

Stewardship of Time

We know that God has entrusted the earth and everything on it to our care. The Bible says we have “dominion” over the earth and all its creatures, plants, seas, and the fish within them. But, regardless of what you might have heard from someone claiming a biblical faith, “dominion” does not mean that we *own* any of God’s creation, or that it is ours to do with as we will. Our dominion is properly expressed in stewardship. A steward is a trusted, respected servant — almost a partner, in some ways — who has significant latitude but who is expected to return what has been entrusted, with increase.

In terms of Creation, we partner with our Creator in our care for the earth and for our brothers and sisters, present and future, who depend on this planet’s ability to sustain life indefinitely.

But this mini-series is about the Stewardship of the Time that is entrusted to us in the form of life itself. How are we to care for this precious gift?

If we are to care for our life — our time — in such a way as to achieve some added value, some increase in the gift we are entrusted with, it might seem like we should start looking for something to DO with our time: what can we make, or whom can we serve, that makes our time more valuable? It’s a reasonable question, but it’s the wrong one to start with.

The first task we have to do with our time (life) is to build a relationship with God. But how? The Old Testament of the Bible is basically the account of God’s people trying to build a relationship with God with noticeably inconsistent and frustrating results. Their experience revealed to them a God who was sometimes happy, sometimes angry, sometimes available and sometimes absent. This was a God who might just decide to flood the entire earth, or turn someone into a pillar of salt, or destroy a town with an earthquake or who knows what else.

They longed for God, but they were also wary of God. And this is not the ideal framework for a relationship.

Then, in God’s good time, God’s own Word enters the world in the person of Jesus, who is the son of the living God and of Mary. God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, becomes one of His own creatures, and we finally have a way to build a relationship with God through His Son. No longer are we flying blind in trying to understand God and how to relate to God. We have a Brother, a Shepherd, and a Guide who comes right out and tells how to relate to God: Love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul (actually, we knew this already, but maybe didn’t get the implications of it), and your neighbor as yourself. This, says Jesus, summarizes the whole Law and the Prophets.

And how do we pursue the relationship with Christ that will show us how to love God and neighbor so completely? We have two avenues: A vibrant personal prayer life, and of course, the sacramental life of the Church with the Eucharist at its center. In fact, the Eucharist will turn out to be the center of our personal prayer life as well.

And now to the punch line of this reflection: Prayer takes time. Actual time. Definite time, set aside, focused, committed, and attentive. The regularity and commitment is more important than the actual quantity of time we devoted to prayer. If this isn’t typical for you, start slowly.

We can pray anywhere, and we should. We can pray at the beginning of each day that our entire day might be a prayer in itself. Very good. But some specific, regular, and committed time in prayer is the goal here. This time can include recited prayers like the Rosary, the Chaplet, or other prayers we have learned and memorized. But we also need to cultivate the ability to listen to God’s voice.

Our prayer is meant to bring us closer to God through Jesus, so that we come to understand that God wants to be in a personal relationship with us, that this is why He sent Jesus to be a part of our life — He pursues us! —and that our unworthiness for such a personal relationship has nothing to do with God’s desire to have it anyway.

It looks like there’s at least another week’s worth of material in this subject. I’m going to have to pray about it.