

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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A Stewardship Story: Dan and Sharon



“ ... there is a place for telling the story of God’s work in the lives of His people. ”

The Lutheran tradition does a tremendous job of telling the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Generation of Lutherans have been well trained in the proper distinction of Law and Gospel. As former LCMS President Rev. Dr. Al Barry would insist, we’ve been successful in getting this message straight and getting this message out. When Christians of any stripe, and even those outside the Church, listen to Lutheran preaching and teaching, it is clear that there is something different happening.

This truth is to be cherished. The center of what the Church is to be about in preaching, teaching, education and stewardship is

to be focused on the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ! It is not possible to be good stewards of the Gospel as we tell the story of Scripture if the stories that are told are about human ideas, human intuition or feelings and emotions. The Church is a story that is rooted firmly in Jesus. As John asserted in John 20, *“Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”* (vv. 30–31). This is a story worth telling!

But one weakness that Lutherans have is telling the story of the work of Jesus in

the lives of those stewards who have been assembled around Word and Sacrament. This is not an advocacy for personal testimony in worship. That practice is fraught with danger. It is far too easy for that to devolve into anthropocentric navel gazing that focuses on mere humans rather than the Savior of humanity. But there is a place for telling the story of God’s work in the lives of His people. That is exactly what is found in the history of Israel that plays out in the Old Testament. There is value in hearing their stories. The story of God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm is also our story.

Story can play a powerful place in the formation of stewards. Jesus knows this

when He highlights the widow who dropped her mite into the treasury box in the Temple (MARK 12:41-44). He told her story as a pattern for the stewards to follow. She continues to be a powerful example of the faith of the steward. This story is not about stewardship self-righteousness. It is a story about the faith of the steward in action, responding to God's work in her life.

Telling Our Stories

Dan and Sharon are a stewardship story. They don't have any pretense of being the paragon of Christian stewardship. But they are! Here is their story:

The new pastor had just come to town. During the vacancy, the steward leaders of the congregation had decided to set in motion the workings of *Consecrated Stewards*. The dates were all set for events. Just after the installation of the new pastor, the calls started for the congregational dinner that would be held as a part of commitment weekend. The cards were passed out. Faithful volunteers started calling those who had not yet responded. There is nothing out of the ordinary yet in this story.

Enter Marge. No event in the congregation would be complete without her service. She was one of the callers. In her stack was the card for Dan and Sharon. Marge faithfully called. Sharon answered. After the short explanation of the reason for the call, Sharon abruptly interrupted Marge. She related that several years earlier their daughter had died and no one from the church had even contacted them. The hurt in the call was palpable. Marge took a good note and apologized. That could have been the end.

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But it wasn't. The story of Dan and Sharon continued. The new pastor visited the couple. Four hours later it became apparent that some of the issue was a lack of communication. Jesus was active. Confession was made.

Forgiveness was shared. A relationship was restored. This is what happens when God's people are active in their stewardship of the Gospel!

One might ask how this is a stewardship story. Well, it is! For the story continues. Dan and Sharon returned to the Church. There isn't too much about their outward appearance that would make someone seek them out. They don't have much monetarily. Sharon has many health issues. Most of their social calendar is marked by attending the funerals of neighbors, co-workers and friends. But they were rich in their growing faith. They started coming to receive the Jesus who had forgiven them because they knew they needed it to forgive their pastor. They didn't like crowds, so they became regular attenders at the newly formed Monday night service. Soon Dan became aware that they needed an usher. When he was asked to serve, Dan willingly said yes. He even went to the local thrift store to get a sport coat because, as Dan said, "an usher needs a good sport coat!"

As the years passed, Dan and Sharon continued to serve. But their stewardship of the Gospel was just beginning. Their



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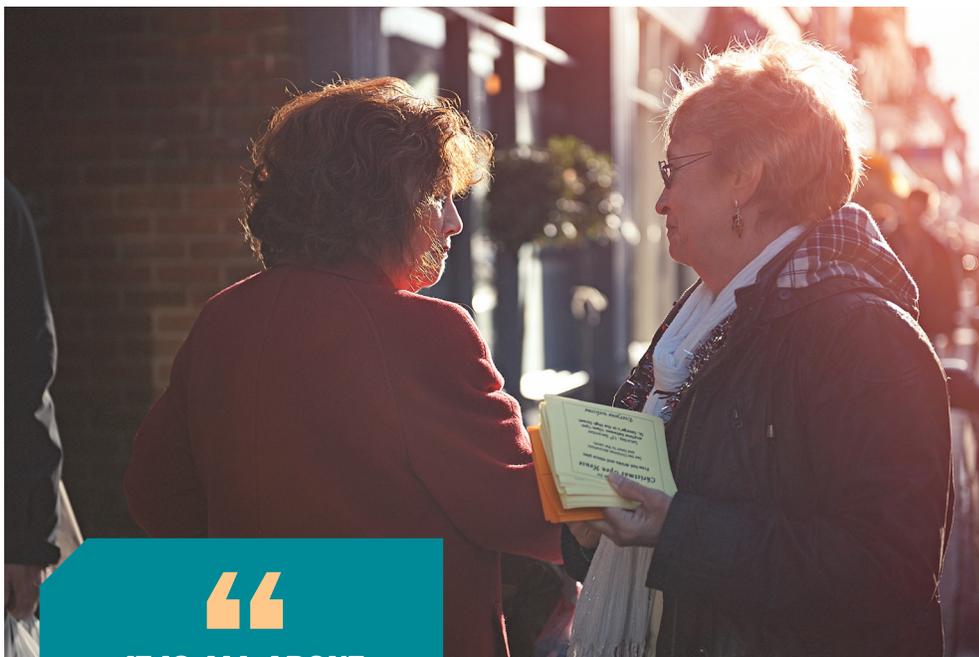
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“
IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE. IT IS ABOUT STEWARDSHIP OF THE GOSPEL IN AND THROUGH THEM.
”

stewardship story deepened because of a deer. Their son was an avid Harley rider. He and his girlfriend were riding at highway speed when a doe jump out in front of them. The son hit the deer and was killed instantly. As soon as Dan and Sharon heard the news, their first call was to the pastor who had been at their table years earlier. These twice-broken parents knew the only source of healing would come in Jesus.

In their grief, they missed a couple of weeks of Monday night services. After the second Monday, Dan called the pastor. He confessed that he had been gone long enough. Dan asked if he could come back to serve! And serve they have! Dan and Sharon have expanded their service. They now open the doors and turn on the lights every Monday night. They are the first to ask about those other Monday night regulars who might miss a week or two. Dan has become a communion assistant. Sharon even offered to become the Monday night altar guild so that they could have

communion more often. They don’t put massive amounts of money in the offering plate, but they are tremendous stewards of what God has given them!

Glory to God!

Should this story be told? Yes, it should! It should be told not to hold up Dan and Sharon, but it should be told to hold up the way that God can take a retired cheesemaker and his wife and use them for His glory! Steward leaders have heard more than enough excuses from those they are called to lead. “I can’t give.” “I can’t serve.” “I don’t have time.” “I don’t have gifts.” “I am just too simple to serve.” If stories like that of Dan and Sharon are told, excuses are blown away! They have placed the mites each week in the way that they have faithfully served the Lord who has served them.

Every congregation has their Dan and Sharon. Steward leaders simply have to open their eyes and their ears so that they can be found. Notice, the story of Dan and Sharon isn’t about money. It isn’t about how great they are. It is all about Jesus and what He has done. It is about stewardship of the Gospel in and through them. Find their stories. Jesus is at work in the Dans and Sharons in your place! Tell them. Share those stories with us if you are so compelled. Send them to pastormeador@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing them!