

# StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

[lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)



## Stewardship Assumed Is the Gospel Denied

Several years ago, the sainted Rev. Herb Mueller wrote a tremendous article while serving as president of the LCMS Southern Illinois District entitled “The Gospel Assumed Is the Gospel Denied.” Later published in *Concordia Pulpit Resources* 15.3, this article nails the need for the faithful preacher to actually preach the Gospel. Mueller rightly points out that “assuming the Gospel is the height of arrogance. It is as if we are saying, ‘We all know what God has done for us in Jesus, so we can go on to teach and learn other things today.’” This assumption of the Gospel in preaching has a deep impact on those who hear this preaching. Again, Mueller hits the nail on the head: “Without clear Gospel preaching, sanctification alone just becomes more law — law that makes God’s people so self-righteous that we don’t see our need for Jesus or so despairing that we don’t believe His forgiveness is for us. When the Gospel is assumed, the sermon will not connect people with its power.”

This last point causes pastors and steward leaders to sit up and take notice. For too long the objection has been raised that any kind of stewardship formation in the congregation is nothing but Law. Preaching of stewardship as Law alone has the negative impacts of which Rev. Mueller warned. It either leads to the self-righteous steward claiming that they have “paid their fair share” or that they “should be given credit for their time and talents” even when their stewardship is lacking; or it leads to such despair that any mention of “stewardship Sunday” will lead God’s people to stay away from the Divine Service for fear that they will once again be beaten down and left for dead by the preaching on that Sunday.

### The narrow way of faithful preaching

This highlights the fine line that the preacher and steward leader walk when preaching and teaching stewardship. To assume anything in this process is to fall into the ditch on either side of the road. But to walk the narrow way of faithful preaching of the Gospel, and thereby faithful preaching of stewardship, is a challenge not for the faint of heart. In fact, humanly it cannot be done. But here is where Mueller’s article gives great comfort: “The Spirit uses the means of grace to gather us for worship, because in those means Jesus Himself comes



It is the proclamation of the Gospel that leads to faithful 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](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org)  
[lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)

StewardCAST may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

#### 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*

### How to Subscribe

Complete our easy sign-up form to receive free newsletters, worship bulletin sentences, church newsletter articles, and other resources from LCMS Stewardship Ministry. Subscribe at [lcms.org/email-signup](https://lcms.org/email-signup).

### Support LCMS National Mission

The LCMS Office of National Mission works within the borders of the United States to support the programs and resources available to congregations, districts, schools, Recognized Service Organizations, and other Lutheran organizations.

**GIVE NOW**

[lcms.org/givewith/nationalmission](https://lcms.org/givewith/nationalmission)

© 2022 LCMS



to us to serve us with His forgiveness.” This clear Gospel, not assumed but proclaimed, gives the steward leader this confidence: “Our works of service are really the works of Christ through us. He gives us His Spirit to produce fruit.”

It is the proclamation of the Gospel that leads to faithful stewardship. When the steward is led to see from the clear, faithful preaching of the whole counsel of God that they were created to be a steward (GEN. 1:26-28) and then in Baptism transformed and restored to that role of steward because of the mercies of God in Jesus Christ (ROM. 12:1-2), there can be neither self-righteousness nor despair. The Gospel preached points to Jesus. Jesus for the steward. Jesus in the steward. Jesus through the steward.

### Stewardship and the Gospel

When the preacher, either out of ignorance of what Scripture and the Confessions say about stewardship, or out of fear of how his hearers might react to even the mere mention of the word “stewardship,” assumes that he can remain silent on the topic, an equally egregious failure occurs. When stewardship is assumed, the Gospel is denied. The steward, created in the image of God and bearing that image in Baptism, still struggles. When stewardship is taught as a mere human work and is judged by the results (e.g., a

balanced budget), the Gospel is denied. This Gospel-denying stewardship teaching robs the hearers of the freedom and new life that only the Gospel can bring! Again Mueller excellently points out, “Growing in sanctification takes place life-long as the Gospel of forgiveness transforms ... relationships by constantly transforming. ... It happens when Jesus’ ‘victory parade’ comes into the ‘funeral procession’ of ... life. If we preach Christian living, assuming that we do not have to bring our people to the turning point between law and Gospel, they will remain stuck in their own ‘funeral processions.’ ... Their outward lives may show immediate changes when only the law is proclaimed, but they are still dead in their sin, if they do not hear that Jesus died and rose for them.”

For years steward leaders have known that we cannot assume that faithful stewardship will come about in the congregation without intentional effort. Today, the time has come for those in the position of steward leader to intentionally view their efforts in light of the Gospel. In all of our preaching and teaching we must ask: Are we assuming the Gospel? The answer is repentance. It starts with preparation that is driven by the Bible and not the budget, the cross more than the cost, resurrection rather than result! When steward leaders stop assuming the Gospel, then neither the Gospel nor stewardship are denied!