For the past two weeks, we have been learning about stewardship and how it is the key to a fulfilling and prosperous life. We learned that the concept of stewardship in the context of the Bible is that of a manager—someone who is given the responsibility to take care of something on behalf of someone else. In our case, we are managers of the life and gifts God has given us; we have been made stewards of the things of the earth such as family, church, jobs, school, and any tangible stuff we may have.

In our previous message last Sunday, we learned an example of a good steward or manager in the life of Joseph of Egypt. His journey is a crazy story of trials and hardships and fulfillment and prosperity. We learned how Joseph could not be robbed of his anointing and the favor God placed upon his life; and no matter where he was or what happened to him, he was always standing firm on God’s promises. And whether he was treated as a slave or object or a criminal, he never stopped being what God made him be: a good, faithful servant. That is why he always prospered despite the people against him and the injustices done to him.

The point from last week’s message was that no matter who is against you and what they bring against you, no one can’t stop God’s favor over your life when you are a faithful steward.

This leads us to todays’ learning: good stewardship is also about sharing our gifts and blessings to make the world a better place.

Let’s pick up where we left last week, with Joseph in jail. Here is what happened next, Genesis 41 (paraphrased),

“While Joseph was still in prison, the Pharaoh had a dream in which he stood by the river and saw seven healthy and well fed cows come from the waters. Afterwards, seven thin and sickly cows came out of the river and ate the healthy ones. In the second dream, he saw seven healthy heads of corn. Then seven thin heads of corn came and swallowed the healthy ones. The following morning Pharaoh called for all the wise men and magicians of Egypt. He recalled the dreams to them but no one could interpret their meanings.

When no one could discern the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams, the chief butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh how he had correctly interpreted the dreams that he and the baker had. He told Pharaoh that the interpretations given to them by Joseph both came true. Hearing this, Pharaoh ordered for Joseph to be brought before him so that he could interpret the dreams concerning the seven cows and heads of corn.

After he had arrived, Pharaoh narrated the dreams to Joseph. Joseph told the Pharaoh that the dreams were of one meaning and that Egypt would experience seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. He also informed Pharaoh that, as God was showing him what He was going to do, Pharaoh should look for a wise man to be put in charge of collecting part of the food throughout Egypt in preparation for the famine.

The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

As we can see, Joseph was brought out of prison to serve the Pharaoh and save the country. He interpreted the Pharaoh’s dream and was then placed in the second-highest office in Egypt to ensure that the people were ready for the oncoming famine.

Here is a man who went from being sold as slave, falsely accused of a crime, and forgotten in prison for years to later become in charge of saving and preserving an entire nation. In any position he found himself, Joseph was fruitful and always a blessing to those around him, be it his family, his owner during his time as a slave, the prison where he was wrongly incarcerated, or Egypt where he ruled.

How was this possible?  Though he suffered much, he never held back his gifts to serve others. He had leadership and business skills and used them to bless his master; he had wisdom and foresight and used them to advise and to save a nation. You see, a good steward is not only one that is nice and kind but also proactive in making things better, making the world a better place.

I think that a reason why we continue to struggle as people and human beings is because we are not good stewards. Instead being generous, kind, and helpful to others, we are greedy, envious, and selfish and become ruined fighting each other. However, when we act in good faith towards each other, we prosper together.

Think of this for a moment. Just as Joseph faithfully stewarded every opportunity he had, what would happen to us if we did the same with ourselves, our family, church, job, school, and all the stuff we have? What would happen if we started living the life -as individuals, family, church- God has spoken to us and begin to manage our gifts, opportunities, and assets with joy and responsibility? How much happier, healthier, satisfied, peaceful, and fulfilled would you be if you knew you were living good and faithfully? What amazing things might happen if we are faithful stewards of what God gives us?

My friends, this is what life is all about, doing our best with what we have and being grateful in everything—even as we may have to overcome injustices and hardship.

Now, I want to share with you something from last year’s stewardship campaign. If you recall, we asked you to complete the sentence “I see a church that…” When we asked this, we were dreaming together about our future and all the possibilities that awaited us. So, it has been a year, and this is what you said back then,

Kay Pratt – I see a church that values every member, regardless of age or sex, and that teaches everyone to love Jesus.

Jodi Ernest - I see a church that is loving, welcoming, and bust at the seams with new families!

Michele Sisson - I see a church that is filled with worshippers who are grateful to be with their “family” once again—praising God for good health, their neighbors, and a new pastor.

Suzanne Smith - I see a church that is ready to open our doors in service to our community.

Mary Rhodes - I see a church that we all worship together with young and old, children and adults, at one time.

Gerald and Dee Lancaster - I see a church that is willing to reach out to our community to grow our church

Beth Steerman - I see a church that is welcoming, loving, and generous.

Don Smith - I see a church that is the “smiley face” of our neighborhood.

Cary Davis - I see a church that wants to serve all types of people, treats everyone the same, and focuses on Christ first.

How are we doing on this? How are we managing our dreams from last year about us today? I think we are doing pretty darn good, and it is not an accident. We have been engaged, active, willing, invested, committed, and we have show up week after week. We did not stop coming to church, serving, giving, and believing. And because of that, here we are today.

I love this because it is an excellent example of good and faithful stewardship (thank you, Kay, for the idea).

My takeaway is this: to reap the blessings and success requires hard work and commitment. Think of what we have learned about and from Joseph. I mean, we can read about him in a few minutes, but his life journey did not happen in a few minutes, hours, weeks, or months, but over a lifetime. In the same way, we have come so far because we have overcome obstacles and remain true to the people God called us to be. We planted the seeds of the dreams God put in our hearts, watered them, and tended to them. That is why we are seeing fruit today. We remained standing on God’s promises and God delivered them.

So, please, believe in what God says about you and for you; stand on God’s promises and be generous in your service. Don’t hold back your goodness and generosity, and always be kind and compassionate, make everything better. Start with yourself, family, church, and your relationships with others. You have everything you need to be fulfilled and prosperous. All you need to do is not give up. And if you fall, get up again and get going. Remember, this is a lifetime kind of a journey.

God used Joseph to save a country from starvation. What is God calling you to do? Be a good steward.