

# Forming Good Stewards

*Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!*

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

## Bulletin Bites

November 5, 2017

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 23:1-12

### Option 1

**“The scribes and the Pharisees have taken the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example.”**

Lord Acton wisely observed that “*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupt absolutely.*” Sadly, Lord Acton is right. During the life of Jesus the Romans, through Pilate, the governor, exercised absolute power over the life and destiny of everyone in Palestine. And he was absolutely corrupt. The chief priest, who was appointed or approved by the Roman Emperor, along with the scribes and Pharisees, exercised absolute power over the People of Israel. They used that power to take advantage of the people through oppressive dietary and sanitation laws, and taxes. When Jesus said to do what they said, but not what they do, he was condemning the abuse of power by the Jewish leaders and challenging them to stop making the people afraid of God and to teach the Israelites about a loving, caring, compassionate, and forgiving God. The Jewish leaders were so concerned that the people would believe Jesus and that would cause them to lose control of the people, so they plotted to kill him. And they succeeded. Is that not absolute corruption?

### Option 2

**“The greatest among you must be your servant.”**

Robert Greenleaf is credited with the concept of “servant leadership” as a model for leaders in business and industry [and politics]. His model is impressive, but it is by no means unique. When stripped of the business and industry management jargon, it bears a striking resemblance to the life and message of Jesus. People listened to Jesus because his words matched his actions. People observed that he loved God the Father with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength, and that he loved his neighbor as himself. That is why he had the credibility to challenge others to do the same. That is why he had the credibility to challenge the scribes and Pharisees who dressed in elaborate garments, claimed high sounding titles, sat in places of honor, performed acts to be seen, and assumed the “chair of Moses” - all the while placing heavy burdens on the people. It is no wonder the scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus and his example of “servant leadership.” But for us who claim to be Christian, we must be servants. We get closer to God by serving others.

**November 12, 2017**  
**Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Matthew 23:1-13**

**Option 1**

**“Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”**

The parable of the five wise virgins who brought extra oil and the five unwise who did not seems to suggest that Jesus was a Boy Scout and was well aware of their motto, “Be Prepared.” It is more likely that the Boy Scouts were aware of that parable, and others, and based their motto on the teaching of Jesus. People who live in areas prone to hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, blizzards and other climate or geology related events know the value of being prepared. Jesus clearly meant that being prepared involved more than having an extra vile of oil for a lamp or the right supplies and equipment in the event of an emergency. He intended that we should live our life always prepared to grow in the understanding and use of all the talents, abilities and gifts God has given to each of us, to the best of our ability, for ourselves and for others. That is truly “being prepared,” especially the part about using all that God has given us *for others*.

**Option 2**

**“The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them,”**

“I thought you brought the \_\_\_\_\_” Everyone has heard those words at some point. It is the sudden awareness that something important was left behind because everyone involved thought someone else had taken the missing object. Sometimes such oversight is the result of the rush to get to a destination. Sometimes it is the result of carelessness or laziness. Whatever the reason the cause is lack of preparation. Jesus was not concerned about bridesmaids not having enough oil. He was using the story to teach the Israelites to prepare for the time when they would be before God to explain whether or not they had loved him with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength, and loved their neighbor as themselves. Jesus is also trying to prepare us to stand before God to make that same accounting. We have the advantage of the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the counsel of clergy who can help us examine our lives and discern how we can do better. Do we avail ourselves of the sacraments and counsel?

**November 19, 2017**  
**Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**Matthew 25:14-30**

**Option 1**

**“Well done my good and faithful servant. . .”**

In golf a short put is called a *gimme*. In tennis a high, lofting return near the net is called a *lob*. In baseball four balls will get you a *walk*. And in basketball a ball passed to a tall forward or center over the goal is called a *slam dunk*. For a writer seeking to convey a message about the nature and consequences of being a good steward, today’s Gospel reading is a *gimme*, a *lob*, a *walk* and a *slam dunk*. We can learn that God created each of us with a vast array of talents, abilities and gifts, and free will to choose to accept and use them for ourselves and for others; or to reject them. What an awesome God! What an awesome gift! What an awesome responsibility! What an awesome reward for being a good steward! But the consequence for

failing to be the good stewards God expects us to be is awesome. Take some time this week to reflect several times on the Gospel passage for today. How have we done with our stewardship? Can we do more?

### Option 2

**“Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?”**

Jesus told several parables about people given responsibility for different quantities of talents and the consequences for the recipients who used their talents well in contrast to the recipients who failed to use their talents at all. Jesus seems to act harshly toward the person in the stories who receives the least amount and does nothing with it. The lesson of these stories is not that the people who receive the least amount of talents did not have much to work with. Jesus is teaching us that no matter how much or how little for which God makes us responsible, God expects us to make our best effort to make the most of it. It is not about the amount of the talents. It is about the amount of the effort. A steward is a person who is given the responsibility for the preservation and *productivity* of the possessions of another. Everything we are and have comes from God. He expects us to be good stewards and make the most of it.

**November 26, 2017**

**The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

### Option 1

**“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for the least ones, you did for me.”**

Our image of Jesus as a carpenter who cared for people in need and the necessities of life does not fit our image of Christ as King. The problem is that our image of *kingship* is not very positive. Kings were often tyrannical and self serving. And we often forget that at our Baptism we are all anointed *priest, prophet* and *king*. So what is the true function of a king? It is to see that all of his subjects, everyone entrusted to his care, is treated equally and shares equally in the benefits and resources of the kingdom. That is the message Christ the King taught and demonstrated to us. We share in Christ’s kingship. Whatever we *do for the least* in His kingdom, we do for Him. He depends on us to do it. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, we should be grateful to live in a country that allows us to be kingly like Jesus - to do all we can for those who are *the least* in His Kingdom: the unborn, the elderly, the homeless, the sick, the dying, and the imprisoned.

### Option 2

**“Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”**

How can we identify a real king or a queen? Is it the fine clothes and jewel encrusted crowns they wear or their regal demeanor and stately appearance? Do they sit on thrones raised above all the other people and give orders that make others fearfully rush to fulfill their every command? No!!!! Hollywood may portray them as such and that may be how some kings and queens actually lived. But a real king or queen is one who cares equally about everyone for whom they are responsible. David was a real king. Despite his well documented faults and sins, he sought to assure that all of the Kingdom of Judah shared equally in the resources and protection of the kingdom. He understood that whatever he did for the least in God’s kingdom, he did for God.

That is why the Northern Kingdom of Israel prevailed upon David to be their king. Jesus is a Davidic King so today we honor him as *Christ the King*. Jesus challenges us to be Davidic kings and queens who understand that whatever we do for the least in God's kingdom, we do for God.