

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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Stewards of Sacred Space



The failed steward is tasked with stewarding a sacred promise that is the Gospel.

Throughout the Bible we hear stories of sacred space. When the Lord spoke His all-powerful Word into the chaos of pre-creation, we are told the result is very good. It was just the way He made it. Perfect. Holy. Sacred. Adam and Eve were given stewardship of this sacred space to work it as kingdom priests and to guard it like vigilant soldiers. Genesis 1:26–28 creates the office of steward. Genesis 2:15

gives the steward his marching orders. From these paradise-rooted beginnings stewards have always been stewards of sacred space.

Fallen-yet-promised stewards

But this stewardship has not always been faithful. The first stewardship crisis of Genesis 3 highlights the failure of the first stewards. This sin introduced conflict between Creator

and steward, between man and woman, and between man and creation. That conflict led to anything but sacredness as the story tells of hiding from God, pain in childbirth, and toil which leads to death. The sacred space of the Garden is shattered by the unfaithful shenanigans of the failed stewards.

But man is never relieved of his office of steward. The failed steward is tasked with stewarding a sacred promise that is the Gospel. The promise of a Savior was stewarded for generations. This promise was of the sacred bursting into the common. The Scriptures are replete with examples of the stewardship of the sacred within the mundane.

While the classic location of this stewardship of sacred space is the Tabernacle and later the Temple, there are so many more examples of fallen-yet-promised stewards at work stewarding sacred space. Noah stewarded sacred space as he built an ark in the middle of the desert. Abraham stewarded sacred space multiple times as he left Haran on the way to the Promised Land. Moses was a steward of sacred space at the Burning Bush. Jacob did it both at the ladder to heaven and as he wrestled with God. The nation of Israel did it as they heaped Jordan stones before the conquest.

These stewards were at work in the stewardship of sacred space that wasn't Temple. These spaces were sacred not because they said they were sacred. They were sacred because the Lord made them

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sacred by His presence. In all of these cases mentioned, and the myriad other examples that could be cited, these heroes of the faith were very often surprised by the sacred nature of the space.

Sacred spaces among the ordinary

This becomes informative for modern day stewards as well. The stewards of the completed Gospel work of the long-promised Messiah Jesus Christ are stewards of sacred spaces as well. These sacred spaces include the sanctuary, where the font is filled with life-giving, eternity-changing water, the pulpit is overflowing with the same Holy Word that creates and sustains faith in fallen humanity just as it created in the primordial chaos, and an altar serving a sacramental feast to forgive failed stewards and nourish them in their redeemed stewardship of the Gospel.

But beyond the walls of the church building, God's people are also stewards of sacred spaces. Homes become sacred spaces as parents steward their families into the Word of Life that is the Gospel through devotions. Dinner tables and bedtime prayers are just the beginning of this. A family meal at McDonald's can be that sacred space when the Lord is openly thanked for the chicken nuggets and French fries. A corner of the living room where personal time with the Lord in Word and prayer takes place becomes sacred space to be stewarded. Even a lengthy commute can become sacred space when the morning drive is saturated not

with news or entertainment, but with God's Word played from a podcast which leads to prayerful contemplation of the day.

All of life and life's resources

All of the steward's life, from the inception of the office in the Garden, has been one of stewarding the sacred among the ordinary. Stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing of all of life and life's resources for God's purposes. As stewards manage all of life for God's purposes, sacred space breaks in all over the place. Not because the steward wills it, but because this is the task of the kingdom priest-steward established and directed by the Lord of the universe.

Fallen but redeemed stewards are those whose eyes and ears are open to the task of stewardship of sacred space. It certainly does happen in the places where God promised it to happen. But this stewardship of sacred space also happens in the unexpected as well.

Steward leaders need to make this reality known to those under their care. This knowledge overcomes the sinful partitions we put up in our lives. Too often God's people lay claim to the secular as their property. Psalm 24:1 argues against that. Sacred time and sacred space, which really is all of life and life's resources, work hand in hand for God's purposes of stewardship of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for this generation and the generations to come.