

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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Stewards of Our Body: Sacred Space for a Sacred Purpose



Last month in the *StewardCAST* we talked about being stewards of sacred space: The sacred space we steward is so much more than the nave where the Lord gathers His people around Word and Sacrament. It includes the space in our schedule when we are being filled with the Word. It could include a quiet corner of your living room, a break space at the office, or even your car while you commute. What makes these spaces sacred is not what the people in them are doing, but what the Lord is doing! Where the Lord is working in Word and Sacrament, we find sacred space.

Fearfully and wonderfully made

This extends also to the human body. As the psalmist says: “I praise you, for

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (PSALM 139:14). When one considers the intricacy of the human body, the magnificent wonder, the interrelated systems, and the almost limitless potential, thinking of the human body as a sacred space is not out of bounds.

The body is a magnificent machine created by a magnificent Lord for a magnificent purpose. That purpose is stewardship of all that belongs to the Lord (PSALM 24:1). We find this in the words of institution of the office of steward. Genesis 1:26–28 informs us that we were created as bearers of the image of God. This does not mean that we look like God, but that we are to reflect the will of the Creator toward creation. How we live, work and keep the Creation

(GEN. 2:15) fulfills our purpose and serves as our worship. In a real way, all faithful stewardship of creation takes place by sacred space within sacred space.

That can sound pretty tinny in the ears of human beings. It is clear in the way humans think, speak and act that the sense of the sacred is often lost, or even more accurately, tossed away by sinful selection. How often do stewards take that which has been created good and turn it into a godless idol? Money is amoral. The idol-making factory of the sinfully corrupt human heart tries to make it a god. The heart does the same with everything the Lord creates good. Spouses, family, achievement, leisure, house, home and every other item one might find in the lists in Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Creed and Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer are so often morphed into idols.

This failed stewardship of the created order includes the human body. How often does the steward not care for the very body that has been fearfully and wonderfully made? When the human body is not nurtured and nourished properly, it makes the already difficult stewardship process even harder. The pain and toil which the Lord prescribes in Genesis 3 is felt acutely in Adam and Eve’s successive generations. Idolizing control of life and choices, the human body is filled with substances that numb the pain and cover the stressors. Alcohol and drugs are just the beginning. Caffeine to cover poor stewardship of sleep, sugar and preservatives which cover poor nutrition of the body,

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and prescription drugs to cover the years of abuse and excesses inflicted upon the body take their toll. Stewards claim ownership of their body. This is just an extension of idolatry of generations of stewards.

Bought with a price

The Creator responds to this. His response is almost confounding. For those who have sullied the sacred spaces of creation, including the human body, the Lord doesn't cast down fire and brimstone. Instead, He sends His Son, His only Son, to redeem failed stewards from their own sinful choices and the consequences that come with them. Rather than rousting out and casting aside, Jesus comes alongside and redeems. The currency of innocent suffering and death pays the redemption price for failed stewards.

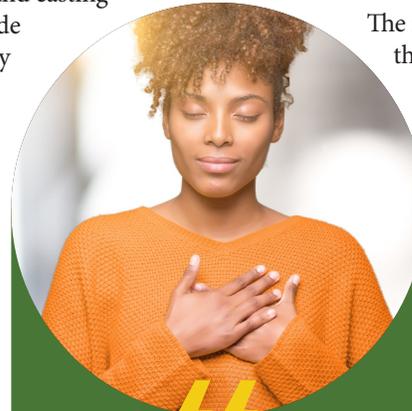
The human body entrusted to you remains not your own. St. Paul rightly calls the Corinthians and us to repentance when he says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 COR. 6:19-20). While he is speaking of sexual immorality, these words extend to the entirety of stewardship of the body. Redeemed and restored by the blood of Jesus at Calvary, the steward is returned to the task of stewardship of all created things for the glory of God.

The chief treasure, in fact the ONLY treasure to be stewarded is the Gospel. Everything that has historically been lumped under the heading of "stewardship" is actually the means by which the Gospel is stewarded. The treasure of the Gospel, poured into the steward by grace in the waters of Holy Baptism, filled up again and again in the preaching of the Word of God and overflowing from the table of the Lord's Supper is nothing short of amazing.

Treasure in jars of clay

But this treasure, which makes the space in which it is contained sacred, is stored in less than pristine conditions. Again St. Paul says, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 COR. 4:7). The human body, still marred by sinful corruption, is chipped and dinged and cracked. It doesn't look like much on the outside. But it is still sacred. Like the sacred space in the church is centered around the Word and Sacraments (Augsburg Confession VII), the body is sacred because Christ has been poured into it by grace!

The fragility of the jar calls for the faithful steward to take better care of it. Age and infirmity take enough of a toll on the jar. When the steward doesn't care for their body, allowing it to become unhealthy because of unhealthy choices, the stewardship of the Gospel is impaired. Stewardship of the body is essential in faithful stewardship of the Gospel. Healthy eating and sleeping habits enable the steward to be a better steward of the Gospel. Healthy weight and exercise enable a more faithful stewardship of the Gospel. It is just that simple.



“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?”

While in no way simplistic, it is a simple solution. The faithful steward confesses that the body they have is not their own. The care they have for it is accountable to the Creator. The Lord also has grace! Now is the time for faithful stewards of the Gospel to get serious about the sacred space that is the vessel of the Gospel that is their body! Make the decision to care for that which is not your own in such a way that it gives glory to God! The Lord has even put people in the world to help this process. Seize this opportunity. Let your stewardship of the body entrusted to you by the Creator and redeemed by the Savior glorify the One who has done this for you!