

All In Matt. 21:33-46



If I use the phrase, “All In” no doubt
it will mean different things
to different people.

It could be statement about
being invited to a Panther’s game on Sunday
—“oh I’m all in!”

It could be a reaction to the request
to help fund the charity golf tournament.
Maybe you think of the MSNBC show
with Chris Hayes
or maybe
you’ve come across the book
by Mark Batterson, *All In*,
that claims you are just one decision away
from a totally different life.

Then there’s that rap song, All In by Lil Yatchy
or maybe, *All In*
sounds like a stewardship slogan...

If you thought it, you were right,
we’re beginning our season of stewardship
and we want you *All In*.
Our session and staff want all of us
to be *All In*.

And just to get you even more excited
than you already are about stewardship,
Starbucks has decided
to partner with us here at FPC
and so, let me unveil...
because this is a game changer
for our Stewardship season,
let me unveil that our pledge cards
are now available in Pumpkin Spice!!!



That’s right, Pumpkin Spice pledge cards are here!

This is pretty amazing, isn't?

Yeah, no.
I know, that was just a cheap, wonderful shot
at you PSL people out there
—but I love you and I do,
love pumpkin.
But let's get back **to the real reason for the season**
as churchy people like to say,
let's get back to stewardship.

Once I was in a church
where the minister stood up
at the time of the offering
and said, "The good news is
we can reach our goal
and fund this project.
We have all the money we need.
The bad news is it is still in your pocket!"

That's what we all think of when we talk
about stewardship, right?

But it is more than that,
so much more than that.

Stewardship is all about
taking care of something that isn't yours.
Which if we think about it,
most of really don't do much of.
We tend to take care of the cars **we** drive
or the houses we own
—*or the houses we make payments on*
in order to own.
Children are about the only things we will say
that are more a gift and not ours—
and that's only when they are behaving.

So, instead of stewards
it seems that we might think
of ourselves as owners, don't we?



Our very first story
in our scripture though,
tries to make clear
that everything around us
was created by someone so much bigger than us.
And that it was made out of love and it was good

—oh and we are here just to take care of it.

That is our first calling,
our first vocation as humans,
to express divine love and care
toward every bit of creation.

You could say that stewardship is
the, “spiritual condition of living
as if the fleshy attachments to property
weren’t so fleshy;
[it’s] believing that everything you own
actually belongs to God.”¹

But instead of stewardship
being our guiding vocation,
it sort of feels like this churchy thing
no one really wants to talk about—

and maybe that’s because we have a twisted,
sorta narrow view of stewardship.
And seriously, who can blame you
if you don’t like talking about
stewardship in church?
Most of us think of stewardship equals
the church asking for money,
and it is no wonder.

Church has a serious track record
of making the end result to get wealthy:

¹ Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffey Dictionary of Theological Terms. Ed. Rolf A. Jacobson Ausburg Books, Minneapolis 2008



Maybe it started in Acts,
when Peter and John were laying their hands
on people and they were filled with the Holy Spirit
—remember how Simon the magician
came up to Peter and said,
“I must have some of that power
—name your price and I will buy it.” (Acts 8).

As the late Thomas Are says,
**“in one way or the other,
the church has put faith and salvation
on the altar to be bought and sold.
While the name has changed,
the game has been to raise money
for the church.”²**



In the time of Constantine
raising money for the church
was touted as *security*.
After that it was *legacy*,
where thousands of people
left all they had to the church
in hope of a guaranteeing their salvation.

² Thomas L. Are, My Gospel of Stewardship Lay Renewal Publications, Tucker, GA 1977



Then the name of the game
became indulgences.
Johann Tetzel, a Roman Catholic Dominican friar,
who later become
the Grand Commissioner
for indulgences in Germany,
expanded the idea
that you could buy pardon
not only for sins
you have already committed,
but also for sins
you think you might commit.
I need that.



Same game under a different name.
After indulgences it was the sale of relics.
I mean if just touching the hem Jesus's robe
could heal *what ails ya*,
think of what the whole robe could do!
So the church went in the business
of robe and chalice and splinters of the cross-selling.
There was enough wood from the cross sold
to rebuild the ark.
There were enough chalices hawked
to stage a royal banquet in every house in Rome.



The named changed a little under Henry VIII;
now it was called law.
Let's use force and watch
the church thrive,

not because of the spiritual leadership
but because of Henry's soldiers;
everyone kept their tithe
because the troops collected it.



Now we enter the new world
where you could rent a pew
or enter a raffle or go to a rummage sale.

Or what about the time when the church said,
if you gave to the church,
we could defeat social evils.
Not convinced?
Well it didn't last long either
so the name changed again
but the game stayed the same.

This time we hitched our church wagon
to the *tithing star*.



Tithe to the church and God will bless you
—you'll be rich in no time.
Sounds familiar—
we've been faithful to God for years
and just bought a new 3,000 square ft. home;
we are so #blessed.

**This is just a glimpse at the church's long history
of selling God's grace.³**

It's never been about tithing or buying a relic
or renting a pew or paying for sins;
grace has always worked slap up against
every bit of that and smothered it all
with radical extravagance.

Our stewardship can't be

³ The historical run-through is taken in large part from Thomas L. Are's *My Gospel on Stewardship*, 1977

giving to the church
with the expectation
of getting something from God in return;
whether it is the promise of well-being
or the promise of salvation.



Biblical giving to God
is about stewardship,
understanding that grace
is neither bought nor sold.

And *my gospel* tells me
that the grace of kingdom is different empire
that the grace of kingdom is different than democracy;

my gospel tells me
that there is no way
to earn favor or love
when it comes to God.

My gospel tells me there is no way
to buy or tithe my way into God's kingdom.

Now you might be thinking,
since when is the good news, *your gospel*, H?

Well, you're right.
I'm borrowing a phrase from Paul,
who writes in Romans,
"...on the day when according to *my gospel*,
God will judge the hidden truth
about human beings thought Christ Jesus."

It is there, when Paul uses the phrase,
my gospel; I think he is saying
the way he understands the gospel is...
I think Paul calls us
to have a personal understanding of the gospel,
our own gospel.

***Not in a way that means we possess the gospel,
but in a way that the gospel possesses us.***

So how does the gospel possess you?

I believe that our gospel
comes from our lived experience
and conviction about God
and about the good news of Jesus.
Which is why in my gospel,
All In, means just that.

It is the grace of God—radical grace
(as if there was ever anything
but radical grace when it come to our Lord)
but the radical grace of God
tells me that All are In.

My understanding of gospel,
my good news is that,
I don't and **you** don't
and **we** don't and **they** don't
—buy or tithe or bargain
our way into God's love
or God's kingdom.
We are already *all in*.



And there's not one thing you can do
to get your way out of God's kingdom.
"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world and those who live in it," says Psalm 24.
That's what I believe.
That's my gospel, *All In*.

But it also means that God
is *All In* for **me**,
for **you**, for **us**,
for **them**.

It means that God is the active force
of love and goodness and justice
in this world
—and in Jesus,
God was saying I'm committed to you
and to this world I have created.
I'm not a god who lives

far off in the heavens
and rolls a dice
to decide where a hurricane will land.

I'm not a god who is spiteful
and waits for you to mess up.
In Jesus I am *All In*,

God says, I want to show you
that the way to me
is together.
The way to kingdom is stewardship.
And stewardship is taking care of each other
and this world
so that you can
feel, touch, taste and see
my love with and for you.

Which means that when it comes to stewardship
we should be *All In*.

We [sang/heard sung] at the beginning of this service,
We Are Here, by Alicia Keys
—we are here for all of us,
that's why we are here.

If stewardship is about recognizing
that our truest and first vocation
is to love as God loves
and care for everyone and everything
as God does,
then *All In*, means
we belong to each other,
and are committed to each other
and creation around us;
that's what God intended from the very beginning.

And when we are engaged in God's stewardship
then how we live our lives
in this world becomes synonymous
with living graciously and generously.
Because what else can we say
about all that we have
other than it was a gracious gift?

Stewardship is the act of responding

**to the incredible things God has given us
in God's abundant grace.**

So in some ways my gospel
speaks to stewardship.

Not in the way that says,
you need to give the church money
to build our building or
because we are running a campaign.

The church has done been running campaigns for years
and gotten pretty wealthy—and I don't mean
our church I mean Church, with a capital C.

This *All In* gospel speaks to stewardship
because it makes me aware

that everything here is God's
and God decided long before
there was ever *a me or a you*,
that it was given in love to all us.

And the Holy Spirit was at work
in the lives of so many before us
so that we get to be here
in this place together.

Stewardship is a response
to God's radical grace
that says let's be *All In*, together.

It is out of gratitude

for everything around us
everything that we count as precious,
our family, our friends, our well being
—gratitude for those things—
that for some reason God saw fit to give to us,
for no other reason than because we are here,

it is out of gratitude that stewardship
becomes our gospel,
our vocation, our calling.



Now a word about the scripture.

This Matthew passage
speaks to us of stewardship in a big way.

Matthew loves to tell Jesus stories
that really hit the religious
right in the jugular.

This parable is about us;
and it is about our stewardship.

If this place
that has been gifted to us
is the vineyard,
we've been living pretty well.

So notice when it is time for the harvest,
the parable doesn't say
that the harvest was bad;
in fact we can assume
that the harvest was a good harvest

because when the land owner comes back to collect,
the tenants act out.

They respond in fear,
fear of losing their claim on the land
they fear losing what they have come to see as *theirs*.
And so they attack
the vineyard owner's slaves and collectors.

Why?

Because they've forgotten
that they were only **hired to be caretakers**,
they are not the owners themselves.

Maybe the tenants are scared
that there isn't enough to go around.
Maybe they are scared of the abundance
a good harvest will produce.

It doesn't say.

But what it does tell us
is that these tenants forgot their vocation;

and instead of helping reap the harvest
they set of destroy each other instead.

But we can rewrite the story.

We can rewrite this
so that we are not those kind of tenants;
—we can rewrite this story according
to our gospel and reclaim the gift of vineyard
where the harvest is plentiful,
and where we are generous caretakers
of what we were given.

Doesn't that sound

like the gospel anyway?

Can that be our vocation;
to put aside the role of tenant
and reclaim the role of steward,
to be the generous caretakers
and harvest workers;
to be *All In*?

Can you imagine the grace,

the love, the abundant

harvest of life that is right here,
if we go All In?

In the name of the one who

gives spices their flavor

and pumpkins their color,

and who calls us to be stewards
of each other and our land,
Amen.