Stewardship as a Way of Life: Perspectives from Classic Texts in Scripture

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Session One:

“The Basics of Stewardship: Our God-Given Humanity”
God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Grant us, we pray, to be grounded and settled in your truth by the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. That which we know not, reveal; that which is wanting in us, fill up; that which we know, confirm; and keep us blameless in your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 86
26 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

29 God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
Creation of Adam by Michelangelo (1510)
Questions for Discussion

1. When and where is “stewardship” discussed outside the church, if at all?

2. When the word “stewardship” is used, what thoughts come to mind?

3. What differences are there between “dominion” over all living things (Genesis 1:26) and “exploitation” of them?

4. If communities have stewardship responsibilities, what does that mean for the congregation in society and within the larger church?
Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us coworkers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 80
Session Two

“Jesus, Money, and Faith”
• O God of power and might, your Son shows us the way of service, and in him we inherit the riches of your grace. Give us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to serve the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

• —Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 53
“The Rich Young Ruler,” Henrich Hofmann (1889)
Martin Luther on a Person’s God

“A ‘god’ is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.”

“The Rich Fool” (Anonymous)
Discussion Questions

1. When we use the word “abundance,” what do we mean? Does it refer only to material possessions?
2. Discuss the statement: “It is not wrong to have wealth, but it can be dangerous.”
3. What attitudinal shifts about money have you observed in your lifetime?
4. Read again the text from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34). What is the difference between anxiety and trust?
5. Consider again the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21). What is the difference between planning for the future and trusting one’s abundance for years to come?
• God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. Fill us with good things at your table, that we may come to the help of all in need, through Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord. Amen.

• —Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 64
Session Three:

“Faith Working through Love”
Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life which you have given us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

—Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 140
“St. Paul” by El Greco (1606)
Martin Luther on Good Works

• “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works.”
• There are two kinds of righteousness. The first is “alien righteousness.” That is “the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies us by faith.”
• The second kind of righteousness is our “proper righteousness,” and consists of “that manner of life spent profitably in good works.”
“Peter and Paul” by El Greco (1587-92)
“Paul Receiving Collection at Corinth” (Anonymous)
Discussion Questions

• 1. Does talk of “good works” make us nervous, especially when it comes to the use of our money?
• 2. Does Paul’s phrase “faith working through love” help us to relate faith and works?
• 3. Do the needy of the world actually have a claim upon our possessions, as suggested above?
• 4. How might we speak of stewardship in the congregation in such a way that it means more than “giving to the church”?
• 5. How might we speak of “giving to the church” as a part of our stewardship?
Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

—*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 64