of Jesus that supports His ministry, that is His heart of being open, attentive, compassionate and responsive to the needs of people around Him.

- And so today, we are going consider stewardship from the perspective of the **open, attentive, compassionate and responsive heart of Jesus.**

If we were to consider a building site, we know the foundations are laid and then the framework is erected, before the walls, roof, fittings etc.

- The ministry of Jesus is built upon the foundation of compassion and a framework of being open/approachable, attentive and responsive.
- All of His teachings, miracles, healings, parables etc are built upon this framework.
- Therefore, the core to Jesus being a steward of what He is given, is his being open, attentive, compassionate and responsive to the needs around Him: with that in mind...

“Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, ³¹ so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. ³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.”” (Matthew 15:30-33)

- This story highlights the heart of Jesus that supports His teachings and His miracles and all of His ministry.
- And this is something He wants His disciples to see and know, because, not only are His followers to rely fully upon Him, but we are to be like Him.
- Therefore, if Jesus built His life around being compassionate, open, attentive and responsive, then so are we.

So, what does it look like to be open/approachable, attentive/value, compassionate, and responsive to the people around you? Listen, care, act,

When have you done this in the past?

When has someone been open, attentive, compassionate and responsive to you in the past? What was that like? Fulfilling, joyful...

When someone has been open, attentive, compassionate and responsive to me, I feel loved, valued, like my needs are valid and important.

- This is who Jesus is, and what He does for all who come to Him; and He invites to do for others.
- So now that we've seen the heart behind the Ministry, let us look at what Jesus does with what He has been given:

³⁴ Jesus asked them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." ³⁵ Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, ³⁶ he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷ And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ³⁸ Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children."

(Matthew 15:34-38)

- From the perspective of compassion, openness, attentiveness and responsiveness, Jesus asks, "What do you have?"
- I think we know that 7 loaves and few small fish are in no way sufficient to feed up to 10 thousand people!
- But He took them, gave thanks, broke them and gave them to the Disciples to hand out.
- He could have grumbled about the lack of quality and quantity.
- Jesus gratefully received and diligently and passionately gave it away.
- Even though what He received would barely have been enough for Him and His disciples.
- He could have justified keeping the food for His tired team, but because of His compassionate, open, attentive and responsive heart, He gave it away.
- Church, do you know that Jesus takes what you offer even if it seems inadequate, incomplete, a bit stale (dessert for 3 days!)...
- Jesus gratefully receives whatever we offer and uses it for His kingdom purposes.
- In your eyes, what you offer might seem insignificant, incomplete, inadequate, stale and stinky, but to God, it is sufficient, enough. He gratefully receives it and uses it for His kingdom purposes.
- Ultimately, it is about His love and power at work in and through us.

- Not only that, but Jesus invites us to be grateful for what we have received, even if it seems meagre, incomplete, inadequate.
- And through prayerful consideration, be open, attentive, compassionate, responsive and generous to the needs around us.
- I don't believe wise stewardship is giving away everything.
- But I do believe that this story helps us to see that wise stewardship flows out of a heart that is open, attentive, compassionate, responsive, grateful and generous.
- Today, I wonder what God is inviting you to notice about your stewardship...
- The heart of open, attentive, compassionate, responsiveness, behind why and how you steward.
- Receiving what you've been given with gratefulness.
- Giving generously even if it seems inadequate, incomplete, old and stinky...

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