

Stewardship Under the Cross **God's Word on How We Use His Gifts**

What is Stewardship?

Christian stewardship is the faithful management of our financial resources and all we have. It begins with the understanding that all we have is God's (Ps. 24:1 "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it") and that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (1Tim 6:7). Since all we have is God's, we should use it for His purposes. God's purpose for us in our lives is expressed in the various vocations, or callings, that we have. So, for example, a father and mother use their income to feed, clothe, and protect their children.

Besides the vocations that each of us have in our family life and in society, we are also all Christians and members of this parish. How do we use our income faithfully in regard to this vocation? To learn this we must look to God's Word.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 ¹⁷You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Luke 16:13 Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Malachi 3:8-9 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings." ⁹You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me.

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9:6-8 But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving. . . . The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything.

What does this mean?

Your heart always goes where you put God's money. Stewardship is not an optional subcategory of the Christian life; it is the living out of a Christian's dependence on God. As such, faith and finances are inseparable. True joy is found not in storing up the things of this world, for the things of this world won't last. True joy is found in clinging to Christ who poured out His life for you on the cross and now gives you His Life in Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. The

things of this world are temporarily given to us by God to see and we will be called to account for how we manage the Owner's things (Rom.14:10-12, 2 Cor. 5:10).

Prayerfully Consider Your Giving

Prayerfully consider your giving to God's work in His Church. Are you faithfully giving a first-fruits tithe (10%) of your income to the work of God? Are you, as St. Paul says, "excelling in this grace of giving"? If not, why not? In next month's newsletter we'll consider more of what God says about Stewardship – specifically more about tithing (the Biblical practice of giving a tenth of our income to God's work in the Church) – and provide steps for planning your giving for next year.