LCMS Stewardship

It's in the Way that You Use It (Originally Published October 2023)

Consider the humble baseball bat. It is a simple tool designed for a complex task. The batter needs a tool that can consistently deliver force to a small ball which may be thrown at over 100 miles per hour, but which might also come slanting across the plate as a slow curve. For a game like this, the founders of baseball had to redesign the old cricket bat, which is more of a flat paddle. The tool had to fit the job.

But even a specially-designed tool can be used for a different purpose. It turns out that some years ago in England, the home of cricket, baseball bats suddenly started selling like hotcakes. What were folks across the pond doing with all those baseball bats? Using them as clubs in riots!

A tool can be used, and it can be misused. It's all in the way that you use it.

The same is true with the things of God. The Second Commandment states that we should "not misuse the name of the Lord." In the Small Catechism, Luther goes on to tell us exactly what this misuse is, as well as the proper use:

> "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks." (SC I)

The Lord has given us His name: He has placed it upon us in Holy Baptism and He has invited us to pray to Him as our Father. In this sense, the Lord's name is something for us to use. We should not misuse it … and we should not fail to use it. The Pharisees of old were so afraid of misusing the name of God that they decided to simply never say the name of God (YHWH, Jehovah) at all! This non-use is just as bad as misuse. The Lord gives His gifts for our use.

A Christian steward is one who is called to use all of God's gifts for His purposes. This includes things like the Name of God, the Sacraments and the Word, and it also includes things like our family and friends, our talents and skills, our money and resources. Everything that God has given to you, He has given to you so that you may be blessed to use it for His kingdom.

It's all in the way that you use it!