Today we continue our sermon series, The Stewardship of Life.

Life is a gift, a gift from God.

And we are all stewards of everything God has given us –

This includes: vision, influence, commitment, time, opportunity, resources and so much more.

All of these are things we are given at birth.

The question is what do we do with them…how are we using them, are we managing them for God’s purpose?

We’ve talked about vision, influence, commitment, time, and opportunity so today we are going to talk about resources.

Jesus issued this stern warning found in Luke 12:15:

*Jesus said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”*

Think how different our lives might be if we really believed this…one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

It is so easy to fall prey to the notion that life is more fulfilling
if we simply have more things.

Under the constant barrage of advertisements and appeals
it’s easy to get sucked into this concept.
But it’s not true,
and we run a major risk when we look at life in terms of our things,
our money and our possessions…for one’s life does not consist in the
abundance of possessions.

When you think of the word resources, what comes to mind?
Natural resources, people/contacts, money or possession, skills, info,
God…
When you think about it, we have many resources at our disposal.

Ownership versus Stewardship
From a Christian perspective,
I believe the essence or spirit of life in regards to resources
is not about ownership but rather stewardship.
With stewardship defined as the faithful management of all that God
entrusts to us,
Some are entrusted with a lot, some with a little;
but whatever comes to us brings with it an undeniable responsibility.

The temptation is to think that abundance is found in possessing life’s benefits,
when actually it’s discovered in stewarding life’s blessings.
That’s why Jesus warned his disciples: “Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.” (The Message)

If you are struggling with the idea of stewardship rather than ownership, let’s again look at the Bible for guidance.
1 Timothy 6:7 reminds us, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”

At the moment of death, every “possession” of this material life is left behind – even the bodies we once inhabited.
This seems like a pretty good case for stewardship to me…
We didn’t bring anything into this world,
and we won’t take anything with us when we leave.
The things of this earth are only entrusted with us for a little while.
When you think about it,

it is truly foolish to spend a lifetime accumulating things

that we will leave behind when we die.

Author Kirk Nowery says we need to think like a pilgrim, not a settler.

Jesus himself said, “Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt 6:19-20)

We are pilgrims, not settlers.

Paul reminded the Philippians, “our citizenship is in heaven”

for we are just passing through this world.

God has entrusted each of us with a bounty of resources,

yet it is only when we seek to please God and God’s purpose

that we become good stewards of all God has given us.

As we look at the resources God has made available,

people, money and possession, skills, info, God’s love and wisdom,

I realize I often fail to use God’s resources to their greatest potential.
Often times when searching for a solution to a problem, the answer in right there in front of me, but I have just not used the resources God has put at my disposal.

The stewardship of resources is serious business.

Let me give you an illustration:
At 12:55pm the mayday call went out from the pilot of a small single-engine plane, reporting that he had run out of fuel and was preparing to ditch the aircraft in the body of water immediately below him.
Under normal circumstances it would have been a routine flight; however, the combination of fierce headwinds and a failure to top off the fuel tank had created a lethal situation.
To make matters worse, the plane was traveling without water survival gear, namely life preservers; leaving its four passengers with even less of a chance to make it through the ordeal.
For reasons we will never know, the pilot chose not to use the resources that were at his disposal.
He did not have enough fuel.
He did not have the proper survival equipment.
And one has to wonder if he had taken the time to get the day’s weather report.

Whatever the case, he did not use the resources that were available; and in this instance the consequences were fatal.

The stewardship of resources is a serious business.

Ownership versus stewardship

- deserve versus blessing

I believe that all resources, whether monetary or material, are the result of God’s favor and blessing, not simply a result of one’s personal achievements.

I’ve seen too many instances when people didn’t get what they “deserved,” good or bad.

I realize this statement may be a stretch for many especially because this seems to contradict what society teaches so I am not going to belabor this point.

But I do what to challenge you to have an attitude of stewardship versus ownership when thinking of the resources God has blessed you with.
What would it look like if the monetary and material resources in your life were invested in a way that brought glory to God and the Gospel message?

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, said in regards to money,

“Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”

The whole purpose of earning and saving all you can is that you might be able to give all you can to support the most basic needs of those who lack the means for health and safety.

Wesley insists that such giving is not a matter of charity but of duty.

When we use our resources to indulge our desires instead of meeting the needs of the poor, we do not merely miss an opportunity to do good:

Wesley would say we “rob God”, taking what God has entrusted to our care and turning it from the purposes for which it was given.

(www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/429/wesley-on-money#ixzz2W7Jcct2U)
With that said, I want us to understand that God is not opposed to us enjoying His blessings but that is not the ultimate goal of the resources God has given us. God wants us to be good stewards of the resources God have entrusted to us. God wants us to share things joyfully, blessing others as God has blessed us.

Ownership versus stewardship

- deserve versus blessing
- hoardship versus lordship

**Hoardship versus Lordship**

Let me explain this by giving you example:

The old man had lived in the run-down house for longer than anyone could remember.

It was rumored that he had claimed squatter’s rights years ago, and the legal owners never contested his claim.

From time to time, he shuffled about the neighborhood, pushing a wobbly grocery cart as he searched for discarded treasures.
And regardless of the season, he was always dressed in the same tattered clothes.

When weeks had passed without a sign of him, someone called the police to report his absence.

Upon investigating, the officers discovered his cold, lifeless body. According to the coroner, he had died of starvation.

After the old man’s death, nearby residents petitioned the city to demolish the unsightly house where he had lived for so long. After searching the official records, it was discovered that he was not a squatter, after all.

He had purchased the house and owned it free and clear. But no heirs could be identified and located, so the demolition order was given.

When workers began to dismantle the house, they were startled to find the oddest “insulation” stuffed into the walls, under the floors and crammed into nooks and crevices throughout the structure: authentic stock certificates and other securities worth millions of dollars.

The recluse who had lived in poverty for years, actually had great riches. And though he could afford the finest food,
he ended up starving to death.

This man was not extravagant or boastful, he didn’t squander away his resources, but he failed nonetheless. He hoarded his resources. The old man was rich in possessions, yet utterly poor because he did not use what was in his hands. As a steward he failed miserably, failing to use the phenomenal resources at his disposal. This story reminds us that worth is gained in what we use, not in what we hold.

Jesus told the story of a rich man whose fields produced an excellent crop: Upon seeing his bounty, the man thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” So he decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to store his grain and goods...then he could take life easy. Life had presented him with an extraordinary blessing: a crop so abundant that he didn’t have room to contain it.
And in the midst of this opportunity he asked an important question:

What shall I do?

Be he arrived at the worst possible conclusion:

I'll keep it for myself.

He saw the bounty as something to benefit himself exclusively.

He thought that the amazing crop was something he deserved, failing to see that it resulted from factors completely in God’s control, not his own.

You see he was more concerned with “hoardship” than lordship.

Remember what Mike shared last week, God uses a giver.

God can take what we give and multiply it many times over.

Little things can make a big difference.

David had a sling shot and a few stones at his disposal, but God was able to use them to defeat Goliath.

A young man had a five loaves and two fish and Jesus blessed them and fed thousands.

In the stewardship of resources it is so true that “little is much if God is in it.”
In the stewardship of resources it is vital to think biblically.

Remember to use things and love people, not vice versa.

Once while Jesus was teaching the multitudes, he was interrupted by a man who blurted out, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

Jesus responded with words that exposed the man’s true problem of greed.: “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

What a powerful summation of what matters.

It’s not about things; it’s about people.

It’s not about us; it’s about God.

As a summary, I think the real question is:

How can we be rich toward God?

It’s all about stewardship and realizing all that we have belongs to God and we are simply God’s caretakers.
Richness toward God comes through seeing everything as a gift from God's hand.

Whatever we receive is an expression of God’s love, and evidence of God’s grace.

Every possession is entrusted to us to steward and enjoy and use for God’s purposes.

Richness toward God comes through seeking God’s direction before settling on decisions…seeking first the kingdom of God.

Whenever we receive windfall blessings, the first order of business is to ask, “Lord, what is your purpose in this? What do you want me to do?

Richness toward God comes through caring more about giving than getting.

The challenge is to think inclusively about others instead of exclusively about ourselves.

I want you to take a few minutes and prayerfully think about the resources God has put at your disposal.
Are you using them in a way that is pleasing to God?

Are you seeking God’s wisdom in how to best use them?

Are you hoarding them for your own use or are you sharing them for the sake of others?

Prayer:

Lord we come this morning seeking our most powerful resource, You. We come seeking your guidance and wisdom in being good stewards of all you have entrusted to us. Lord all you have given us is a sign of your love and care, help us to share these blessing with others as we seek to show them who you are by sharing our blessings with others. Help us to realize our worth comes from being loved by you, being children of God, and not from our worldly possessions. Help us to realize you are all we need as we pass through this world to our eternal life in heaven.