

Wise Stewardship

Introduction:

Someone commented like this, “The poor work so hard to eat food and the rich work so hard (in Gym) to digest the food”. In the world today the rich consume food so much and also the wastages by the rich are very high. There is a clipping in Hindustan Times (Delhi edition) in regard to 35 Five Star Hotels in Delhi. Every day their consumption of water is 15 million litres, which is enough to cater 36,000 households, 10 million litres of sewage generated which is equal to the sewage generated by 4,50,000 population. Besides this the hotels also generate 4 to 5 tonnes of solid waste everyday. 35,000 kilocalories / sqm is the energy consumed by them which is equal to energy consumed by 30,000 households”¹.

If we are the rich Christians we are either not aware of this issue or not concerned about this and if we fall in the lower category we resign to the situation and feel that we cannot change the situation. This might have resulted because we are not sure what the Bible says about this matter. Sometimes we are so caught up with our spiritual food and wastes that we seldom think of this physical food usage and wastage by a section of the community. With Climate Change looming over our head the Lord is seeking us to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. The rich have to change their behavior and the poor should raise their voice against the unconcerned attitude of the rich, which God resents.

We will be looking at three passages on being good stewards and aligning with the topic “Eat wise, Waste less”.

1. Stewardship is recognition of what we are/have belongs to God

Read Genesis 45: 1 – 9

In Genesis we see Joseph’s remarkable understanding of God’s sovereignty and recognizes that God put him in that top position to serve his community. “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45: 7). He recognizes that he got the position not because of his faithfulness (could be also) but that he could be a blessing to the community in God’s wider plan.

In Deuteronomy 26:1 – 12 the Israelites were asked to bring the first fruits of the land to the Lord. It is an act by the Israelites in recognition of God’s sovereignty and that the blessings are from him. In continuation, the Lord commands the Israelites to share their blessings in the form of tithes with the Levites, foreigners, fatherless and widows and that they will also rejoice along with them (vs 11, 12). God has

¹ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Delhi-stop-wasting-government-tells-5-star-hotels/Article1-1042946.aspx>

recommended the joy of sharing with the rest of the community who are in need from the blessings what they have received.

This implies that the riches what we have received is a blessing to us and that we have to be a blessing to others in God's wider plan. This is contrary to many of our beliefs. We have heard people saying, "I have been faithful and God had blessed me". Yes true, but we have to share the blessings with others wisely as Stewards of the Lord.

In one of the villages in Umerkote district in Orissa, the church decided that they would support the people living in the Leprosy Colony once in two weeks by giving food. In the church a call was given to give food materials as per the list prepared. An old lady offered to give tomatoes worth Rs. 2 as her contribution for the effort of the church. The rest of the church members refused to accept her offer. But she persisted. When asked why the church members are not allowing her to share, they informed that she is a widow and get Rs. 50 per month as widow pension from the government and she begs from the market. She in her poverty, recognizing God's sovereignty in her life wants to give to people whom she considers as poor.

2. Stewardship in consuming food

Read Proverbs 23: 2, 20, 21 and 28:7

The food materials created by God are delicious and nutritious. When God created the food and other natural resources His expectation is that all human beings will share the resources and enjoy the creation. If you are in the upper echelons of the Society then you should recognize that we honour God's creation by enjoying these foods and by eating them in appropriate quantities. God calls us to control our appetites, rather than allowing them to control us. All the passages, which were referred above, speak against over eating (gluttony) and to eat wisely. If you are in the lower echelon, then you should recognize that you have the right to the food materials, which should be made available to buy from the market, and you should have the power to purchase. You should also eat wisely ensuring all nutrients needed for the body are eaten by you.

The example shared in the beginning of how the 5-star Hotels consume food, water and energies shows the arrogance of the rich and expect them to change. While accusing others on their life style it is important that we also analyze ourselves to find how we consume resources. Will God also raise the same sin against you and me?

We have been oriented again and again from the Sunday school to be careful of not involving in immoral activities or face destruction as Sodom faced as mentioned in Genesis chapter 19. But if we look at Ezekiel 16: 49 one of the sin for which Sodom was punished by God was that they were overfed and did not help the poor and needy. It seems here that overfeeding and immoral activities are put in the same category of sin.

In the context of Climate Change, which affects the whole world and specially the poor, we as stewards of Christ should consume wisely, to save the world.

3. Stewardship in proper disposal of waste and waste less

Ezekiel 34: 17 - 24

Earlier we talked about consuming less. But it is also important that we also work towards wasting less. As in 2011, 1.3 billion tons of food was wasted annually². In the context of Climate Change while encouraging all to consume wisely, it is also imperative that we waste less and dispose of waste properly to control pollution.

In Deuteronomy 23: 11 – 13 God also teaches the Israelites how to dispose of the excrement, which scientists accept as the best way to dispose off the waste. Though Bible is not a science book but which explains the mission of God, it throws imageries like this in teaching us to care for the creation by not polluting the land environment. In many villages of our country we have water borne diseases. The village paths are used as places for defecation and because of that water sources are contaminated. God is asking us to wisely dispose of wastages.

In the passage read from Ezekiel, the imagery is also about people who use the natural resources and waste the rest of the resources or pollute them. God is against them and He says that He will judge them. This may apply to us also. We have to be careful on how we dispose wastes and also whether we unnecessarily waste natural resources such as water, food etc., or we also will be judged by God. We can also put the drainage water to good use like using it in kitchen gardening etc. We can also recycle some of the materials which we dispose off.

Conclusion

God expects both the rich and the poor to be good stewards of the resources He has entrusted to us. If everyone recognize this and start doing their part in a small way we can make a difference. As mentioned in Nehemiah 2: 18 “Let us Start Rebuilding”. Amen.

² www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_waste