

November 16, 2025

Matthew 6:19-24:

The One Who Owns All

- I. Don't Be a Scrooge
- II. We Belong to the One
- III. Serving God with *His* Things
- IV. Content with Eternity

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 N. Oakland Avenue
Decatur Illinois 62526

The One Who Owns All

Matthew 6:19–24

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

If you're like me and enjoy a good cartoon, you probably remember Scrooge McDuck, the richest duck in the world. Diving headfirst into his vault that was filled to the brim with money, he'd shout, "Bless me bagpipes!" while swimming through gold coins like water. He'd pop up, feathers sparkling with dollar signs, and declare, "I'm the richest duck in the world!" Then he'd go right back to guarding it all. He'd count every coin, lock every vault, and be afraid someone else might take what was "his."

I. Don't Be a Scrooge

It's easy to laugh at Scrooge McDuck, but if we're honest, we all know that feeling. We all know the need to hold on tight, to measure security by what we can count. There's a certain comfort in numbers, a full bank account, a stocked pantry, and a well-padded plan for the future. Jesus addresses that very impulse in Matthew 6. He says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Jesus isn't condemning wealth itself. He's exposing how easily wealth can become idolatry. He is exposing the sneaky temptation to believe that if we just have a little more savings and security, we'll finally be at peace. But the problem isn't possession; it's the position. When what we own takes the place of the One who owns us, and it often does, our hearts shift from Heaven to earth, from trust in God to the illusion of control over our own lives.

In contrast to the words of Jesus, Oscar Wilde once said, "When I was young, I thought money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old, I know that it is." He meant it as a joke, but Christ our Lord would tell us there's nothing funny about it. Money, possessions, and things in themselves are not evil, but they make terrible masters. They promise freedom and deliver fear. They can even make us see other people not as neighbors to love but as obstacles to our success. It can cause us not only to take advantage of others for our own gain, but also to shift our priorities from the things of the Kingdom of God to the created things of this world.

This danger is very real and very easy to slip into. Even the greatest steward of the gifts of God can be tempted to put their faith, trust, and hope in that which is given rather than the Giver. The luxuries of this life, especially in our time, are extremely enticing. After all, that's what they are designed to be. The constant pull to compare ourselves to what we might call the "Hollywood lifestyle" is forced into our daily rhythm by advertisements, social media, television, and the like. This is nothing new; rather, it advances over time. Every advertisement, every scroll through social media, every highlight reel of someone else's "perfect" life is meant to stir up that old Scrooge inside of us. It is meant to stir up the sinful desire to believe happiness

can be bought, measured, or displayed. The world preaches a daily sermon that we are what we own. But Jesus preaches a better one: We belong to the One who owns it all. So don't be a Scrooge, clutching what cannot last. Rest instead in the hands of the Savior who provides for all our needs of body and soul.

II. We Belong to the One

In our Old Testament lesson for today, the stark contrast to Scrooge McDuck is displayed. Scrooge lived in abundance yet feared losing what he had; the widow of Zarephath lived in scarcity yet trusted the God who provides. Scrooge clutched gold coins that could never satisfy; the widow opened her hands and found that God Himself was enough. When Elijah arrived at her doorstep, she was preparing what she thought would be her last meal. It would be a handful of flour, a few drops of oil, and then the end. Yet in that moment of hopelessness, God invited her to do what seems impossible: to give away what little she had and trust that He would supply the rest. He did then, and He continues to supply for His children.

He does not do this because of how great we are but simply because we belong to the One who has given everything to redeem us as His own. The widow's jar never ran empty because her God never runs out of mercy. And neither does our jar run empty. The same Lord who increased her flour and oil has poured out something far greater for us in the fullness of His love in Jesus Christ. We are the redeemed people of God. He withholds nothing, not daily bread, not forgiveness, not even His own Son. That's why we can trust Him with everything. The hands that were stretched out to feed a widow are the same hands stretched out to save the world that is in desperate need of forgiveness.

Though it is not our appointed text, Jesus continued His sermon after exhorting believers to store up Heavenly treasures rather than earthly ones by saying,

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these things will be added to you.”

This is what it means to belong to the One who owns all. The widow trusted, not because she saw abundance, but because she knew the promises of God. In the same way, our Lord calls us to let go of the anxious care that so easily rules our hearts. We often worry as though everything depends on us and our effort, our work, and our control. The hard-to-swallow truth is that everything, and I mean everything, rests in the hands of the God who provides. Luther once said that this kind of worry accomplishes nothing, and that true faith learns to rest in God's providence. He wrote:

“Since you now see that there is no use in it, and your caring (about your possessions) does not avail, why do you not let it alone and turn your thoughts upon having the kingdom of God? For he will give to you; but not because of your caring, even though

you should work. For such care accomplishes nothing; but the care does that belongs to your office; and to the kingdom of God, it belongs that you do what is commanded you, preach and propagate the word of God, serve your neighbor according to your calling, and take what God gives you. For those are the best possessions that are not thought about, but are bestowed and providential. . .”

III. Serving God with *His* Things

If everything truly belongs to God, then what we call “ours” is really His in our hands. Therefore, every possession becomes a tool for His service. True stewardship does not hide or cling to possessions, but it gives and cares. It is not ruled by the fear of loss but by the freedom of faith. Instead of clutching our gifts in anxious self-protection, we hold them with open hands, knowing they were never truly ours to begin with. Whether we find ourselves scraping by or blessed with abundance, whether we live in a humble apartment or in a mansion with a hundred rooms, everything we have comes from the same gracious Giver. All of it, whether it be our homes, income, talents, or time, is meant to serve His glory and the good of others.

We are called to trust that no matter what happens, all those things have been given to us to be used for His glory and for the furthering of His Kingdom. When our minds are changed by the Spirit to see those things that we have in this light, the gifts of God take on a whole new meaning where, like Luther said, we cast our cares and anxieties onto the Lord and continue to operate as His Children in a world that otherwise seeks after more and more.

So, what does this look like in everyday life? It isn’t the command to sell all that you have, nor is it the burden of some twisted monastic poverty. It is something far more ordinary. It looks like a mother folding laundry and praying for her children as she does it. It looks like a father who works long hours, not to store up treasures, but to provide for his family and give thanks for the strength God supplies. It looks like a young person sharing their time or talents for the good of the church, a retiree who uses extra time to visit the lonely, a Christian business owner who treats employees with fairness and compassion, and a congregation that sees every dollar and every hour as a way to serve the Gospel.

It’s not grand gestures or dramatic sacrifice that mark a good steward, but the steady rhythm of faith expressing itself in love. Wherever the believer lives out his or her vocation with gratitude and trust, there stewardship is found and there Christ is glorified. All this, done not by coercion or guilt, but because the Scriptures teach, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

IV. Content with Eternity

Paul also writes in our Epistle lesson, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. . . In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Paul knew what it was to have everything and what it was to have nothing. Yet his confidence did not come from

circumstance but from Christ. The secret of contentment is not the ability to endure hardship, nor is it the ability to enjoy abundance, but it is the assurance that Christ is enough. He is our strength in need, our humility in abundance, our peace in all things. When we have Him, we already have more than the world could ever give.

That kind of contentment cannot be bought or achieved. Rather, it is the work of the Spirit in the heart that has the certainty of faith that it has been redeemed by grace. In the forgiveness of all our sins, Christ gives us peace in the hope of Heaven. This contentment in knowing where we will be when we die cannot be shaken by loss or gain. Whether our jars feel full or empty, our confidence rests not in what is in the jar, but in the God who fills it now and in eternity.

This is the comfort of all Christian stewardship: that the One who owns all things has already given us Himself. He who was rich became poor so that we, through His poverty, might become rich. The hands of our Lord Jesus were stretched out on a cross to redeem the world, and from those hands still flow every good and perfect gift. Therefore, we live not in fear of loss but in freedom of faith. We give because we have been given everything. We rejoice because our treasure is eternal. And we praise the greatest cheerful Giver of all— our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Pastor Lucas Abbott