

# Worshipping God by Putting Away Stealing

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**Bible Text:** Luke 18:18-34  
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We turn in sacred scripture to Luke 18. Luke 18:18 through 34. We read this in connection with Lord's Day 42 of the Catechism on the 8th commandment and we consider, we read this passage especially because of verses 18 through 27, which is the record of Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler. Luke 18 beginning at verse 18.

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. 28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. 31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

It's on the basis of this passage of scripture, and on the basis of many passages of scripture that we have the teaching of Lord's Day 42 of the Heidelberg Catechism found on page 23 in the back of the Psalter. Lord's Day 42.

Q. 110. What doth God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. God forbids [and that is the commandment "thou shalt not steal"] not only those thefts and robberies which are punishable by the magistrate; but He comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devices whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves [to take to ourselves] the goods which belong to our neighbor, whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, usury, or by any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness, all abuse and waste of His gifts.

Q. 111. But what doth God require in this commandment?

A. That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may, and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others; further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I want to begin this sermon this morning the same way that I've begun a number of these sermons on the 10 Commandments. Are you thankful? That's where we are in the Catechism. That's the perspective that we are taking as we are working through these 10 Commandments. "I want to show God my thankfulness. He's made me a Christian. I've seen how great my sin and misery is, who I am of myself left to myself outside of Jesus Christ, bondage to sin, dead in trespasses and sins. I've seen Jesus Christ and I've seen how God sent Jesus Christ to be the perfect mediator who saved me from all my sins, who's made the full covering for all my sins, who's imputed to me his perfect life of obedience through faith, and who now also gives me his Holy Spirit who raises me to a new life and who strengthens me in my soul and for all my work to live unto the Lord. I am the adopted child of God. I am a new creature in Jesus Christ and I have the hope of eternal life in glory and I want to show God my thankfulness." That's the attitude of the child of God and the question, the burning question for the child of God is this: how do I do this? I need to know this in order to live and die happily. I need to know this.

Well, you live a life of thankfulness by striving to live a life of good works, heeding the will of God and keeping his commandments, and that's our perspective now as we go through the 10 Commandments. This morning we come to the 8th commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." I think one of the challenges with this 9th commandment this morning is that we can tend to think that we do a pretty good job with this commandment. We can admit that we struggle with some of the other commandments, but with this commandment, "Well, I'm not one who's stealing." What we want to see is that with this 8th commandment, it goes very deep and this 8th commandment goes against our sinful

natures just as much as any of the other nine. This 8th commandment is a commandment that we fail to keep more than we might be inclined to think, and there is much instruction that we need. And again, let me emphasize, this is what we want, we want this instruction because we are thankful and we want to show our thankfulness, and I want to show it in every aspect of my life. I want God's law written on my heart and that's why we joyfully look at another commandment this morning.

We take as our theme, "Worshiping God by Putting Away Stealing." Worshiping God by putting away stealing. We'll look at three things. First, the sin. Second, the calling, the positive calling. And then third, the blessing.

What is this sin of stealing, "Thou shalt not steal"? Well, I think we know generally what the sin of stealing is, even the children know. Stealing is the act of taking to myself that which God has not been pleased to give me. Stealing is that act of taking to myself that which doesn't rightly belong to me. And stealing is taking something that belongs to my neighbor and trying to make it my own. This 8th commandment is in the second table of the law. As such, this 8th commandment has to do in a special way with my neighbor. I am called to love my neighbor as myself and this 8th commandment is a commandment that comes to us and as it relates to our neighbor in this way, that I love my neighbor with regard to his earthly possessions and with regard to his material things. In other commandments, I love my neighbor by honoring his position of authority over me. I love my neighbor by loving his life and protecting his life, doing him good. I love my neighbor by protecting his marriage. And now this commandment, I love my neighbor by loving him in his possessions and with his earthly and material things.

I think we know what stealing is: robbing a bank, shoplifting something from Meijer, selling fraudulent merchandise, cheating on a test at school, stealing the work of another student calling it my own, slacking off at work and not giving my boss an honest effort, fudging the numbers on my taxes in this coming tax season, stealing tools out of the shop, borrowing them and not returning them, taking advantage of my neighbor with tricky and dishonest business practices, right? Selling him things on Facebook that's junk all the while pretending it's not junk, ripping him off, not promoting his advantage in every way I can or may. All these things are stealing. I think we know this well. What I want to focus on this morning, at least a little bit, is this: why is this sin and what lies at the heart of this commandment? Why does the 8th commandment exist? What is the root sin that lies at the bottom of all of these other sins? Why is fudging on your taxes a sin in God's holy eyes?

Well, as we've seen with the other commandments, it goes back to this, it goes back ultimately to my relationship with God himself and it goes back to who God himself is. All these commandments are rooted in God himself and now with this 8th commandment, what we need to see is this: God is the ultimate possessor of all things. God is the Lord of all the possessions that I have in my life and God is the Lord, the Sovereign of all the possessions that my neighbor has in his life, and God calls me to submit to him and serve him by using all my earthly and physical possessions and all my interactions with my neighbor and his possessions in a way that honors him, the Lord of

all things. And then he gives my neighbor the same calling and I recognize that and live accordingly.

The Lord is the owner of all things. He possesses everything and everything we have is not ultimately ours, it is the Lord's. That's fundamental. There is nothing in your life, child of God, that you have that you can truly ultimately say, "This is mine." There is really only one thing that you can say that about, that this is mine, and that is this, your sins. Your sins are your own. That is our position before God. All we have to ourselves are our sins but even there, God in his amazing grace, he even takes our sins and he makes them his own so that he could bear the punishment for them. This is how we stand before God. This is the point. All our possessions, all our clothing, our cars, our house, our bank account, all our money, our health, our strength, our intellectual gifts, our time, they are all God's. They all belong to him and he has given them to us, and one day he may also take them away. That's what Job had to confess with all his wealth and prosperity in Job 1, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. My children, they were the Lord's. My cattle, they were the Lord's. My servants, they were the Lord's. The Lord gave and the Lord took away."

The Lord is the owner of all these things and who are we? We are but stewards, and this idea of stewardship is really what gets at the heart of this 8th commandment. And you children know what a steward is. Just think of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, taking care of everything that Potiphar owned. Joseph was a steward. Think of Jesus and he talks about stewards in a bunch of his parables. A steward is a servant. He has a master and a steward is one unto whom the master has entrusted some of his possessions. The steward ultimately didn't own anything. The master owned everything. But the steward served the master and the master put things into the steward's hands for the steward to work with, and the steward was obligated to use the things entrusted to him, not for himself, but for his master and his master's advantage. And the steward would have to answer to his master for how he was a steward of these things that were given him. There would be a day of reckoning. There would be a time when the master would come back and check in on the steward and the steward would have to give an account of his stewardship.

That's what you and I are. We are the stewards, the servants of God. And in a special way, as those who have been purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who have been brought into the house of God, we are very directly the stewards of Jesus Christ, who has made himself our Lord and Master. Everything we have belongs to the Lord and everything we have is to be used in his service and for his advantage and how he wants us to use it. Nothing we have belongs to ourselves. And our calling, particularly as God's redeemed people, is to serve him with these earthly possessions and the gifts and abilities in the time that he has given us. And God has given us each our own unique gifts and abilities. He's given us our own unique possessions. He's given us our own unique time on this earth. And our calling as stewards is to use what he has given us in the service of his glory and according to his will.

And so what now is the sin of the 8th commandment? What ultimately is stealing? What gets at the heart of stealing? I think at the heart we could express it this way: stealing is my act of not being a faithful steward, not having the attitude of a steward. Stealing is my act of taking what God has given me and using it not in the service of God, not in the service of Jesus' glory, but in the service of myself and my own comfort and my own glory. Stealing is my activity of using God's gifts, God's money, God's clothing, God's car, God's house, God's intellect, and all these things that belong to God that he has entrusted to me and using them not for him, but for myself. Stealing involves even this attitude, "God hasn't made me rich. I've made myself rich. My industry, my wits, my diligence, I've made myself rich." And that's stealing the glory from God.

From a slightly different point of view, stealing is the outworking of my attitude of not being happy with the position God has given me as a steward, not being content with my particular station. Stealing is the activity of resenting the responsibilities God has given me, being jealous of what God has given my neighbor and then trying to determine for myself what I'm going to be a steward of so that I steal from my neighbor because what lies at the bottom of that? I say to myself, "I will determine what I will be a steward of. God won't determine it for me. I will. I will take matters into my own hands. I will be dishonest in my dealings. I will make myself better off as a steward." And we're not happy with how God has been treating us as his steward, and besides that, we've totally forgotten how rich we already are in Jesus Christ.

From another point of view, stealing is also this: my act of hindering my neighbor, my act of hindering my neighbor from being the steward that he is called to be. That's why the Catechism says that we are to promote our neighbor's advantage as much as we are able because not only do I have to be faithful with what I've been given, but as a steward and looking at everyone else as a steward, I recognize who my neighbor is as a steward of God and I want my neighbor to make the most of the things he's been given because in the end, it all belongs to God and God has divided everything as he has seen fit in a way that's right to God. And everyone, in a certain sense, is a steward of God's possessions and for the Lord's glory, I help my neighbor serve God with what God has entrusted to him. I want God to receive the glory and so I promote my neighbor as much as I am able in his calling as a steward. I don't take advantage of him, but I seek his good because everything that we're handling in this whole interaction is of the Lord and has been distributed as he has seen fit to distribute and I honor that.

In the end, it's the same thing that we've been seeing throughout these 10 Commandments. Stealing is just another form of putting myself before God. Not humbling myself before God. Not serving him as his steward, but serving myself. Self-worship, pressing earthly and material things into the service of my pleasure, my glory, my comfort, and my praise. You know, we might be tempted to say that the root of stealing is a love of money, right, we steal because we love money, but the reality is even that love of money is itself rooted in the love of self. When I am greedy, it's not just because I love money, but it's because I worship myself and I'm not exercising the heart of a steward.

Now we see an example, a powerful example of everything that we've just been considering in Luke 18 and the rich young ruler that Jesus came across. We know this story about the rich young ruler. He was a rich man. He had many possessions. God had given him many things of which to be a steward. And the rich young ruler was an outwardly pious man. Evidently, this man thought that he had kept all the commandments of God. He thought he was pretty good stuff. This is how people thought about themselves in the church in Jesus' day. On the outside, he looked just as good as anybody else, if not better. But Jesus was able to see right through this man and Jesus saw the problem very clearly. What was the man's problem? The problem was that he loved his money and he refused to look at himself as a steward. Oh yes, this young man was confident that he hadn't stolen, we have no reason to believe that he had gotten his wealth through improper means, we don't read that he had robbed or oppressed others to become rich. Maybe he had worked hard, maybe he was born rich, but the problem with the man was this: he felt that the riches he had were his own riches. He did not think of himself as a steward.

He loved his money more than serving the Lord and loving Jesus, and the point of the passage is this, at least part of it, a lot of this passage has to do with discipleship and Jesus gives himself as an example. The whole passage we read is intimately connected. Peter responds to what Jesus says and then Jesus tells him about his own discipleship, you might say, to the Lord, laying down his life. "This is what it's going to cost you. My life is not my own. I'm a steward and this flesh and blood that I have received and I have taken upon myself is to be pressed into the service of God's will." But the point of the passage is this, at least in part, is this when Jesus says, "Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," when Jesus says that, he's exposing the greedy, self-centered heart of this man. What happened when Jesus said he had to give all his money to the poor? We read that the man became very sorrowful and what's the idea? The idea is the man said to himself, "I don't want to do that. I don't want to sell all that I have. I love my money too much. Even if Jesus himself should tell me to do it, I won't do it. I love my money," at least at this point in his life, that's what he was saying, "I love my money more than Jesus." This man hadn't come to terms with the fact that Jesus was Lord over his possessions and that the man himself was but a steward.

The point is not that we all must live an ascetic lifestyle. Jesus is not saying that God's people must give up all their wealth, but Jesus is saying, "You'd better be ready to serve me and me alone with your money, and you'd better recognize that your money is not your own. Don't get too attached to your money because soon enough I might be asking you to give it to the poor. And if you can't do that for my sake, then we know what kind of a steward you are, a faithless steward." You see, this gets to the heart of the issue. You are only a steward. What you have isn't yours, it's Jesus', and you must use it in the way that Jesus instructs you to use it. Serve Jesus and only Jesus with the possessions he has given you.

And when we have all these thoughts before us, it becomes easy then to think of all other, all kinds of examples of stealing. Think of a young person, a young adult who has many

gifts and many abilities that God has given him, natural gifts and abilities, and he's lazy. That's stealing. Maybe he's in high school and he's thinking about college and maybe what he will go to college for and all that he's thinking about is how he can use his gifts and abilities for his own advantage. Young people, this is a word for you, this is something you need to hear as a young person to shape you going forward: your gifts, your intellect, your abilities are not your own. As we mature, this is one great truth that we need to be confronted with. How do you decide whether to become a mechanic or a painter or a doctor or a teacher or a minister? Well, one of the questions that we could ask is this: do I have a passion for this work? And do I have an opportunity to do this work? These are fair questions to ask. But one of the most basic questions we need to ask is this: how can I serve God with these gifts and abilities? What are my God-given gifts and what are the ways in which I can best use them to God's glory?

You see, through your education, God is shaping you as one of his stewards. He is shaping you for a place of stewardship, and you need to look at what God has entrusted to your care, your callings and responsibilities, your opportunities, your resources, your personality, your interests, and you need to ask yourself, how would God have me serve him as his steward? That's the heart of the Christian. If you have all kinds of gifts and abilities, but you don't use them or develop them, you're stealing from God. If you use your gifts, but you don't use them for God's sake but only to enrich yourself, that's stealing. If you use your gifts, but you become so addicted to your work, and you emphasize industry, right, a strong Calvinistic work ethic, but you become so addicted to your work that you neglect your family and your place in the church, that's stealing too. That's obviously not living for God's glory either because you're doing what you want to do, and you're not coming to terms with all the callings God has given you, and how to serve God in them all. If you foolishly take on debt, and you make yourself a victim of credit card debt, you're stealing. You're not being an intelligent steward. This is why we go to school, in order to be good stewards of everything.

I suppose the point is this: everything we do with our possessions, with our finances, has a spiritual component to it. You plan to buy a car, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to go to college, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to buy a house, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to take on debt, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to buy groceries at the grocery store, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to go to Culver's for dinner, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to buy a case of beer, that's a spiritual activity. You plan to buy a pack of smokes, that's a spiritual activity. My wife and I are in the middle of planning a vacation for the end of April, that's a spiritual activity for us, everything from how much the hotel costs to what we will be doing on Sunday as we take that Sunday and worship with others maybe and take it off, take Sunday off the pulpit. It's all a spiritual activity and I'm called, we're called to be a steward of each day that God has given us. Are you using what God has given you in a way that gives him pleasure, that honors him? All things were created by him and for him, for his pleasure they are and were created. Are we now using the things that God has created and entrusted to our stewardship for his pleasure? It's all related to the 8th commandment.

As I prepared this sermon, I came across a description of how people were behaving in the time period leading up to the 2008 recession. People were making all kinds of greedy decisions. Many people who borrowed loans were lying on their loan applications. They lied about their incomes. They lied about their assets. They lied about their employment. They lied about their credit history. One statistic I read was this, 70% of mortgages that defaulted in the first year of the recession turned out to have false information on the original loan application. Yes, that involves lying, lying to the bank, which is not loving your neighbor as yourself, not loving the bank, that's the next commandment, but it also involves stealing, not being content as a steward of what God has been pleased to give me in these circumstances. And we should look at that and say, God is the one who distributes. God is the owner of all things. God is the one who makes rich and who makes poor and my calling is simply to be a faithful steward.

So that's the sin of stealing, one aspect, there are different aspects to look at. That's the approach we've taken this morning. Obviously there's more we could talk about. Let's move on now and let's look at the positive calling. In order to be that faithful steward, in order to keep this 8th commandment, what must we do? I have a few things we can mention, four things. First, our calling is to work and we emphasize that, we know that, the Bible emphasizes that. Ephesians 4:28, "Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth." We're called to work. That's what stewards do. We don't bury our talent under the sand. We work not for money, although God does use money as means, but we work for the Lord. We work as unto the Lord. We work as stewards and we work also so that we might be able to provide for those who are in need. I work hard for God's sake and the neighbor's sake. I'm living out of love for my neighbor. That's the attitude of a steward. And as we work as stewards, God supplies us what we need to live as stewards.

So our calling is to work. Second, our calling is to trust the Lord and that's something that needs to be emphasized because this is the reality what I'm emphasizing to you right now is not how the world in which we live operates, all right? Maybe we've already sensed that in the course of this sermon. That's what makes this commandment a challenging thing. The world around us, the people you interact with in the world, have lost completely the idea of stewardship. The culture we live in is atheistic. Man lives for himself and as a result, even our culture encourages us to be greedy. The world around us encourages us to take advantage of our neighbor if we have the opportunity. If I can make a quick dollar off a naive and unsuspecting neighbor, then good for me. If I've made myself to be smarter than him so that I can take advantage of him in this business transaction and use him to make myself richer, pat myself on the back. That's the world's way of thinking. I think the feeling we often have is this: if I want to compete in the world, I need to take on that same attitude, right? I don't want to be a loser in the world. I don't want to get burned by others so maybe I need to do the same thing and start taking advantage of others as well. That's why the command here is to trust the Lord. Who provides me what I need? Yes, the Lord commands me to work, but he doesn't give me that allowance to take advantage of the neighbor, even an ungodly neighbor, in order to

make a profit. Don't be tempted to think that you need to rip someone off in order to get what you need in life. God says, "Trust me. I will provide."

That's the second thing, trust. The third thing we must do is this: we must promote the advantage of our neighbor as much as possible. That's at the heart of a true steward, especially within the church. Look at everyone around you, beloved. We are all stewards of God and if I truly care about the Lord's glory and the Lord's honor, then not only will I strive to be a faithful steward, but I will also give myself for you that you might be a faithful steward in your calling and station. And then in the world, we need to have that same attitude, loving our neighbor, loving our enemy. Love the neighbor. He's a steward of God's gifts, whether he acknowledges it or not. These are God's gifts, God's possessions, and if I can help my neighbor to be faithful with the things God has given him, that's well pleasing to God and that expresses true love for the neighbor.

The Catechism explicitly mentions this point, "that I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may, and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others." Well, how do we promote our neighbor's advantage? First of all, it starts with being happy about what the neighbor has. I don't begrudge him. I don't envy him. I'm not covetous but I am truly happy at his success or happy with the gifts that she has. And I see the weight of responsibility that they have with those gifts to serve the Lord and I recognize God gives me what I can handle and the Lord, they need grace for what the Lord has given to them. I'm happy. I truly want him to be successful. I want him to be faithful.

Second, it means to promote our neighbor's advantage means we help our neighbor to protect his goods or increase his goods. If I find something that was lost, I strive to return it to my neighbor. If I borrow a tool from my neighbor, I strive to return it undamaged. If I see a danger to my neighbor in his possessions, I warn him, right? Maybe you want to sell a car. I want to sell this car and get rid of it but now my neighbor comes and he's interested in it and now here I am, I'm going to be honest with you and tell you what's wrong with it. I want you to know what you are buying so that you don't buy something you don't want. I'm looking out for you. I'm just being honest. Maybe you do want it. Maybe you want it even more. How does the Lord lead? Let me just be faithful. Maybe a boss has to say, "I need to pay my employees a fair and appropriate wage even if it means that my income isn't so great this year." That's the weight of responsibility maybe.

And third of all, it means actually promoting my neighbor's advantage. Maybe I see my neighbor is trying to sell his car but he's selling it for much less than it's really worth. I promote his advantage by letting him know that even if I'm the one who wants to buy it. Now he's going to have to consider what he wants to do with my advice. He ultimately needs to determine what's best for him. I can't make his decisions for him. You know, if he's in a pinch, I ought not take advantage of him, right? Maybe giving someone a loan, usury, that's taking advantage of your neighbor in his need. But I need to have the desire of promoting my neighbor's advantage. I deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others. Just to remind us, this is exactly what Jesus teaches his disciples in Matthew 7:12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to

them: for this is," this is the heart of everything," this is the law and the prophets."  
Anything less is stealing.

I don't try to manipulate my neighbor. I don't need to manipulate my neighbor. I'm trusting the Lord and trusting the Lord, knowing who I am in Christ as his child, I have the freedom even to give myself and be spent for the advantage of my neighbor. Imagine selling land, beloved, imagine selling land in order to supply the needs of your fellow church members who are poor. That's not just promoting the advantage of my neighbor, that's also exercising my stewardship in a very striking way. That was Barnabas, wasn't it, in the early New Testament church. This is how I'm a steward of God's possessions at just this time. I sell my land to help those in need. I use my resources. I use my family. I use what God has entrusted to me for the advantage of my neighbor. That's what we're doing with our part of the church budget. That's what we're doing when we're volunteering and for different committees and activities. We're stewards. We're sharing our gifts, using what God has entrusted to us for the advantage of the neighbor.

And then fourth, finally, what is our calling? We've mentioned the calling to work, we've mentioned the calling to trust the Lord, we've mentioned the calling to promote our neighbor's advantage as much as possible, and now fourth, perhaps last of all, we need to remember this, the calling to be thankful. Just remember how Jesus freely gave all of himself for you. Just think, what do I have that I have not first received? Just think, I don't have anything that I have not first received. Jesus shed his blood on the cross to cover my sins and pay my debts and he didn't have to. I have been made rich in Jesus Christ. Look at how Jesus, my elder brother, my head gave himself for the advantage of God's people to the point of giving all his gifts, all his abilities, all his strength, right? Every last ounce of it, so that at the end, all he could do then was give up the ghost. He did that deliberately, but he gave all to be faithful with the people whom God had entrusted to Jesus' stewardship. That's what he was doing. God says, "I give you this people, you be faithful with them." Look at Jesus' stewardship of your soul. All of it, all of your life is a gift of God. And my, your, our blessed sacred calling is to reflect Jesus Christ and live out of Jesus Christ. Am I thinking about taking advantage of my neighbor? Thinking about how I can get ahead in life even though it means leaving my neighbor behind? Don't I know that I can't make myself any whit wealthier or more prosperous than what I already am in Jesus Christ? I already have all things in Jesus Christ so why should I steal? Am I thankful? We come back to that question again. Am I thankful?

Well, that's the calling. There's also a blessing involved in this commandment and the Bible emphasizes this blessing in many different passages. It's really striking. In 2 Corinthians 9:6, the apostle is talking about how Jesus, who was rich, became poor, that we might be made rich, and in that context, he's also encouraging the saints to gather up, lay up in store to supply the needs of the poor. And then we read this, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." In Proverbs 11:24 through 26, we read, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul," the soul that freely gives, "shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be

watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it." And in Malachi 3:10, we read, this is where the people were robbing God because they were not giving him the kind of worship, the kind of gifts that he had commanded them, even though they had those gifts in their power to give, they gave him the sickly animals, and in that context, we read, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Be rich toward God, and he will show you his riches. Serve the Lord, and he will show you that he is a good Master indeed.

He gives us his smile. He gives us his smile and that's all that the steward of the Lord really delights in, is looking for, the smile of the Lord, the smile of my Master. He rewards his stewards, his faithful stewards, richly. What is the blessing? The blessing is hearing those words, "Well done, good and faithful steward, enter into the joy of your Lord." The blessing is living with God. The blessing is enjoying the love and favor of God upon us through Jesus Christ. The blessing is having contentment in my soul. The blessing is knowing God will provide. He is faithful. He will provide. And the blessing is seen, then seen, how God is more true to his word than we could ever imagine. He says, "Prove me. Prove these words and I will open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." And he will pour you out a blessing in the most marvelous and meaningful ways, the ways our new man really wants it, spiritual blessings upon our heads.

We don't have to steal, beloved. You don't have to steal. We have all things in Jesus Christ. Yes, work, trust the Lord, promote the advantage of your neighbor, remember to be thankful and serve him, serve him as the stewards that he, by his grace alone, has made you to be and enjoy serving him. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, thy commandments are very deep, and apart from Jesus Christ, they are a burden and a heavy oppression upon our souls, and they would crush us but we thank thee that we have this perspective when we hear and study thy commandments, that Jesus is our righteousness, and we get to live in the freedom found in Jesus Christ. May we experience that freedom as it pertains to this 8th commandment. Help us, Lord, and strengthen us in the new man to walk in thy ways, and use this preaching to shape our hearts and to shape our lives for what lies before us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*