

September 1, 2015

Stewardship as a Way of Life

“Each man and woman should give what they have decided in their hearts to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work;” (1 Corinthians 9:7-8, NIV)

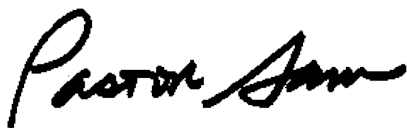
“Mom, Pastor Sam is on the phone and he wants to speak to you!” “Pastor Sam? Why does Pastor Sam want to speak to me? Have I done something wrong? Why would he want to speak to me”? Wait for it. Wait for it. That moment of clarity when you realize why Pastor Sam or someone else from the church is calling you. Duh!! It must be stewardship time. You know. That uncomfortable time in the otherwise beautiful fall, when someone calls you to ask you what your pledge will be for the upcoming year. Ugghhhh!

It’s unfortunate that we sometimes get to the place of reducing stewardship as a way of life by how much money we will give to the church in the upcoming year. It is such a disservice we experience when stewardship--\$\$\$\$-- is reduced to one aspect of discipleship. Why not step boldly, humbly, graciously into the abundant life as the result of offering our best selves and every gift to God? Wouldn’t it be exhilarating to generously sow what has generously been given to each of us? Isn’t it liberating to know what each man and woman decides in their heart to give will be met with the abounding grace of God? Not to have to do so reluctantly or under a guilt trip compulsion, but rather as a cheerful response to God’s goodness. God loves a cheerful giver. God was a cheerful giver even when giving cost God everything. We become God’s cheerful responders because of what God has done for us.

Well good news! This year there won’t be any calls or uncomfortable moments. Rather, we will celebrate stewardship within a more comprehensive worldview. Within the context of a larger story. Stewardship as a way of life. The way God intended it to be.

I’ve often said, “Life can and rightly should be a joyful response to what God has done and is doing in our lives through the risen Christ.” If that is the case, and it is, our entire lives individually, corporately, and as a community of faith can be a joyful response to God’s giving goodness. Receiving all we have, all we are, and all we are becoming as a gift of God. Then we may determine to consistently live out the best of the rest of our lives in gracious response to what God has done and is doing in our lives. Stewardship as a way of life of which money is a part! And while we’re there, our time, talents, gifts and treasures are also good gifts of God to each of us. Why not throw it all in there? Just allow God to shape our entire lives—including all the gifts God bestows upon us—in our joyful response to God’s goodness. It will be transformational. It will set us free from the very things which promised our liberty to do what we want to do, when we want to do it, to the degree we want to do it. Truth be known that’s just another form of slavery. Stewardship season is more than during the fall and deeper than a generous offering to the church to help fund the goings-on. It is a gracious and joyful response to living a life of deep satisfaction that comes as a gift to offering God and one another all our gifts through the best of the rest of our lives. The fiscal year for stewardship is birth to death. To God be the glory!

“Mom, Pastor Sam is on the phone and he wants to speak to you!”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Sam". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Pastor" and "Sam" being capitalized and prominent.