

The Generous Gift of Giving

“All I have comes from God and I give it out of his hand.” *1 Chronicles 29:14b*
A Sudbury Presbytery Stewardship Devotion, by John Fraser

Scripture Sentences

Acts 20:35 “In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

2 Corinthians 8:2 “for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

Hymn: MV 79 “Spirit, Open My Heart”

Opening Prayer: God of power and peace, through your love you equip us to face the challenges in your church and in your creation today. Lead us to be stewards of your bounty, not only in our church, but in the whole world. Make us mindful of your protection and help us respond to your call to share your blessings. May we live in ways that promote love, peace and justice. Bless us and the gifts you give, lead us in bringing it to the work of your church. This we pray in Jesus’ name. AMEN

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 9: 6 - 15 “... *for God loves a cheerful giver.*”

Meditation: The Holy Spirit calls us to live Christ’s commandment of love. This word, *love*, gives substance and meaning to Christian life and living. Being that love is present in creation, we are called to exhibit good stewardship for all elements of God’s creation, caring for all bountiful blessings that God has bestowed upon us. We are to be God’s good stewards.

Stewardship, for many within the church, is represented predominantly by financial concerns. While the church believes financial stewardship to be an important aspect of our being good stewards, it is only one of many vital components. Christian theology tells us Christ’s call is founded in the belief that humans are responsible for the world and should/must take care of it. This means care for all that God has created.

Christ’s call to all Christians is to be good stewards, to be responsible in maintaining and wise use of God’s many bestowed gifts. We learn our call’s purpose by the example of Christ’s ministry. God’s wish is for all Christians to collaborate in the work of creation, redemption and sanctification. Increasingly this has referred to care for the environment, but also it is care for fellow beings through the work of God’s Church. Traditional Christian ministries are to share the resources of treasure, time and talent which has been bestowed upon us. To be shared with others and in care for God’s world, for each other and all that is in the world.

Underlying the responsibility of our call implies giving against your will is giving against God's will. A person should prayerfully determine the generosity of his giving. Christians need to be settled in their heart in order to be good stewards. To give reluctantly means to give with a sense of "grief, sorrow, or pain in mind and spirit." If it is a pain for you to give...don't!

Giving against your will is giving against God's will. To give under compulsion is the feeling that someone has twisted your arm or put you on a guilt trip. The word "compulsion" can also mean to do something in order to get something in return. Either side of the compulsion coin is the wrong reason to give.

Giving against your will is giving against God's will. God loves a giver that is cheerful and happy and willing to give. The cheerful giver says, "All I have comes from God and I give it out of his hand" (1 Chronicles 29:14b). AMEN

Meditation's Concluding Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind us that when we give we are simply taking out of your hand and giving it back to you. Make us cheerful in our giving. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

Please note that this meditation contains information from the following sources:

A Wikipedia reference to Stewardship (Theology) found at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewardship_%28theology%29

"The Journey," with Ron Moore found at <http://www.thejourneyradioministry.com>

Hymn: MV 182 "Grateful"

Closing Prayer/Sending Forth:

We leave our time of worship prepared for our lives as the stewards of God's blessed bounty, of God's trust. We leave this place prepared to show the world that in our sharing the blessing of our gifts and talents, we present the gift of love. May they overcome hate and work for justice. We leave this place grounded in the mission of Christ's example, secure in strength, alive in faith. We leave this place to go boldly into the world to proclaim the way of Christ. We leave this place to love, serve and be stewards of God's creation. AMEN.

Blessing:

Go forth, for the love of God is yours to share, the peace of Christ is yours to extend, the power of the Holy Spirit is yours to offer. AMEN

This prayer and blessing are inspired by the "Blessing," from the Season of the Spirit worship resource for August 26, 2012

All biblical texts used here are from the NRSV version of the Bible

Some relevant, alternative stewardship scriptural references: Genesis 1:2[1:2], Psalm 104, Psalm 113, 1 Chronicles 29:10-20, Colossians 1:16, and Revelation 1:8.