

Stewardship As A Gift To Children

Texts: 1 John 4: 7; Stewardship Handout; Matthew 19: 13-14

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Do you remember in the old days, when tv first came out, and you had to stand up and walk over to the tv in order to change the channel? Yes, kids, there actually was a time when we had to do that!

It's a lot easier now that we have a remote control. Now we just have to get up, look under the couch cushions, check the side table, and walk to the kitchen to see if we left the remote there when we got our popcorn, then change the channel. We've made a lot of progress in the last 60 years!

It used to be when you heard that the sermon was about Stewardship that you would have to walk out in front of the whole church and perhaps embarrass yourself if you didn't want to hear it.

Now you can just pull up Twitter and start doom scrolling until the sermon is over. Just remember to smile for the camera and no one will know!

But don't give up on Stewardship yet! It has some powerful insights and some mighty blessings if we let it in.

A steward, of course, is someone who is charged with looking after someone else's property. They have control over how it is used and what it is used for, but ultimately they are responsible for turning the property back over to the one to whom it really belongs.

Psalm 24 sets the basis for all our stewardship when it proclaims, "The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it."

The Psalmist says that everything we have belongs to God, that it comes to us as a trust from God and we will eventually have to give it all back. This was brought home to me powerfully just a few weeks ago when I received a cheque from my father's estate. What was once his is now mine, and what is now mine, will one day belong to someone else. It's just passing through my hands.

So the question of stewardship isn't how much we can keep of what we have and how much we will have to give away, since in the long run everything but a nice suit or our best dress is

going to someone else.

The question is, what will we do with what comes to us as it passes through our hands? How can we make the biggest impact on our world, and leave behind a lasting legacy, from the way we use the resources that come our way? That's the question of stewardship.

In our reading from the Apostle John's first letter this morning, the apostle suggests that acting in love is the way to go. Those who act in love, he says, are born of God and know God.

When we act in love with the things we have, we show our family resemblance to the God who has given us everything in the first place, to whom everything ultimately belongs. It is out of God's love that the world exists, and that we exist, and that a future beyond this world exists for us.

It is out of love that God has entrusted us to be stewards over what we have from God.

When we act in love, we show that we understand the intentions of the One to whom everything ultimately belongs. Love itself is an act of self-giving in heart and mind and soul and spirit and intellect, and of wealth, too.

So our theme for this year's stewardship drive is Stewardship as an Act of Love. And today our subtheme is "Beloved, love the Children."

It's natural, then, that we should hear about Jesus and the little children. When some parents bring their children to Jesus to be blessed by him, the disciples see the children as an annoyance and the parents' actions as an interruption of Jesus valuable time, but Jesus brings them up short.

He says, "Let the little children come to me, and don't stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

Now, I don't know about you, but I've heard these lines a million times, since I was a child myself, but until I was writing this sermon it never occurred to me that these were stewardship lines.

You see, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the children. It's not ours, at least not yet; it's something that belongs to the future, something that we are passing on, handing over to them.

Our stewardship in how we use the resources God has given us to build the kingdom of God, why, that will be our legacy, that's what we will pass on to our children.

What we have done to build God's kingdom will become the starting point for their stewardship of God's kingdom. What we leave undone will have to be made up by the generation that follows, piling yet another task on their shoulders.

Seeing little children reminds us that there is a world that we are making in which we will not live, but they will. It is a world that we will pass on to them, as stewards do, and they will either bless us and our memory for the good stewardship that we have exercised, or they will grieve over the poor stewardship that has left them in a mess.

What are we going to do about hunger and homelessness so that our children won't have to deal with it, or live through it?

What are we going to do about racism, about sexism, homophobia, transphobia, so that our children will have less on their plate when they grow up, so that they won't have to worry that who they are makes them somehow less than others?

What will we do to take care of the natural world so that our children's children get more than just a picture of a tiger or a panda or a polar bear as examples of animals that used to roam the earth, but do so no longer?

All of these are questions of stewardship; all of these are questions of love. What are we going to do with our lives, so that our children's lives, our grandchildren's, will be at least as good as ours, and hopefully better?

Our church is a focal point for activities that change the world. We try to deal with hunger and homelessness. We stand up for social justice to make the world a better place. We are beginning to recognize our role in preserving our natural world for future generations.

And the church is a place where these topics get discussed, where we can get energized to do things outside of the church, with other organizations, too. The church is a place where God challenges us to be stewards, and to pass on a rich legacy of people acting in faith to give our children and grandchildren a better future.

The world, unlike our tv sets, doesn't work on remote control. If we are going to change it, we are going to have to get up off the couch and move. We're going to have to use energy, and enthusiasm, and put our all into it.

That's the characteristic way that children do things they want to do, with their whole being, with all their energy, and with a kind of delightful naiveté about how difficult the challenge might really be!

This is what God is challenging us to do in making us stewards over some part of God's resources, over our own time and talents and gifts: to find something that we love, something that is important to us, a lasting legacy that we want to hand on to our children, and to throw ourselves wholeheartedly into that.

When we leave this world, we will take almost nothing with us. But what we leave behind can be an investment in our children that will pay interest many times over. What we hand over to them can be better than what we received. That's good stewardship.

I know this church is a part of making the world a better place, and I hope you'll consider supporting it as one of the many things you do with the resources God has given you to look after on your journey through this world.

May God bless you richly, and may God bless the children of tomorrow through our loving stewardship of God's resources today.

Amen