

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

lcms.org/stewardship



Prepositional Stewardship

There are certain prepositions that very often come up in the discussion of stewardship. Stewardship has been described as what the Christian gives TO. This makes sense. Theoretically, the steward gives a gift TO the Lord. Practically, this is done most often TO the local congregation. This allows the congregation, then by extension district and Synod, to be active in mission and ministry as they meet their budgets. This giving TO allows for the support of workers, the maintenance of property and the preaching of the Gospel. The preposition TO is directional. It often finds its end locally as well. The local congregation may well be the end of the

giving TO with very little thought about what exists beyond the local context.

But TO is not the only preposition that is often connected to stewardship. When speaking about the rationale of stewardship, there is also extensive use of the word FROM. The faithful Christian steward gives their gifts FROM gratitude to the goodness of the Lord. St. James reminds, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (JAMES 1:17). The life of a faithful Christian steward confesses this as they respond to this gift by managing all of life and life's

resources considering whence these gifts come. The Lord gives, and the steward gives FROM a desire to respond. This stewardship preposition also tends to be limiting. It makes stewardship very personal. This can only happen when the steward is willing to engage two stewardship questions: "How has God blessed me and how is He calling me to respond?" The danger in this reflection comes when the steward forgets FROM whence the gift comes. This forgetfulness flows from the residual effects of the Garden of Eden. There, our first parents forgot who was God and who were supposed to be stewards. This continues when the modern-day steward thinks that they actually own things!

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above ...

There are other prepositions that are included in the grammar of stewardship. Sometimes “over” and “above” are used. These are used by congregational leaders who are urging an even greater commitment of stewards to give FROM gratitude to the Lord and to give TO the ministry needs of the local congregation. Prepositions like these, while well-intended, often reinforce the shortsightedness of the Christian steward. They lead them to see stewardship as only a local endeavor designed to perpetuate the institutions of the local congregation. In a worst-case scenario, these prepositions lead the hearer to feel manipulated by emotions like fear that flow from the reality that without support, favorite institutions may cease to operate.

Forward and outward

There is, however, yet one more preposition that better captures the essence of a faithful steward. That preposition is THROUGH. As one reads the Scriptures, the idea of “steward as conduit” is one that is easily seen. In the creation account in general, the call of the steward is to work and keep the creation for the sake of others. The working and keeping of Gen. 2:15 is for the sake of the results of Gen. 1:28’s injunction

“The work of the steward is now to be about stewarding the Gospel.”

to be fruitful and multiply. The working and keeping of the steward was never for self. It was always a forward and outward movement. The steward was to work and keep the creation for generations to come!

The Lord God entrusts to His stewards things of the greatest value. The perfect creation was the first treasure entrusted to the steward. This working and keeping didn’t go well. The aftereffects of the stewardship failure of Adam and Eve are felt to this day. This is the great reason that modern stewards have such a challenge with stewardship. The modern steward, living in a fallen world, is still to be about the original, pre-fall task of working and keeping the creation for others. But these

stewards are discharging that task in a fallen world, where each steward faces the daily temptation “to be like God” in the way their first parents attempted to be.

But this forward and outward nature of stewardship forms the way that the forgiven and restored steward is to carry out their task of being a steward. Forward and outward are the directions of the Gospel! The Lord Jesus went forward and outward from His eternal throne to secure the re-creation. At cross and tomb, Jesus sets right the order that stewardship failures of all time had messed up. From that complete work of death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit has poured forward and outward, calling failed stewards to repentance and faith in Jesus! Working through the Gospel, the fallen and restored steward is set free from the fear of death and is restored to the task of working and keeping!

Stewarding the Gospel

The first and foremost treasure entrusted to His stewards is the treasure that is the Gospel. The work of the steward is now to be about stewarding the Gospel. This



StewardCAST is published monthly by:

LCMS Stewardship Ministry
1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122
888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
infocenter@lcms.org
lcms.org/stewardship

StewardCAST may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

- President of the Synod:
Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison
- Interim Executive Director,
Office of National Mission:
Deaconess Dorothy Krans
- Author:
Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador
*Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church,
Plymouth, Wis.*
- Coordinator:
Robbie Clasen
- Designer:
Lisa Moeller

How to Subscribe

To subscribe to *StewardCAST*, register online at lcms.org/enews. Select *StewardCAST* from among the “Stewardship and Giving” newsletters.

Support LCMS Global Mission Fund

Your gift to the Global Mission Fund impacts people around the world and in our own backyard through acts of Christian compassion, wherever the need is greatest at the time the gift is made. Gifts are used exclusively to support Synod's *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* work at home and abroad.

[GIVE NOW](#)



© 2017 LCMS



is done with the full investment of all of life and life's resources. But the work of the steward employing their management of the First Article gifts entrusted by God is not central. This working and keeping all serve the stewardship of the Gospel! Every gift of the created order is used by the faithful Christian steward for the sake of the delivery of the Gospel to others. Yes, this does include financial stewardship. But it is also so much more. It is the investment of all that we are and have in being faithful caretakers and sharers, not owners of what God has done for us in Christ.

Ripples of stewardship

This makes faithful Christian stewardship in the modern world a forward and outward action. The Holy Spirit working through the individual stewards that make up the corporate stewardship of the local congregation, district and Synod is inherently a missional act. For this reason, it would be helpful for the local congregation to shape their stewardship message along the ripples that flow out of the wonder that is Acts 1:8. There Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

An Acts 1:8 model of stewardship is one that is first and foremost directed by the Holy Spirit. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit that calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies and

keeps both the individual Christian steward and the entire Church. It is that working of the Holy Spirit that allows for stewardship of the Gospel first in the Jerusalem of the home. It is there that real stewardship that is selfless and for the sake of others is modeled. From the home comes the stewardship that is carried out for the sake of others in the Judea of the local congregation. If there is a place where stewards of the Gospel should work most clearly, it would be within the body of Christ! This then overflows and ripples out to the Samaria in which the local congregation has been planted by the Holy Spirit. Stewards of the Gospel are led by the Holy Spirit to be the hands and feet of Jesus for their neighbor so that they too might see the Gospel at work among the community. Then, joining with other congregations in the district and Synod, the ripples of stewardship for the sake of the other in the Gospel continues in regional, national and international mission work. Stewardship that flows through the conduit of the faithful steward to the world in need is the kind of stewardship that the Scriptures teach!

Prepositional stewardship is key to this. But one needs to adopt the correct preposition. It is time that the church stops focusing on the TO and FROM, for these allow for ownership mentality to still sneak in. It is time for us to move to a stewardship understanding that is THROUGH God working in and through His stewards for the sake of the kingdom.