

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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Stewards of Sacred Time



In last month's StewardCAST there was a call for faithful stewards to start to live as "exiled stewards." This means those who are created and redeemed to be stewards actively embrace the idea that the world in which the steward lives is not an ultimate destination. The steward labors in a world that looks and feels far more like Babylon than the Promised Land. But this is where the

Lord has placed His stewards. Using created things, the steward is to reflect the love of the Creator within the fallen world. This is done by using created things to point the fallen world to the only thing worth stewarding: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian steward is a steward of a community within a community. The church is a little bit of Eden placed within the realm of the fallen world.

"Exiled stewardship" in the church calls for our community-within-a-community to be both distinct from and engaged in the world. We are distinct because our community is defined by the Lord. Like the tabernacle was at the center of the community that was ancient Israel, so the altar is a defining centrality to our exiled steward community. It sets us apart. It absolves us. It nourishes us. It sends us to live the different kind of life for which the exile steward has been formed and redeemed. Because of what this community of exile stewards sees, hears, tastes, touches and smells from and around the altar, we are different.

Putting away the "T's" of stewardship

It is this difference that calls us to a unique stewardship of sacred time. This stewardship of sacred time is different than the tired expression of stewardship of time that has been taught in decades past. In fact, it really is TIME for us to put away the old "T's" of stewardship. They are not helpful in the least since they lead to a compartmentalization of stewardship that is just not present in the Scripture. The steward manages all of life and life's resources for God's glory. But this management is holistic, not piecemeal. There is no partial faithfulness in the steward. The steward doesn't get partial credit. The standard is pass/fail. We are faithful in all things, or we are unfaithful. To sanctify the work of author Jim Collins, "good is the enemy of [faithful]" when it comes to stewardship.

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

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STAFF

- Rev. Heath Curtis
*Coordinator (contracted),
LCMS Stewardship Ministry*
- Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador
*Assistant Coordinator (contracted),
LCMS Stewardship Ministry; Executive
Assistant to the President for Mission
and Mercy, LCMS South Wisconsin
District; and Official Lutheran Pastor
of the B93 Morning Show*
- Robbie Clasen
*Administrative Assistant,
LCMS Stewardship Ministry*

CONTRIBUTOR

- Lisa Moeller, *Designer*

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In Scripture there are two different words for time. Each carries a different connotation. One of the concepts is the one that we normally think of when we hear the word “time.” The linear nature of time slipping, slipping, slipping into the future is indeed one of those concepts. The word for this sort of time in Greek is *chronos*. Chronological time is indeed an element that the faithful steward is called to handle as a trust from God. Time cannot be saved. It runs through our fingers like water. We can manage time more or less faithfully, but it cannot be stored or restored. Because of this, faithful stewards entrusted with minutes, hours and days do need to be intentional about their stewardship of this fleeting trust from the Lord. Every moment of chronological time is a matter of stewardship of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Stewarding two types of time

But there is a second concept of time. The word for it in Greek is *kairos*. This is the sacred time that the steward is really all about. *Kairos* is not measured by clocks or calendars. *Kairos* is more about the *right* time rather than the quantity of time. It is the stewardship of *kairos* time that leads to our stewardship of *chronos* time. When the steward’s days and weeks are anchored in sacred time — with set times in the day for the Word and prayer and set times for being gathered by the Holy Spirit for Word and Sacrament with the body of Christ in the Divine Service — then it is possible to be faithful in chronological time. Stewardship of sacred time establishes faithfulness in stewardship of all time.

Stewardship of *kairos* time reveals truths about the steward. There is an old adage that goes “show me your calendar and I will show you your god.” Does your chronological stewardship of time have fluid or infrequent moments with the Lord in worship, at the Table and in prayer? This betrays a stewardship that is defined by other gods. When our stewardship of *chronos* time — work time or play time, leisure time or kids’ game times — smothers our stewardship of *kairos* time, it reveals not a time problem but a First Commandment problem. Seeking the Sabbath rest our Lord created us for and calls us to in Holy Baptism calls for our *kairos* time to be the guide in our stewardship of all time.



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Let it be a call to repent. After all, repentance is the way of life for a Christian steward! Stewardship of sacred time is not about how much time is being spent in service to the Gospel. It is about spending the right times in stewardship of the Gospel. The steward cannot manage what they don’t have. A steward not sitting at the feet of the Master runs the risk of running dry. But when faithful with *kairos* time — Word time, Sacrament time, Gospel time — then

it is the Lord who fills the *chronos* time in life with grace shown in mercy and love to the neighbor.

Sunday morning is the next opportunity for the steward to be faithful in *kairos* time. Today in devotion and prayer is yet another. God grant the steward faithfulness in little so that they may be faithful in much!