



What is Christian Stewardship?

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Note: The following article is a reprint of an article first published in June, 2007. As disciples of Christ we are all stewards of the abundant and varied gifts of God entrusted to us. From time to time we need to be reminded about our responsibilities so that we can faithfully return to the Lord what He has first given to us in love.

The Bible has much to say about “stewards” and the practice of “stewardship.” In the church this concept is usually considered a pious code word for “fundraising.” We need money to achieve our institutional goals. We must devise ever more clever appeals to separate people from their wallets. When we do this for good causes, especially religious causes, we call it stewardship. Many, if not most people think that stewardship is little more than fundraising for Jesus.

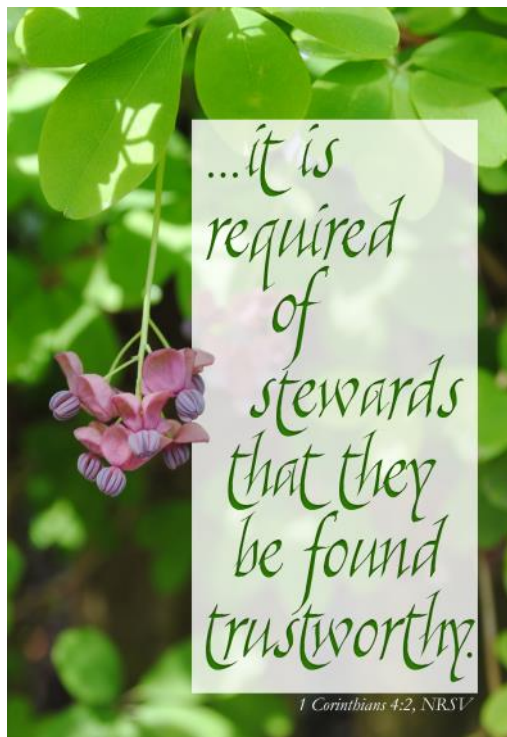
This is all a terrible distortion of stewardship. A steward is simply a person who manages the wealth and property of another. Joseph was a steward in the household of his master, Potiphar. He was a very wise and able administrator, and Potiphar prospered by his faithful labors. Most of us who have mutual funds or savings plans also have

stewards. We don’t decide specifically what stocks to buy. We trust the manager to do that for us, but it remains *our* money. We hope the manager has our interest at heart when he invests our money. We probably would not entrust our property to a disreputable company. Just as we entrust our wealth to the care of managers, so God entrusts His property to us. He trusts us to manage that portion of His “portfolio” placed in our power. Stewardship is managing the gifts God has entrusted to us.

The problem is we are not “trustworthy” by nature. Our flesh is self-centered and self-serving. It does not recognize God’s claim on our life and rejects the idea of His ownership. The flesh is never inclined to yield fruit to God. By nature everything is mine, only mine, and rightfully mine. I may choose to give it away, but only on my terms and for my benefit. There is no thought that God owns me and all that I have and that I have any duty to use His bounty in a way that pleases and glorifies Him. The natural man is blind, dead, and an enemy of God without the slightest ability to yield anything to Him.

True stewardship begins with faith in Christ. People can give to charitable causes without faith in Christ. Some unbelievers are, indeed, great philanthropists. Hypocrites can give large sums to the church or temple, as we see in the New Testament, but even this is not Christian stewardship. Jesus says, “Without Me you can do nothing.” The writer of Hebrews says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Faith in Christ alone regenerates the spiritually dead heart and empowers it to serve God and man. Someone has defined stewardship as “faith in action.” Another says it is “what I do after I say I believe.” Christian stewardship embraces the whole of life, not just money. St. Paul, in Romans 12, calls all Christians to live as stewards, saying, “*I urge you brothers,*

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will" (vs 1-3). In the Old Testament, sacrifices resulted in the death of animals. Through the once and for all sacrifice of Christ, Christians are now called to place their own bodies on the altar, but not to be slaughtered. Our "offering" is to be a "living sacrifice." Our whole lives are now to be spent in thankful, joyful service to Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor 5:14).

As a Christian you have been "bought with a price." You no longer belong to yourself or to the devil, but to Him who purchased you with His holy, precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death. Christ lived and died for you so that you might be "His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." Living under and serving Christ in one's life IS Christian Stewardship. Rev. T.A. Kantonen, author of "A Theology for Christian Stewardship," has offered the following comprehensive definition of stewardship:

Stewardship is nothing less than the distinctively Christian orientation to

life as a whole. It concerns not only congregational or religious activity in the narrow sense, but all aspects of the believer's life, both individual and social.

In the next few newsletter articles I will deal with various aspects of the stewardship life in the hope and prayer that we might all be stimulated to ponder our blessings in Christ and encourage one another in regard to our responsibilities as Christians in this world.

Blessings in Christ.
Pastor Huebel

Out of the Mouths of Babes by Pastor Tom Chryst



Art Linkletter had an old TV show called, "*Kids Say the Darn'dest Things*". He would simply interview children in such a way as to draw out their view of the world – often different than adults, and usually fairly humorous to us. Others have repeated this approach in various formats over the years. In a way it never gets old. Sometimes the children surprise us with a wisdom beyond their years, or some ironic truth that they're clearly too young to understand. But something about children is both endearing and disarming, and their simple and somewhat innocent way of looking at the world can also teach us adults a thing or two.

Jesus had a special place in his heart for children, even little ones. He rebuked the disciples when they tried to keep those bothersome children away from him. He said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them – for of such is the kingdom of heaven". (Matthew 19:14). We quote this passage at the baptism of infants – not because Jesus was there speaking of baptism per se, but because we see in Holy Baptism a most excellent way in which Jesus does receive even the littlest of children into his loving arms.

Another time, his disciples were arguing about their own greatness. So he put a child in their midst as an object lesson, "whoever receives one such child as this, receives me". (Mark 9:37) Children are not to be regarded as lowly or without value because they don't have as much to offer as adults. Rather, they may have something to teach us about greatness, servanthood, and humility.

And He commended the faith of children: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the

kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Luke 18:17) Children are also commended for their faith. The trusting child, who believes his parents and knows they are watching over him – this child is a paragon of faith. Would that we receive the Father's love and the promises of Christ with such childlike trust.

Jesus also quoted the Psalms which poetically used the praises of children as testimony of the Messiah.

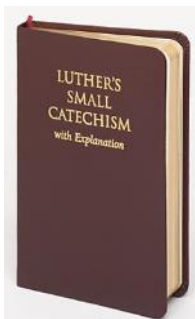
and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" (Matthew 21:16)

But children aren't always seen so favorably in Scripture. Paul warns the Corinthians to stop acting (or at least thinking) like children: "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature."

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(1 Corinthians 14:20) and "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."
(1 Corinthians 13:11). Some have described this as a contrast between being "child-like" and "child-ish". Clearly there are aspects of children we want to admire, and aspects we ought to avoid.

One of the refrains I've heard around Messiah over the years is, "We love kids". To me, very few things can show the heart of a congregation more than how we view children. I've often said that the child screaming during church is "music to the pastor's ears", because it's the sound of young families doing what they ought to do – bringing their children to Jesus. A church that never hears the occasional screaming child is a dying church, at least



demographically. Thanks be to God for the young families faithfully bringing these little lambs to the Good Shepherd.

As we've found through our approach of classical education at our school, Children also, especially at an early

age, learn like sponges – and even memorize quite easily. This is a beautiful way to teach the faith to our young people – through catechesis. That is, a series of questions and answers that can be easily recited and taken to heart. "Q: *What does this mean?* A: *We are to fear and love God...*" Memory work doesn't come as easily to older kids and adults, but it's still not worthless. Music also helps us to take the truths of Scripture and of the Christian faith to heart. And so it continues to be a vehicle for carrying the word of God among us.

When a child has been taught the Word of God, catechized in its truth, he or she may not fully understand it. For that matter, which of us adults fully comprehends the Divine Word? But still, they can often put us to shame with the simplicity of their confession, the laser-beam focus of their faith that knows beyond doubt that Jesus died for us.

Soon we will welcome another batch of young people – no longer quite children - into a deeper commitment to their faith through the Rite of Confirmation. We will recognize the formal training they've received. They will join us as discerning recipients of the Sacrament of the Altar. We will rejoice with them in the confession of faith they will make before us. And we will continue to

encourage them to put away childish things, even as they retain a child-like faith in Christ who's word they have received.



Children of God, at any age, really do say the darnd'est things. Or the most heavenly things, rather. They (we) speak the very word of God. We recite the promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We confess, not only our sins, but also our faith in the one who welcomes even the lowliest among us. By the Spirit that has called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified us – we the Children of God in Christ Jesus speak as we have been given. The truth in love. Always to the glory of God and for the sake of our neighbor.

The **Issues**, Etc.

MAKING the CASE CONFERENCE

June 8 & 9 in Collinsville, IL



Scott Klusendorf - Life Training Institute
Making the Case for Life

Rev. Will Weedon - LCMS Worship
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Rev. Hans Fiene - Lutheran Satire
Making the Case for the Centrality of Justification

Dr. Angus Menuge - Concordia University Wisconsin
Making the Case against Scientism

Also featuring **Rev. Jonathan Fisk** and **Craig Parton** during the live broadcast of Issues, Etc.

Registration Information can be found at: <http://issuesetc.org/conference2018/>

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The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

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Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org

Sing a New Song. by Vicki L. Main, Kantor

Our April Hymn of the Month is *Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure* – LSB 654. The text was written by **David W. Rogner** (b. 1960). He is Distinguished Professor of English at Concordia University Chicago, where he has served since 1986. He received his Ph.D in English at Loyola University Chicago. He has published a number of poems, hymn texts, and psalm paraphrases, including hymns in our *Lutheran Service Book*

(CPH, 2006) and in Carl Schalk's collection *Sing with All the Saints* (GIA, 2014), as well as psalm paraphrases in *Salvation's Joy: The Psalms of Heinrich Schütz Recast* (CPH, 2008). In our hymnal he has also translated the text for *Jesus Comes Today with Healing* – LSB 620.

The hymn tune writer, **Joseph Herl** (b. 1959), has ties to Texas. He holds a master's degree in organ performance from North Texas State University and a Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; he is also an Associate and Choir Master of the American Guild of Organists. Currently he is assistant professor of music at Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska, where he teaches courses in music history, music theory, hymnody, liturgy and parish music administration. He is quite prolific in arranging choral music and hymnody. Here at Messiah, we have a number of choral arrangements in our music library by him as well.

Since 1996 he has been involved in the production of hymnbooks for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, first as a compiler of the *Hymnal Supplement 98* and editor of the *Hymnal Supplement 98 Handbook*, and more recently as a compiler of the *Lutheran Service Book* and author of its historical handbook.

His academic interests include the history and practice of hymnody and liturgy, Latin Lutheran plainchant, the influence of doctrine on worship, liturgical inculturation, the music of the Middle Ages, American art music since 1950, and the teaching of harmony. He is also interested in looking for ways to further the cause of music instruction in Lutheran elementary schools.

654 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure

- 1 Your kingdom, O God, is my glorious treasure,
My pearl of incomp'able worth.
Its value exceeds ev'ry standard of measure,
Surpassing the wealth of the earth.
Lord, give me Your grace and the pow'r of the Spirit
To value this treasure aright
That, never allured by the world, I inherit
Your kingdom of glory and light.
- 2 Your kingdom, O God, is alive with the power
Your Word and Your Spirit bestow.
Like yeast, they affect the whole measure of flour,
Enabling Your kingdom to grow.
Empower me, Lord, as I live Your commission,
Though humble my service may be,
And bring ev'ry planting to perfect fruition,
A mustard seed grown to a tree.
- 3 Your kingdom, O God, is a field for the growing
Of seeds that Your mercy has sown;
But still in our midst is the enemy sowing
The weeds that imperil Your own.
Sustain me, O Lord, till Your day of returning
And harvest me homeward at last,
To shine in the homeland that quiets all yearning,
Where sorrow and danger are past.

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The scripture for this hymn, Matthew 13:24-33, 45, will probably be familiar parables to you. They are carefully woven into the three stanzas and wonderfully carried along by the melody.

To God be the glory!

Miscellany (/ˈmɪsəˌlənē/) noun. —a mixture or collection of different things

- We have some **free tickets** to the Pregnancy Help 4 U fundraising banquet. If you would like to attend, see Pastor Huebel.
- MLCA is hosting several fun **camps** this summer. Go to the blog section of the website, mlcatexas.org, for more information.
- Yes, we are having a **Vacation Bible School** this summer! We'll be announcing the dates soon—so

watch the bulletin. If you'd like to help in any capacity, contact Vera Sweet.

- **Save the date:** our school's annual auction will be held on May 11. It will be a carnival theme, with fun for the whole family.
- **Don't forget** to like us on Facebook, and follow us on Instagram and Twitter! Help spread the word about our church and school! #MLCATexas