

Honoring God with the Firstfruits

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-10

August 16, 2026 - Week 3 of Sermon Series: **"Fruitful Stewards"** - Combined Worship Service

Grace and peace to you in the name of God our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what a joy it is this morning to see our two congregations worshipping together as one family in Jesus Christ.

And what a wonderful weekend for us to gather here in Plainview. Around us, our community is celebrating. There are people visiting, families gathering, friends reconnecting, and, of course, there is corn.

So perhaps there could not be a better Sunday for us to hear these words from Proverbs:

"Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce."

Corn is everywhere around us this weekend. And when we look at an ear of corn, we see something very ordinary. But today I want us to see something more. I want us to see a picture of God's grace.

A farmer can prepare the soil. A farmer can plant the seed. A farmer can work long hours. A farmer can care for the field. But the farmer cannot command the rain. The farmer cannot order the sun to shine. The farmer cannot reach underneath the soil and force a seed to come alive.

We work. We prepare. We plan. But life itself is still a gift.

And those of you who have lived many years, who have worked many seasons, who have planted gardens, raised families, built homes, served churches, and walked through both good times and difficult times - you probably understand this better than anyone:

"We do our part, but God gives the growth."

That is why Proverbs first says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart."* And then: *"Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce."*

Do you see the connection? Trust God. Then honor God. Christian giving is not first about money. It is first about trust.

So today, I would like us to remember only three simple things:

First, Remember the Giver

Second, Give God the First and Best

Third, Leave a Legacy of Faithfulness

The key sentence for today is this:

"God does not ask for what is left over; God invites us to honor him with the first and best of what he has already given us."

First, Remember the Giver

My brothers and sisters, stewardship begins with remembering. Before we ask, *"What should I give?"* we should first ask, *"What has God already given to me?"*

Many of you have worked hard for many years. Some of you worked on farms. Some worked in schools. Some worked in businesses, factories, healthcare, offices, homes, churches, and many other places. You got up early. You stayed up late. You raised children. You paid bills. You saved money. You cared for parents. You served your community. You gave to the church. You made sacrifices that perhaps younger generations will never completely know.

And after many years, it is natural to look at what we have and say, *"I worked for this."* Yes, you did. Your work matters. Your sacrifice matters. Your faithfulness matters.

But Scripture invites us to look one step deeper. Who gave us the strength to work? Who gave us breath this morning? Who gave us people to love? Who carried us through seasons when we did not know what would happen next? Who stood with us when the diagnosis came? Who comforted us when someone we loved died? Who provided when the money was tight? Who forgave us when we failed? Who remained faithful when our own faith was weak?

God did.

Perhaps you can look back over fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years and see many different seasons. Some years were abundant. Some years were difficult. Some prayers were answered exactly as you hoped. Some were answered differently. Some doors opened. Some doors closed. Some people came into your life. Some people you loved are no longer sitting beside you. But through every season, God has remained God.

That is why stewardship begins not with a calculator. It begins with memory.

"Remember the Giver."

Remember who carried you. Remember who provided. Remember who forgave. Remember who gave you hope. Remember who brought you this far.

And when we remember the Giver, something happens inside us. Gratitude begins to grow. And when gratitude grows, generosity begins to grow too.

Second, Give God the First and Best

Proverbs says, *"Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce."*

For people living close to the land, the meaning of firstfruits was very clear. The first part of the harvest was offered to God. Not what was damaged. Not what nobody wanted. Not whatever happened to remain after everything else had been used. The first. The best.

Why? Because firstfruits were a statement of faith. Giving the firstfruits was saying, *"God, you are first."* And it was also saying, *"God, I trust you for what comes next."*

That is powerful. When you give from the first part of the harvest, you do not yet know exactly what the rest of the harvest will look like. You are trusting. And that is why biblical giving is so deeply connected to faith.

We sometimes reverse the order. We receive. We spend. We pay. We buy. We take care of this and that. And then at the end we may say, *"Is there anything left for God?"*

But firstfruits turns the order around. Firstfruits says, *"Before everything else competes for my attention, I will remember God."* That is the heart of faithful giving.

And I want to be careful here. Especially for those living in retirement, sometimes finances must be managed very carefully. Some live on a fixed income. Some have medical expenses. Some are helping children or grandchildren. Some are wondering how long savings will need to last. God knows that.

This sermon is not about comparing one person's offering with another person's offering. God is not asking us to compete. God is asking us to be faithful.

For one person, faithfulness may mean beginning regular giving. For another, it may mean continuing a practice that has been part of life for fifty years. For another, faithfulness may involve giving time. For another, sharing wisdom. For another, helping someone quietly. For another, including the church or another ministry in future estate plans. For another, using a home, a car, a workshop, a kitchen, or a skill to serve someone.

Firstfruits is bigger than a number. Firstfruits asks, *"Does God receive first place in my life?"*

And we must also remember this: we do not give to make God love us. We do not give to purchase blessings. We do not give one hundred dollars hoping that God will send us two hundred dollars back. That is not the gospel.

God's grace cannot be purchased. God's love cannot be bought. Salvation is not for sale. We give because God has already given. We love because God first loved us. We are generous because God has been generous to us.

Third, Leave a Legacy of Faithfulness

Now I want to speak especially to those who have walked with Christ for many years.

Many of you have already given greatly to the church. You have served on Session. You have served as deacons. You have taught Sunday school. You have sung in choirs. You have played instruments. You have prepared meals. You have cleaned kitchens. You have repaired buildings. You have written checks. You have attended meetings. You have prayed through church conflicts. You have welcomed pastors. You have said goodbye to pastors. You have buried dear friends. You have kept coming back. And through changing times, you have helped keep the light of Christ shining.

I want you to hear this clearly today:

"Your years of faithfulness matter."

They matter to this church. They matter to the generations coming after you. They matter to God. But your ministry is not finished.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts God is asking you to give now is the gift of legacy. And legacy is much more than money.

A Christian legacy is what remains in another person's faith because you were here.

Perhaps your legacy will be telling a younger person, *"Let me tell you how God was faithful to me."*

Perhaps your legacy will be praying faithfully for your grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Perhaps it will be encouraging a younger church leader when they are discouraged. Perhaps it will be sharing wisdom without demanding that everything be done exactly the way it was done forty years ago. Perhaps it will be saying, *"We built this church for the next generation. Now let us give them room to serve Christ in their generation."*

That is legacy.

And this brings me back to the corn. Look at a mature ear of corn. It represents a harvest. It is the result of a season of growth. But inside that harvest is also seed.

"The harvest is not only the end of one season. The harvest contains the beginning of another season."

That is a beautiful picture of Christian stewardship. God has given us a harvest. But some of that harvest must become seed for tomorrow.

Our churches have received a harvest from generations before us. We have buildings. We have financial resources. We have traditions. We have music. We have memories. We have faith. But now we must ask: *"What are we planting for the next generation?"*

Not simply, *"How do we keep the church going?"* But, *"How do we prepare a church where children and grandchildren can meet Jesus Christ?"* How do we prepare ministry for people who are not yet sitting in our pews? How do we use what God has given us so that the gospel remains alive long after we are gone?

Brothers and sisters, this is where stewardship becomes beautiful. When we are younger, much of life is about gathering. We build. We work. We purchase. We save. We prepare. But as the years pass, God may teach us another holy joy: the joy of releasing, the joy of blessing, the joy of giving, the joy of passing faith forward.

The joy of saying, *"Lord, everything you gave me was always yours. Now let it bless someone who comes after me."* That is fruitful stewardship.

The Greatest Gift

And finally, we must remember that before God ever asks us to give, God gives first.

God gave creation. God gave life. God gave daily bread. God gave grace. And above all, God gave us Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not give God whatever was left over. Jesus gave himself. Fully. Freely. Lovingly.

At the cross, Jesus opened his hands for us. And in the resurrection, God gave us a hope that neither age nor sickness nor even death can take away.

So our generosity does not begin with us. It begins with God. Our faithfulness is a response to God's faithfulness. Our giving is a response to God's giving. Our love is a response to God's love.

Conclusion

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during this harvest season, perhaps every ear of corn can preach a little sermon to us.

It can say: *"Remember the Giver."* The harvest did not come from us alone.

It can say: *"Give God the first and best."* Put God first, not last.

And it can say: *"Leave a legacy of faithfulness."* Because inside today's harvest is seed for tomorrow.

Our lives are gifts. Our years are gifts. Our families are gifts. Our churches are gifts. Our resources are gifts. And Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift.

So whether you are eight years old or eighty-eight years old, God has still placed something in your hands: a prayer, a gift, a story, a word of wisdom, an act of kindness, a testimony, a resource, a seed.

The question is: *"What will we do with what God has placed in our hands?"* And especially for those who have walked with Christ for many years, perhaps the question is: *"What seed will I leave for the next generation?"*

So let us remember the Giver. Let us give God our first and best. Let us leave a legacy of faithfulness.

"Today's harvest contains tomorrow's seed."

And may today's harvest become tomorrow's seed for the kingdom of God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reference Notes

1. The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, Proverbs 3:5-10; Malachi 3:10.
2. Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15, New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, commentary on Proverbs 3:5-10.
3. Ellen F. Davis, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
4. Douglas John Hall, The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
5. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Order 2025-2027, F-1.0304, "The Great Ends of the Church."