

Mosaic – The Christian Life – Week 3 – Stewardship Gifts that Give – Pr Jim Sprenkle, August 15, 2021

- I. **Romans 12:1-2** – ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...
- II. **The past two worship services were great reminders...**
 - a. First, the Word of God is the foundation of any disciple or follower of Jesus
 - i. We tend to avoid it, neglect it, and lack knowledge of it, but it reveals the grace of God and His will for our lives
 - b. Second, worship and the sacraments build on the Word of God.
 - i. We receive the grace and blessings of God each time the Holy Spirit calls us to gather in this place
 - ii. The Lord's Supper, Baptism, and His Word provide the spiritual food we need to live for Him
 - c. Today we consider stewardship, or how we manage God's gifts.
- III. **St. Paul begins Romans chapter 12 with a "therefore"**
 - a. "Therefore" usually points to something previously said, and in Paul's letter, he has spent the last 11 chapters giving the "what" God has done.
 - b. The Book of Romans is a monumental part of the Bible, and Martin Luther's big breakthrough came while reading it.
 - i. For example, Romans 1:17 says, "the righteous shall live by faith" – which came to mean that by faith we are called righteous by God.
 - ii. Also, Romans 3:23-24 – "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified (called not guilty) by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"
 - iii. And in Romans 6, we read that through baptism, we are connected to Jesus' death and resurrection. (Romans 6:3-5)
 - c. The big "so what" of all these chapters is that God has made us right with Him by the gift of grace through our faith in Jesus Christ.
 - i. We are not in charge of our own salvation... God has done all that work for us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus our Savior.
 1. If it wasn't clear in the past two Sundays, God is a huge giver.
 2. We all fall short of His glory (Rom 3:23) and in that state of helplessness, even while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8), God sends us His love, mercy, and grace through Jesus.
 3. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes (has faith) in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
 - ii. I can't tell you enough times... Jesus died for you. Jesus died for ME!

- iii. And without that gift of faith and grace that God gave to us, we could never reflect that gift into the lives of others.
 - d. So, we go full circle to Paul as he says in Romans 12:1, “therefore...”
 - i. We have the incredible gifts of God’s love, mercy and grace... “therefore...” What?
 - ii. Therefore, we offer our bodies as sacrifices... living and holy, which is pleasing to God. (Romans 12:1)
 - iii. Sacrifice means that we give the body that God gave us... the gift of life and holiness through Jesus and our baptisms (Romans 6) and we use our WHOLE selves for His glory.
 - e. Nothing we are, or own, or use is just for us...or our selfish purposes. All we have is for God’s glory
 - i. That means that we don’t take credit for all the good in our lives, and we live like we care about what God wants...
 - f. Paul is exhorting and encouraging all believers to use the gifts God gives them to give back...
 - i. That is God-pleasing and a type of worship...
 - g. Rather than allowing the world to tell us what’s best – we are transformed to show how much God loves us by our inward and outward commitment to Him and His will.
 - i. The word is metamorphosis – or what happens to a caterpillar when it goes into the cocoon and comes out a butterfly.
 - ii. We were buried in baptism and came out a new person...

IV. **A new person in Christ is a steward or manager.**

- a. Managers don’t own things, they just take care of them.
- b. I can’t tell you how many people get confused about what stewardship means... they mostly consider it a way for the church to ask for money.
- c. Stewardship is exactly what Paul is saying, that our entire life and everything in it is under the ownership of someone else – God.
- d. Our money? Sure... Our talents and abilities? Yes. Our time to serve? Yes.
- e. We can try to take credit for things, or we can call something “mine”, but the truth is that God is the giver of everything – from our daily needs for our bodies to our emotional and spiritual needs.
- f. In fact, when we don’t turn everything over to God, we can see it come back around to cause trouble.
- g. I read an illustration from a pastor in Haiti who said,
 - i. A certain man wanted to sell his house for \$2,000. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn’t afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: he would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door.

- ii. After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell. So first the owner went out found the carcass of a dead animal and hung it from the nail he still owned. Soon the house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail.
- iii. The new owner made a crucial mistake in allowing someone who did not have his best interest in mind a foothold in his life.
 - 1. Satan will come back into your life again and again to hang his rotting garbage on the places you claim for yourself... the places you hold back from God.¹

V. **All the glory and honor and credit go to God!**

- a. Everything we have is His alone and a gift that we can give... share with others.
- b. I know it may seem difficult to consider giving your time, talent or treasure.
 - i. Part of being able to let go of these things is proper perspective about whose they are (God's).
 - ii. A second part of letting these things go is trust.
 - 1. God's will is to give you His gifts, which builds a trust in Him to care for you even if you give away things for Him.
- c. Yet, the work of God is to bring more people into His love and care... and that's what our good stewardship does.
 - i. Stewardship shares the Good News!
- d. I've pointed this out before, but the support of our members and friends – whether it be financial, talents and abilities, or time in volunteering – has brought thousands of people the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Since 1958 our congregation has reached into the community with the Good News – 1000's of people have heard the message of salvation within these walls – from pastors, teachers, and all who supported the worship and community here.
 - ii. The early childcare center, the soccer clinic and servant event, and mission trips around the nation and globe, and our many ministries have touched the lives of 1000's of children and adults with the love of Jesus Christ
 - iii. Our stewardship of God's gifts...The gifts we manage... change lives.
- e. And so this is our big picture lesson for today... God gives so that we give.
 - i. This is His way of spreading love and care to others.
- f. Remember the great transformation that took place because of your baptism and faith, because these are the gifts that give. Amen.

¹ Dale A Hays, *Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 2.*