A Broader Perspective on Stewardship

At this year’s District Stewardship Leaders Conference, Dr. Wayne Knolhoff led a devotion that presented stewardship in a much broader perspective than most would view it. Using 1 Corinthians 3:20–22, Dr. Knolhoff showed us that when the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, uses the word “stewardship,” He is talking about much more than our wallets and purses.

“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile. So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 COR. 3:20–22).

This issue of StewardCAST would like to share these stewardship thoughts with a broader audience.

First thought: All things are yours.

The danger in these words is that we might see the things that we have in life as ours. You see, when a gift is given, there is the idea that a transfer of ownership takes place. When you give a birthday gift to a friend, you transfer ownership of that gift to your friend. That is not the case in stewardship. God does not give us ownership of the things we have in life. More accurately, He entrusts us with the things that we need to support our body and life and the body and life of our neighbor. God entrusts us with all we need to steward our life and the lives of those around us so that we might be faithful stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Second thought: We are stewards of people.

As the Lord entrusts us with all things, we are to use these trusts for the benefit of our neighbor. Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul lamented the factionalism in Corinth. But Paul, Apollos and Cephas were indeed used by God to steward people into the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who created factions viewed the work of these men wrongly. God allowed these men, and you and me, to be stewards of people for the sake of the Gospel. We have been entrusted with wisdom from God, with talents from God, and with time to be present with those around us for Jesus’ sake. The trust we have received from God was never intended to be hoarded by us. This trust is granted so that we might employ these resources for the sake of those around us. It starts in our families. But then this trust radiates out into our congregations. It permeates the way we live out the Gospel in our workplace and neighborhood, our community activities and relationships. We use what God has entrusted to us in ways that show those around us Jesus.

Third thought: We are stewards of the world.

God entrusted our first parents with the entire creation in the Garden. How did that trust go? Read Genesis 3. But this failure to
work and protect the Garden opened up the promise of the Gospel: God would send a Savior, not just for mankind, but for all of creation! Jesus is that promised Savior. As we have been baptized into Christ, we also have been entrusted with a new perspective on stewardship of creation. We steward the world in a way that reflects God’s love for it. If Jesus was willing to come to redeem creation, of which we are a part, then we have also been redeemed by Jesus to care for creation in a manner that reflects the love that God has for it. This means that we care for creation not out of fear that if we don’t, we will all die, but out of faith in Jesus Christ. He loved the world enough to die for it. We steward creation in such a way that it points others to Jesus!

Fourth thought: We are stewards of life.

Life is sacred. From conception to natural death, all life is a trust from the Lord. How we invest this trust reflects what we believe about the One who was willing to lay down His life for us and the world. This means we use the trust that God has in us to protect, defend, extend and preserve life so that we may point others to the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life: Jesus.

Fifth thought: We are stewards of death.

This may sound a bit morbid, but as we steward the life that God has entrusted to us in this world, we also confess that we are but resident aliens in this world. This trust is temporary. But our Baptism reminds us that we have already died with Christ and have been raised with Him (ROMANS 6). This takes away our fear of death in this world. It is a call to entrust the life we live in this world to Jesus. This means that we live for the Lord. It also means that when we die, we die to the Lord. Our life and death is a confession of the trust that we have been given in Jesus!

Sixth thought: We are stewards of the present.

Our faithful stewardship takes place in time. Stewardship is not some philosophical endeavor. We are stewards of what we have been entrusted within our time. In worship, at the rail, and in the world, we steward the trust we have been given by God for the sake of those around us. In this way, we are His hands and His feet to serve our neighbor for His glory.

Seventh thought: We are stewards of the future.

While we have no control over what happens tomorrow, our stewardship today can indeed affect the future. Our congregations are legacies of the faithful stewardship of those who now rest from their labors with Jesus. As we live today, and as we give today, we are laying the groundwork for the future ministry of the local congregation. As you reflect on this, rejoice that God has given you this trust to faithfully steward for Him and for the benefit of your neighbor!