

Property Theft and Restitution

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 April 2023

Preacher: Chad Bennett

[0 : 0 0] An oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath and he shall not make restitution.

But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.

If a man borrows anything of his neighbor and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution.

If it was hired, it came for its hiring fee. Let's pray together. Oh Lord, we read earlier in your word of Christ walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus and how he began with Moses where we are today and showed from the scripture how the scripture related to Christ.

Lord, as we look at this application of the Ten Commandments, that may seem very far off from us. But we pray that you would work today as you worked in Jesus' day.

[1 : 2 4] That our hearts would burn within us. That you would show us Christ from your word. That you would be glorified. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So we saw last week the beginning of the application of the Ten Commandments to specific situations.

And we talked about the Ten Commandments are God's moral law that have relevance throughout all history. What we're seeing here is the civil law for Israel to live as a theocracy with God as a ruler and really apply these things.

And while they can be very helpful for us in understanding the application of God's law, they're not binding on us. These aren't the specific rules for which we follow.

But they're principles that we want to learn from. And of course we want to see how they relate to our Savior. And so we're going to spend some time looking at what's set before us here in the passage. Really it deals with the question that how do we treat the property of others?

How do we relate to stuff that belongs to someone other than ourselves? It also deals with the loss of property for an individual. What happens when it's stolen or is damaged?

[2 : 3 5] It deals with subjects like justice. What does justice look like in certain situations? But these laws that we're looking at today are really the application of the Eighth Commandment.

You shall not steal. Last time we looked at you shall not murder, today it's really applying what does it mean that we shouldn't steal? And we talked about when we studied through the Ten Commandments that it doesn't just mean literally that I don't take what belongs to my neighbor.

We even talked about the heart condition that Jesus speaks of in his word. Our desire for what belongs to someone else. Even coveting in its relationship to stealing. But here we see some expression of that.

How stealing deals with how we treat other people's properties. Whether or not our intention was to take it. And again, these examples, these case laws are not intended to cover every single possibility.

Right? The Bible would be huge in terms of if we made it a simple law code of every single thing that could ever happen in human history that relates to stealing. Rather, these are examples of the application of God's law for our benefit to know here's the way God's law is applied.

[3 : 50] And from that, we can use that in our own lives to think what should we do in relation to others and even what we should expect from the treatment of others. And anything that wasn't clear to them was to be taken before God.

And really, the judge is the word there. And it really corresponds to this idea of probably being brought before the elders or later on in Israel's history, the judges in the land who on God's behalf would make decisions regarding what was put forward.

It's also interesting here with maybe one exception, but this isn't a capital crime. We looked last week at the laws concerning murder. And again, even though not all of those were murder, we saw that it was a capital crime.

Not so here. There's one instance in which a person can die that we'll look at, but the government was never to put people to death for stealing. So let's look at our passage.

I want to start by just considering the idea of stealing, and then we'll look at the idea of negligence that comes on later. But really, verses 1 through 4 deal with this. If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an oxen, four sheep for a sheep.

[5 : 06] If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no blood guilt for him. But the sun has risen on him, there shall be blood guilt for him. He shall surely pay.

If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. Now, again, this can be a little obscure.

Probably none of us have had an ox or sheep stolen from us. Maybe even understanding why five oxen, four sheep. But if it's found in his possession, it's only double.

But we're going to try to talk about some of those. And again, we'll get to some practical application. But first, let's try to understand what was going on that day. One is that animals were the primary source of wealth.

You would know a man's wealth by his animals because animals provide money for you. They provide food for you. They even would be used in an agrarian society. They were like the tractors of the land.

[6 : 05] We live near some farms, and some of the tractors out there are half a million dollars these days. But the turnover is so vast when you're working big, large farms.

And these people would have had servants working for them. They would have had oxen. And they were of great wealth to have the sheep, the oxen. Even if you look at accounts of Abraham, when they recount Abraham's wealth, it's talked about in terms of the numbers of livestock and the size of his family.

As we apply it to us, this isn't really just about sheep or oxen, is it? It applies to whatever someone might possess.

In our culture, that's not usually the sign of wealth. Someone doesn't probably brag about their wealth and the number of cats they have at their house. Right? That's not our measurement of wealth.

But we have things that we value. And whatever that may be, this is what's being dealt with here. Just on a side note, we see as well that God has given the right for individuals to own property.

[7 : 10] Right? God's given property rights. We can't talk about stealing if it doesn't belong to one person and it's taken by another person. And so God is really endorsing that for us, telling us that he allows people to own things.

Why is that? Because he wants us to take care of things for his glory. His vice regents, really, of his creation, giving him the glory in how we handle things.

So a principle we see here is really that theft requires compensation. If you steal something, you've got to pay it back. And we can say that that's based on what was stolen and what was done with it.

Those things would determine what had to be repaid. Now, I talked earlier about the wealth. But the aughts was a primary source of work.

It was the main tractor, the big tractor, for individuals. It provided for their livelihood. They also would take a long time to raise up and train. So if someone stole your trained aughts, it's going to take potentially years for you to get another one back in the condition that that one was in.

[8 : 18] Trained, used to your voice, ready to work. And so if it was stolen, it could not be recovered. The person who stole it had to pay back five aughts for every aughts they stole.

If it was a sheep, it was four. Now, I think, again, the distinction may be that the aughts was taking longer to train, was more used for work. If it was recoverable, so you find out who's stolen it, and they still have the aughts.

They haven't sold it. They have the sheep. They haven't eaten it. If you can get the thing back itself, then they owe you double. So they give you back the original, and they give you another one with that one for the trouble, the hassle that you went through for having your stuff stolen.

So it's kind of the principles we see in verses one through four, that there had to be compensation. As you think about this, this actually makes, think about why would someone steal something?

There could be a vast number of reasons, but it may be because of their sense of their poverty. But the way the system is set up here, if you steal something, you run a great risk of being far more impoverished than you were before.

[9 : 39] If you stole an aughts because you didn't have one, now you've got to pay back five of those. How are you going to do that? Well, it talks later even about the idea that if someone can't pay back, then you could sell yourself into servitude.

So you could go from being not well off and stealing to try to become better off and end up having to serve the person X number of years to pay off the aughts, or the aughtsend that you now owe them.

Verses two through three deal with breaking in. What happens if you catch someone breaking in? We might say breaking and entering. Well, the homeowner had the right to defend himself and his property.

I know that's a hot discussion today. What happens when someone breaks in your house? What happens if they're only in your yard? What if they're inside? Well, God's word, and again, I think this isn't binding for us, but it gives us a concept to understand.

It says if someone breaks in at night, we see this in verses two and three, and they are killed, then the homeowner is not guilty of any bloodshed. In other words, he has every right, someone breaking in in the middle of the night, to defend himself and his property because his life or property are threatened.

[10 : 55] And to be fair, I think there's a distinction being made with night, partly because, especially in that day without electricity, it's going to be hard to tell what this guy's up to and what his intentions are.

So you don't take any chances. You shoot them. They don't have guns, but you take them out on the spot. You don't break into someone's house. Now, what happens if it happens during the daytime? Well, the person's not to be killed.

Well, apparently, since you can discern what their motives are and intentions, they're rather to be held or captured. And then that person who broke in is then liable to repay them what was taken.

He shall surely pay. This is verse three, second half. And if he is nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. So the one situation we see in the whole passage where someone could actually, or theft could result in death, was breaking in in the middle of the night.

Every other situation, there was restitution that was to be paid, but never to result in death, even if you caught someone breaking into your house in the daytime. And then verses five and six deal with the idea of negligence.

[12 : 06] What happens if you don't take care of what you have in a way that harms your neighbor? We saw a little bit of that last week with murder and maybe leaving open holes in your property that someone would fall into or an animal would fall into.

But this is dealing with the idea that when you have animals, there's no barbed wire back then. They may have had some stone walls that they could put up, but it's hard to keep animals on your own property.

It's hard to maintain them, to keep them from wandering off into the neighbor's grass. I don't know if you've seen, even in our day, things like I've driven by and seen horses, and they have the fence right there, and cows are the same way.

Where do they eat the grass? Grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, right? And so they're stretching their net through the fence, and they're eating that. So what happens if your sheep or your otts or whatever the animal may be wanders off your property into your neighbor's property and eats his field, his produce, his grain.

It even talks about his vineyard. Well, if your animals wander into someone else's property and they consume someone else's produce, you're going to make restitution. Again, very similar to theft.

[13 : 18] It's viewed almost in that light. You're responsible for your animals. If they take what isn't yours, then you have to pay back to that person. It even says the best of one's produce.

So this time we're not told a multiple, two times or four times, but the best of one's own produce. And so the advantage was always to the neighbor who was wronged or the person who was wronged.

Both in theft, if you have your stuff stolen, the advantage is to you. The one who stole it owes you quadruple, quintuple. If your field is eaten by your neighbor's animal, then they owe you above and beyond what was lost, the best of what they have.

And it talks about what if fire spreads to your neighbor's property. Sometimes, I said before there weren't barbed wire, sometimes they allow the briars to grow at the edge of the property just to deter animals from crossing over.

But every now and then if they get out of hand, as briars tend to do, they might try to burn them. Well, what happens if your fire gets out of hand and it gets too close to the stacked grain of your neighbor and it consumes his grain?

[14 : 26] Even though it's still unintentional, a loss has occurred. And so you're responsible for that. If fire breaks, this is verse 6, if fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

Even if that was never your intent, you were just trying to keep the weeds off your own property. I remember one year having this grand idea that I was going to try to clear some of the woods behind my house and burn some of the leaves.

I made fire rows that I'd cut so that when it only goes so far and still it managed to spread a little bit out of hand. And I'm out there with the hose as far as I can trying to spray things down and hoping it doesn't spread to the neighbor's property.

I just burned a little bit of my telephone pole and I think that was about it. But it was a little scary at the time. What happens if you're trying to take care of your own land and end up damaging your neighbors through fire?

Well, you're to compensate the person for that. God expects us to take responsibility for our actions even when they're accidental. And so there's a principle again for us to apply.

[15 : 40] Even if it's not the specific law, even if none of you are burning field and are burning something in your property and it catches your neighbor's grain on fire. It's probably not going to happen for most of us in this room.

But in reality, we know that we do sometimes harm other people or their stuff unintentionally. Well, God expects us to take responsibility for our actions even when they're accidental.

More than just, Oops, sorry about that. Good luck with your grain next year. We're to take responsibility. And then verses 7 through 15 deal with borrowing and lending.

Borrowing and lending. The first example we see there is if you give someone property for safekeeping. And understand that day there were not banks that you could put your money in. You didn't have a safety deposit box.

You didn't have a fire safe in your house that you might store some valuable documents. And maybe for whatever reason you trusted the other person more than you trusted yourself or your household.

[16 : 46] And you might ask someone if they'd watch over your property for you. Well, in this instance, if you're asking someone else for their help in taking care of your stuff, protecting it, well, the owner assumes the risk.

The one who's lent out his item for safekeeping is responsible for it. If the property is stolen, the thief wants to pay double. Same principle as what we saw before.

What if no one finds a thief? You gave something to your neighbor that was valuable to you. He no longer has it. He says it was stolen, but no one can find the thief.

Well, obviously, the guilty party seems to be the guy who was keeping it. He was protecting your stuff. He doesn't have it now. He was supposed to have it. He doesn't. Did you steal my stuff?

Well, if that happened, they were, again, to go before God. And the word Elohim can also mean judge. And I think there's a principle going before God was to go to the elders or to the judges and have them declare their decision on this.

[17 : 51] If the neighbor stole it, he was guilty as a thief. As we saw before, the same principles apply. If he was innocent, no restitution was required. He was doing you a favor.

If someone did break in and steal it, whether they're caught or not, if he wasn't the one who did it, he's not responsible for that. It also talks about what happens if an animal dies or disappeared.

If the neighbor could make an oath before God, the owner was to accept his word. I'm not the one that stole it. I didn't do any wrong in this. The owner was to take his oath as his word.

Now, if you borrowed that animal to use for your work and it was stolen from you, he was to make restitution for it. Or, again, if you could find the thief. It seems to imply he did nothing to prevent the theft.

In other words, you know your neighbor, he borrows your odds. Maybe we should say car at this point. He borrows your car. And while he's maybe stopped over at the mall, someone comes to steal his car, he doesn't try to stop him.

[18 : 53] He doesn't do anything to prevent it. He just stays out of it. I'm not messing with this. It's not my car. Well, he was responsible for your car. He borrowed your car. And so he's responsible for that if he did nothing to prevent it.

What if it was torn by animals? Okay, it doesn't work so well for a car, does it? But what if it was torn by animals and the neighbors could produce the body of the animal? They were to bring the bits, the pieces, whatever was left over the animal, they were to bring before them.

And if they could show that the animal had been torn by another animal, then no restitution was required. And then verses 14 and 15 deal more with borrowing. What happens if you borrow something from someone else?

Well, the borrower assumes the risk. This is the opposite of when you lend something to someone for safekeeping. In that case, the owner's responsible. But if you're asking for something from someone, you're responsible for whatever it is that you have borrowed.

If anything happens to the property, even an accident, the borrower was to make restitution. I think in our day and age, that might be something along the lines of borrowing a tool.

[20 : 03] I know I've had to borrow tools from my neighbor at times. You borrow a tool from someone and you use it. And what happens, I mean, with our day and age with the wireless battery pack type of drill you borrow, and it dies on you.

That battery may have been going out for years, but while you have it, it dies on you. You borrowed it. You're responsible for that item while you have it. Or the saw handle breaks, whatever it may be.

You're responsible to make restitution for that. You have to replace that item. You're taking a risk not buying it yourself, borrowing it from someone else. You take better care of it than you take of your own things.

You're responsible for that item. So if anything happens to the property, even an accident, the borrower had to make restitution.

And there is a principle here that we see kind of represented in Proverbs 22.7. It says, the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is a slave of the lender. And of course, that's speaking of far probably beyond just possessions, but you think of even borrowing money for your house.

[21 : 13] You know, sometimes, I don't know if you ever have to fill the thing out and ask you, do you own your house? And you're like, no. The bank owns my house, but I'm trying. Right? You're a slave to the bank for 30 or 15 years or whatever it is you decide to do.

Or a car. There's a way in which you're responsible to pay it back. Well, so too when you borrow someone's possession. They kind of have something over you now. You have to be careful when you borrow them.

And if you mess it up or ruin it, you're to pay restitution. Not double in this instance. You didn't steal it. There was no ill intent. But you're to make full restitution.

An equal payment for what was lost. Probably a new item for what was the used item that you borrowed. Now, they give two exceptions. If the owner's present with you while you're using it, he sees what happens.

He knows it was a legitimate accident that broke it or whatever. No restitution is required. In other words, if he's there with you, he has some responsibility for his own item even though he's letting you use it.

[22 : 19] And then the other example was if you hired it or if you rented it. Basically, if someone's making you pay to borrow their item, they're assuming that the payment for the rent is going to cover the possibility of loss.

In other words, you rent it out a few times, you make your money back, things are going to happen when you rent stuff out, but you're assuming the risk. You've set the price. The person was not to pay restitution.

So there's a distinction made between borrowing something for nothing versus paying someone to borrow something. And so that's what's set before us in our passage today.

There are a few things that I didn't touch specifically on, but those are really the principles that we see here in Exodus 22. So how do they apply to us? That's what I want us to consider now. What's the application for us?

Well, much like we saw last week, our first point is that these laws are given for the care and protection of individuals. They're given for our benefit.

[23 : 22] God's law is not meant to be burdensome on us. As you think about the law that we set before us, you can see God's care and protection in this. Someone takes something that belongs to you, they pay you back and then some.

That's good, right? That's what we would expect. Really, they're graciously teaching people how to live in community.

So we think of the context of what we've seen in Exodus. Israel's moving out of Egypt. They've been slaves 400 years in Egypt. Now they're moving out. They have become their own nation in the process of becoming their own nation by covenant with God.

And God's setting before them, what does it look like to live in community with one another? And so even if we step back for a second and say, instead of thinking of this as civil law, as we often do, the law for a country, if we're going to agree to live together, what's that going to look like?

Well, you better not be stealing my stuff. If you do, you owe me. Right? We're okay with that. They were to respect what belonged to another, to take care of their possessions, to protect them, not to take them.

[24 : 37] We think of the 10th commandment as well. They weren't to covet what belonged to a neighbor. Coveting ultimately could lead to taking, which may lead to a restitution beyond what you can afford to pay back.

It's just 20, verse 17. You should not covet your neighbor's house. You should not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything else that is your neighbor's.

And again, even though we're really dealing with the commandment to steal, we see the application of even coveting here. Stealing could potentially make you poor. It could make you pay back double or quadruple or quintuple as we've seen.

And the victim was satisfied because he received double or quadruple or quintuple for his trouble. He was okay with that. I mean, no one wants their stuff stolen, but to know you're going to be paid back and then some.

I'd also say that there's protection for the thief as well. In some of the surrounding cultures of that day, it was a capital crime to steal anything or, in some cultures, cutting off a person's hand if they stole something.

[25 : 49] God protects them. There is a equal and corresponding payment that was to be made. It wasn't that you're thrown in jail forever or that you're put to death or that you lose a limb. You took something, you return it, and then you pay extra for what you took.

So it protected individuals from death. Verse 3, he shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his stuff. We taught some about indentured servitude in Israel.

He would work off his debt, but it wasn't indefinite. He wouldn't remain a slave or be thrown in jail indefinitely. It's also gracious from God that there's no differentiation made based on social status.

And from what I've read, all the other cultures in that area, there was different payment to be made depending on who you stole from. If you stole from a king, it's death every time.

And it worked down to the point where if you stole from a slave, there's little consequence whatsoever. But in God's law, all men are made in God's image. If you steal from a slave, you owe the same as if you steal from the king.

[27 : 04] And I think, again, a gracious and caring God. Secondly, we can learn from this that we need to rectify situations and we need to seek reconciliation.

When we wrong someone, even by accident, we're to rectify the situation, whatever that may look like. To be reconciled with them. Phil Riken says, whenever we do something that damages someone else's property, whether we meant to do it or not, we need to rectify the damage.

It is not enough to say sorry, it was an accident and then expect other people to pay for what we've done. An apology is a good start, but justice demands that we make things right.

I remember one time at a church, no, not church picnic, sorry, softball. I played on a softball team and we had a picnic at the park. And we were a softball team having a picnic, so what happens?

Naturally, a softball game breaks out, not on the field across the road, but right there next to the pavilion. And one of the guys on my team fouled a ball off way up in there and it came down on my parents' Ford Explorer's windshield.

[28 : 19] Shattered it. And I remember at that time the family just graciously offered, we'll replace that windshield. It was an accident. An accident's happened.

But if you're the one responsible for the accident, you realize you've done something that wronged another person. How can you make it right? I want us to look for a second at a New Testament example of this principle, that of Zacchaeus.

You may remember the story of Zacchaeus. Kids, you may remember he was a wee little man. He climbed up a sycamore tree, right? But maybe it will help us to remember that he was the chief tax collector in the region of Jericho.

He was the main guy collecting taxes. And because of that, he wasn't liked. It was understood by everyone around him that he was a thief. You might even say that the tax collector position was a paid theft position.

The way it worked in that day, you were to collect a certain amount of money. Anything you collected beyond the amount of money that the government prescribed for you to collect, you got to keep. And so, they would always lie about the numbers.

[29 : 32] They would charge you more than was needed. I won't make any allusions to modern day government whatsoever right now. But they would overcharge you so that they could pocket a little bit of that money.

And he was a wealthy man. He had cheated many people. Luke 19, 7 says, He has gone in to be, this is Jesus, has gone in to be the guest of a man who was a sinner.

They knew him to be a sinner because they knew he was a thief. Luke 19, verse 2 tells us about his wealth. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

Those two words together tells you about his character, don't they? He was a rich chief tax collector. What does that tell you? He's a good thief.

He's good at ripping people off. He knows how to get money out of people and more than they are supposed to pay. Now, Zacchaeus, when he saw Jesus, he received him into his house.

[30 : 32] But there's also this need not, I don't want to make some illusion of receiving him into his heart, but I do think Zacchaeus is saved ultimately, but there's also a desire in him and from Jesus that there's a need for repentance, a need to make restitution, kind of in lines of what we see here in Exodus 22.

He wanted to make things right with those people that he cheated. So in verse 8 of Luke 19, we read, And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone or anything, I restore it fourfold.

Where's that concept coming from? I restore it fourfold. He's looking back to Exodus 22 and saying, you take something, you return it. Now, we saw earlier that if you find the item in the possession of the thief, the thief only had to pay double.

Listen to Leviticus 6, 4 through 5, that deals with if the thief confesses basically that he's stolen it and offers it back, what happens? If he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything else which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.

So, if a person knows that they've done wrong, they're to pay someone back and this time there's a little bit of a difference.

[32 : 21] You're to pay back 120%. If he ripped you off for \$1,000, he owes you \$1,200 back. That's Zacchaeus. That's what he owed. And so, I think he's not just looking back to Exodus 22 here.

Even if you look there, if he was caught in the act, he should have paid double. But he's offering to pay quadruple, 400% back. And what I see is that God has worked to change in Zacchaeus' heart.

He does more than what is required by the law. He only had to pay back a little bit of percentage. But instead, he pays back quadruple what he took.

And he chooses voluntarily no constraint that we see from Christ or his word, but he gives half of all he has to the poor. He's become wealthy, and his wealth has come primarily from dishonesty.

And so, he wants to give away what he has. He doesn't want that anymore. That's not what rules his life. It's not about possessions. He's now living for the Lord. And so, here we see he's motivated by a heart change.

[33 : 28] So, as we think about the principles of applying this, we want to understand as well that we're to make restitution when we wrong someone, but we're not legalists about getting it exactly.

Again, this law doesn't specifically apply to us. There's a principle at hand. And as Christians, we ought to delight ourselves in going over and beyond what's required of us out of love for God, out of a testimony to the person who has been wronged.

And along those lines, we could say property is to be used for the glory of God, whether it be yours or if in some way you wrong or take another person's property.

As we think about this, we talked a little bit about this when we looked at the commandment on stealing. But where do all our possessions come from? God gives and God takes away.

He's sovereign. So what does it mean then when we look at what someone else has and we say, I want that? Or sometimes we even justify it, don't we? They don't deserve that.

[34 : 35] She's been handed to them. I want that. Well, what are we saying? That I'm discontent with what God has provided for me and I think he's done wrong in taking good care of someone else.

I want what's bad for them so that I can profit by that. I want their harm so that I can do... In fact, that would make things right because God hasn't really been fair or just in how he's divvied out the possessions.

And so, I think we have to understand that stealing, that view of theft, is really a statement of our view of God, of our love for God or our disdain for God.

our trust in his sovereignty or our second guessing or judging the way he's dealt with things. Stealing is a lack of trust in God's provision for us that God has taken care of us.

It's an expression of the forgetfulness, excuse me, the ungratefulness that we have for what he has given us. We're not thankful for what we have. We want more. Remember we talked about Rockefeller saying he'd be rich if he had just a little bit more.

[35 : 52] And we're all like that. Just a little bit more. Rather than stopping to thank God for the provision that he's given us already. That also means that if we have possessions that God's given us for his glory, then we're not to misuse them or abuse them, whether they're ours or someone else's.

If God's given someone else this tool that they have to use for God's glory and we borrow it and misuse it, we're disarming God in that.

And so we're to take good care of anything we borrow, not just for the sake of our neighbor or the owner of that item, but out of love for God, out of God's glory.

We're to treat it with better care than our own. Or we might even say we have a New Testament principle that we're to be givers rather than takers. That doesn't mean we don't borrow things, but if we misuse them, we give back abundantly.

2 Corinthians 9, 6-7. The point is this. I believe we read this earlier in the service today. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

[37 : 02] Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. God loves a cheerful giver. And so as we look at God's law, we don't look at this and say, oh man, I've got to go back and pay that guy some restitution.

Again, it doesn't have to be four or five times specifically, but there's a principle that I have to pay back. That's not how we look at God's law. Rather, we're encouraged to be cheerful givers, that that's what God loves.

And secondly, or no, fifthly, I think I meant it. Fifthly, we're to desire greater treasure. And I mentioned this in a prior sermon as well. We're to desire greater treasure. I think this is really a remedy for us against a desire to steal things from someone else.

We don't want the lesser treasure. We want a better treasure. And I think probably the best examples of this in God's word are the pearl of great price and the treasure hidden in the field.

Both of those talk about the kingdom of God and what it's like. So this is Matthew 13, 44 through 46 that contains the passage. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

[38 : 15] When a man found, which a man found and covered up, then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it.

And so as we hear these laws set before us, our tendency is to think, I don't really want to have to repay someone. My tendency is probably to think, well, I better save up and buy that myself versus having to buy it for them.

But what I want you to see is what's set before us. If our treasure is God, then we're glad to give to others. We're glad to joyfully repay that which we borrowed or if we've wronged someone in some place.

Our concern isn't primarily what do I get, but how do I glorify God in what I give and how I use what's been given to me. It's really an antidote for the materialism and consumerism of our culture.

Right? Every commercial is all about buying something. Every billboard, whatever's out there, wants you to get more and more stuff that you didn't know you needed. I was even struck the other day by the tendency in our culture to maybe if you're bored and want to get out of the house, we just go to the mall or the outlet mall or some store and we walk around and what do they always ask you?

[39 : 37] Can I help you with something? And what's the reply? No, I'm just looking. Right? Do you guys know this? Am I the weird one? Okay. No, I'm just looking. What does that mean?

I have no intention of coming in here to get anything specific, but I'm hoping to find something that I'll buy. It just struck me the other day how crazy that is culturally that we live in a society that has to invent things to buy that we didn't know we needed.

Our desire should be more than just for material things. God has offered us the greatest treasure. That treasure hit in the field, that pearl of great price that we're too long for more than anything else.

So we're to desire a greater treasure than our neighbor's possessions. This is Matthew 6, so going back a few chapters from Matthew 13. Matthew 6, 19-20 says, Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourself treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

[40 : 45] That's where our treasure is to be. And as we think about maybe even asking the question, how do I treasure things in heaven? How do I know I have a treasure in heaven?

Well, remember our passage. There's the man who's holding your possessions for your safekeeping. And it's taken from him. And he goes and he gives an oath before God.

I didn't steal this item. And remember, the owner, you in this instance, is to take his word for this, his oath, as truth. He's vowed it before God that he hasn't stolen this.

Then you take it to be true. Well, I thought maybe this would be of encouragement to us that God has also given us an oath. Listen to Hebrews 6, 16 through 20.

For people swear by something greater than themselves. They vow before God. And in all the disputes, an oath is final for confirmation.

[41 : 47] Probably again, looking back at it, it's 22. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.

so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

So God wanted us to know that we are heirs of the promise. And what's the promise? It's this eternal kingdom, the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in a field.

And God wants us to know, and so he gives us two unchangeable things. himself, who never changes, and his word, his oath, in which it is impossible for God to lie.

[43 : 07] We know he can't lie. He doesn't change. And so, we have a sure guarantee of a greater treasure, and yet, we find ourselves just consumed in this culture longing for lesser treasures.

And I want to encourage you to pursue something greater. And then also, as we think about this thing that this repayment, this restitution that was made, we understand that we have sinned against the Holy God. What restitution, what payment can be made by us to repay God for our sin?

Well, the wages of sin is death. But we have a gracious Savior who lived a perfect life for us, who gave his life to pay our debt.

And even think about the idea of the restitution is it sells beyond what we owed. when Jesus died on the cross, he took upon himself the sins of all who will trust in him.

And it's not as though that there's a limit to Jesus' sacrifice. That he somehow could only pay for its number of sins.

[44 : 13] It was sufficient to cover all our sin, all that we could ever do. God is gracious in this. He overpays, as it were, the debt that we owe. And so now, we can stand before God knowing even our own hearts that we're glory stealers if nothing else.

We're thieves. But Christ has paid the price for us. He's made restitution so that we stand now justified before God the Father. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for Christ and what he's accomplished.

for his death, for his sacrifice, for his payment. And Lord, even in the fact that he who is God became flesh, impoverished himself that we might become rich in him.

That we might become heirs of the promise and joint heirs with Christ. And Lord, we thank you for the assurance of that promise in that you don't change and you cannot lie.

Lord, we pray that we would set our sights, our hope upon that eternal reality, upon heaven itself, that we would desire that more than the stuff of this earth.

[45 : 31] And Lord, inevitably, we will have to use the stuff of this earth. Help us to use it well for your glory. Lord, even in how we interact with our neighbors, many of whom may not know you, that we would be different than the world around us, who might try to hide the damage.

But Lord, we would repay abundantly out of our love for you and as a testimony to what you've done in us and paying us back, not what we were owed, death, but in giving us eternal life in our Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Our closing hymn is number 56, When All Your Mercies, O My God, reminds us that how much we've received from him and how grateful we should be for his many mercies.

Please stand. brotherhood for God, And all your merciful I lighted, ■c proported, also because of Him could ■■ys come to Him I love you.

I love you.

[47 : 52] I love you.

And after death in distant worlds the glories be renewed. To all eternity to you, a joyful
storm I'll raise.

For all eternity is too short to utter all your praise.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly. To all eternity. To all eternity.