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In Search of the Best Practices in Preaching on Christian Stewardship

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IN SEARCH OF THE BEST PRACTICES IN PREACHING ON CHRISTIAN
STEWARDSHIP

A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
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October, 2021

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I dedicate this MAP to my wife, Penny Schuessler, who has been my Barnabas, my encourager and supporter throughout the entire process of research and writing. Soli Deo Gloria.

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ABSTRACT

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Pastors are challenged to preach Christian stewardship within their parishes in a way that they not only overcome the personal and congregational biases against stewardship sermons, but will also assist their congregations to grow in their knowledge of stewardship and help them to become better Christian stewards. This project sought to find pastors that have discovered ways to preach stewardship that increased the congregational stewardship life and assisted individual members to become better stewards. This study intends to help the parish pastor to learn how to address stewardship on a regular basis, be more confident in his preaching of stewardship, and keep the Word at the center of each stewardship sermon.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

“Pastor, it is budget time. Could you preach another one of those stewardship sermons that make people realize they have to give more to meet the budget?” While this is a fictional question asked of a pastor, it represents the thought that exists in many Christian congregations. Stewardship is equated with giving the offering, meeting the budget, or tithing to the church. This has been brought about by years of preaching stewardship at budget time. James B. Lemler writes, “For most Episcopalians stewardship is synonymous with pledge drives, budgets and capital campaigns.”¹ Within the Lutheran church, we have the same issue taking place. Stewardship is tied with budget time. The pastor is expected to preach a stewardship sermon that will lead the members of the congregation to fill out their pledge form so that the budget committee can fulfill the task of setting the budget for the new year.

Waldo Werning points out that congregations also have what he calls the “tyranny of the urgent.”² What he means by this is that the urgent need of the congregation to meet their budget or bills for the next month or year overtakes the mission of the church itself. Instead of focusing on Word and Sacrament ministry, the congregation finds itself facing one fiscal crisis after another, so that the focus of stewardship becomes “unpaid bills and unmet budgets.”³ This creates the dilemma for the pastor when he wants to preach on stewardship. Everyone is looking to him to preach a meaningful sermon that will lead people to give more to the current crisis or the fulfillment of the budget but not address the real need of the congregation to develop a

¹ C. K. Robertson, *Transforming Stewardship* (New York: Church, 2009), viii.

² Waldo Werning, *Supply-Side Stewardship: A Call to Biblical Priorities* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 10.

³ Werning, *Supply-Side Stewardship*, 10.

deeper, more spiritual stewardship life.

The pastor desires to preach about stewardship in a way that will assist the hearers of the sermon to understand the meaning of Christian stewardship so that their lives will begin to reflect what it means to be a Christian steward. Unfortunately for the pastor, in the modern church there is little or no connection between personal spirituality and stewardship. Wesley Willmer, in *Becoming a Steward Leader*, outlines the history of the development of stewardship within the church that shows how Christian congregations arrived at the point where the laity do not want the pastor to preach about stewardship at all. He concludes “We have almost completely separated out how we use our possessions from our spiritual life of the soul.”⁴ This has created a sense of anxiety that preaching about stewardship causes for the pastor. Craig Satterlee points out that there is this “tension between the material realities of church life and the spiritual practice of giving in response and service to God.”⁵ When the pastor preaches about stewardship, the members hear him talking about keeping the doors of the church open rather than practicing Christian stewardship in their daily lives.

Add to this anxiety that the pastor is facing in preaching about Christian stewardship, the fact that no one person or congregation may define stewardship in the same way. Before the pastor can even begin to think about the task of preaching about stewardship, he must define what stewardship means to him according to the Word of God and the teachings of the church. Satterlee states, “For preaching stewardship to matter, preachers need to name what they mean by stewardship.”⁶ He then must work to help his congregation to understand that meaning so that

⁴ Mark L. Vincent & Joseph Krivickas, editors, *Becoming a Christian Steward* (San Clemente: Christian Leadership Alliance, 2012), 13

⁵ Craig Satterlee, *Preaching and Stewardship: Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow* (Herndon: Alban, 2011), 14.

⁶ Satterlee, *Preaching and Stewardship*, 6.

when he preaches about Christian stewardship, they will all be somewhat on the same page.

Because of this tension in preaching about Christian stewardship in the congregation, the pastor seeks to find useful and beneficial resources that will help him to keep the focus on Christian stewardship based in the life of faith. As the pastor seeks to bring stewardship into the regular preaching in the congregation, he finds that many of the resources focus on only one portion or section of the steward's life and may not fit with his definition of Christian stewardship.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of this Major Applied Project (hereafter abbreviated MAP) is to discover preaching practices that are beneficial in helping congregations to grow in their knowledge and practice of Christian stewardship.

The goal of this MAP is to present the best practices for preaching on Christian stewardship as I have gleaned them from interviews with exemplary preachers. These best practices will be helpful for the parish pastor as he preaches on stewardship in his congregation. This MAP will also present some of the possible pitfalls that these same pastors have discovered through their regular preaching on Christian stewardship. This will be helpful to the parish pastor so that he will not fall into those same stewardship traps in his preaching.

In working on this MAP, I will be asking the question: How can I identify, and encourage the use of, the best practices of preaching Christian stewardship in the Iowa District West of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (hereafter IDW). That which I will accomplish in the research and interviews for this MAP will begin with that question and will grow to encompass the application of those best practices in preaching.

Some of the desired outcomes of this MAP are:

1. A summary of responses from a sample of Lutheran pastors regarding their recommendations for effectively preaching on stewardship.
2. A description of some best practices for preaching on Christian stewardship which reflects the recommendations of the research participants.
3. A description of some pitfalls to avoid in preaching on Christian stewardship.

Process of this Project

My plan for this MAP begins with contacting Rev. Dr. Steven Turner, the president of the IDW, asking to meet with him via phone or Zoom⁷ in order to receive his assistance in identifying pastors in the IDW who have a strong stewardship culture in their congregations which can be traced to regular preaching on Christian stewardship. With Pres. Turner's approval, I will also be in contact with the circuit visitors of the IDW to ascertain from them men that might have a strong stewardship culture in their current congregation, as shown through their preaching. I plan to receive a list of approximately 10–12 pastors that I may recruit to participate in this research. I will contact these pastors to invite them to serve as participants in this project. I will ask them if they would talk with me about the possibility of being a part of my MAP research. After I have received responses from these pastors, I will send them the informed consent form to be interviewed via USPS. When they have returned this form to me, I will make an appointment for a Zoom interview with each pastor.

These interviews will then be conducted via Zoom, which is especially important at this current time due to Covid-19. I will send the men a few dates for their interviews. When each one has chosen the date that will work for him, I will send him the Zoom time and link. The

⁷ Zoom provides videotelephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform and is used for teleconferencing.

questions that each pastor will be asked are:

1. Briefly describe your background in the ministry.
2. With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?
3. With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?
4. Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?
5. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?
6. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?
7. What is the one driving thing that helps him to preach Christian stewardship?

Following the interview process, I will compile the information received from each pastor into two areas:

1. That which the pastor found beneficial in his preaching on Christian stewardship.
2. That which the pastor found that he should avoid in preaching on Christian stewardship.

This information will be organized into a collection of best practices, and I will provide an analysis of each practice.

Finally, I will develop a presentation of these best practices that will be shared with the pastors of the IDW Southwest Circuit, presenting them at a regular circuit meeting. I will then take the feedback offered by the circuit pastors and use that to improve the presentation for future use.

Research Presuppositions

I have several general presuppositions that I am making in this MAP:

1. Many parish pastors have a hard time preaching on Christian stewardship.
2. There are some pastors who demonstrate greater fruitfulness (i.e., positive effectiveness and impact) in preaching regularly on Christian stewardship.
3. Parish pastors need the support and insights of other pastors to continue to grow as steward leaders in their congregations.

The greatest limitation that I will need to apply to this MAP is that I will need to focus on one specific definition of stewardship. The approach that I am using for this MAP is defined as the Christian steward lives each day according to the will of God, bringing glory to God and working for the welfare and benefits of others. This definition includes traditional “time, treasure, and talents” in the life of the steward. It would not be beneficial to remove this understanding for the definition of stewardship.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND CREEDAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction to Biblical Foundation

In this section, there shall be a brief exegetical study of a variety of New Testament texts which speak about stewardship. As this study looks at each of these readings, it will begin to develop the Biblical foundation upon which the remainder of the study is built. In doing this study, a greater understanding of what it means to be a Christian steward will be developed.

One must begin work on the concept of stewardship by delving into what Scripture has to say about stewardship. This section shall look at the Greek word *οικονομέω* which is commonly translated as “to steward”. The meaning of this word in the Greek language is “to be a steward; to manage the affairs of a household.”¹ Thayer also says concerning *οικονόμος*, “the manager of a household or of household affairs; esp. a steward, manager, superintendent.”² This is where we get the concept of being a steward.

Stewardship in Luke 12:42 and 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

This concept shows itself in Luke 12:42, “And the Lord said, “who then is the faithful and wise manager (*οικονόμος*), whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?” Here, Jesus is speaking of the person who was set over the owner’s estate while he was gone. The man was not the owner. He has been set in the position of caring for the owner’s estate while he was gone. As such, he would also be called upon to give an account of how he had used that estate in the absence of the owner.

¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 440.

² Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 440.

Again, οἰκονόμος is used in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, as Paul writes, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards (οἰκονόμοις) that they be found trustworthy.” Here, the one entrusted with the mysteries of God is to care for and use the mysteries wisely. What are those mysteries? H. Harold Mare, writing in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, stated, “The secret things of God indicates the mysteries of salvation God has revealed in his Word – the things man cannot discover by his human wisdom.”³ Gregory Lockwood refers to Luke 12:42 in his writing concerning these verses. He stated, “Paul understood his and his coworkers’ responsibility for faithful stewardship in the light of Christ’s instructions.”⁴ Lockwood continued:

As the Gospel mysteries were a gift that had been revealed to them, not knowledge acquired by their own brilliance, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas – and faithful Christian pastors in any age – can only be regarded as stewards of a sacred trust.⁵

As Lockwood and Mare both begin to see the mysteries of God that have been revealed in these times as the message of the Gospel, along with the Means of Grace given for the use of Christians within the Church of God, one begins to see that being a steward has moved beyond just taking care of someone’s household or their material possessions, as was seen in Luke 12:42.

As one compares both Luke 12:42 and 1 Corinthians 4:1–2, it can be seen that being a Christian steward is much more than just caring for the physical things of this world or caring for the spiritual mysteries of the Church. The search for the meaning of οἰκονόμος was expanded, looking at some of the other passage of Scripture that addresses the use of material possessions and the connection to the Christian life.

³ Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 10* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 210.

⁴ Gregory Lockwood, *Concordia Commentary Series: 1 Corinthians*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000). 131.

⁵ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 131.

Jesus' Admonition about Possessions – Luke 12:22–34

In Luke 12:22–34 Jesus addresses the issue of the proper balance of living the life in the material world while trusting in the guidance of the Lord. Arthur Just stated, “Jesus connects the proper attitude towards possessions with the Kingdom of God.”⁶ As one sees these words of Jesus, the focus falls upon what He says in Luke 12:31, “Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.” Here it would be that one’s attitude towards the material realm is impacted by one’s attitude toward the Kingdom of God. Just stated, “Anxiety over possessions is a sign that one lacks faith.”⁷ This seems like a harsh statement except that is exactly what Jesus is pointing out to the hearers. If one is not guided by a desire for the kingdom of God, then there will be an undue amount of anxiety over the things of this world. The Christian steward should have his focus on the Kingdom of God as he lives his life, and then he will find that the needs, cares and supply of the material things lies firmly in the hand of God and not in his hand. When one focuses his attention on the material, striving after and desiring it more and more, the focus on the Kingdom of God will become less and less. The Christian steward is then not being faithful and, as is shown in Luke 12:41–48, will not be ready for the return of the master. Arthur Just gives a powerful statement of what it means to hold fast to the Kingdom of God in one’s life.

The two-fold Gospel message of this pericope (12:22–34) is this: For those seeking the treasure of the kingdom, the Father will provide adequate earthly treasure as well to sustain them in their journey from earth to heaven, and even more precious, along the way while still on earth, “little flock” (12:32) will be graced with eternal heavenly treasures through Christ, the Shepherd who washed his flock in Baptism, feeds his sheep with the new Passover Lamb – his body and blood in the Supper (Lk 22:14–20; 1 Cor. 5:7) – and tends them with the guidance of his Word.⁸

⁶ Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Concordia Commentary Series: Luke 9:51–24:53*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 509.

⁷ Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 510.

⁸ Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 512.

What we find in this section is the discussion about “attitudes.” What is your attitude toward your possessions? As Jesus says, “Seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you” (Lk 12:31). Here it is not so much about things, material possessions, but more about the stewardship of these possessions. Each one of us is entrusted with his possessions, yet one’s life is to be focused on faith in God, using those possessions according to His will and for His glory rather than for one’s own will. Here we see the heart of Christian stewardship – who/what is your God? The answer that one gives betrays his life of stewardship. If your focus is upon the material possessions, then seeking the Kingdom of God becomes secondary, as such, Christian stewardship fails in your life. More than that, how do you use that with which God has entrusted you? Seeking first the Kingdom of God, the material possessions are seen as blessings given by God, entrusted to one to be used according to His will and for the good of others. This is faith in action, in service to God and not in service to possessions. This is Christian stewardship.

Here one can return to 1 Corinthians 4:1–2. What do you do with the mysteries of God with which you are entrusted? These mysteries are the gifts given to you to be used in your daily life according to God’s will. The Christian steward will use these mysteries, these gifts of Word and Sacraments, faithfully, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁹ These gifts will help the Christian steward to grow in faith, trusting in the guiding hand of God the Father as He cares for his life, and thus, he will seek the Kingdom of God in his life as a faithful Christian steward. These gifts will assist the Christian steward to keep focused on the will of God and the service to others with the material possessions.

⁹ Gregory Lockwood, in the Concordia Commentary Series, *1 Corinthians*, states, “As the Gospel mysteries were a gift that had been revealed to them, not knowledge acquired by their own brilliance, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas – and faithful Christian pastors in any age – can only be regarded as stewards of a sacred trust.” p. 131 This understanding that the Gospel mysteries come through the Word and are a sacred trust given to the pastor, should be what guides the preaching on Christian stewardship.

The Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25:14–30

This brings us to Matthew 25:14–30, The Parable of the Talents. This parable challenges the reader to use the “talents” or “gifts” with which God has entrusted him. Here we begin with παραδίδομι, which, when attached with the dative, can be understood to mean “to entrust with.” Dr. Jeffery Gibbs wrote: “In this passage, the compound verb παραδίδομι with the dative means to “entrust” to someone something “in which one has a relatively strong personal interest.”¹⁰ Within this parable, the master has entrusted each servant with 5, 2, and 1 talents. It is important to take note that we are told that the master entrusted “to each according to his ability” (Matt 25:15b). God gives to each Christian steward according to his ability. There is no blanket giving of talents or gifts to all people. God knows each person and what he is capable of doing with the talents they are given. So instead of comparing the amount that each is given, one should look at how he goes about using those talents according to his ability. Christian stewardship in this parable challenges the steward to act in accordance with the will of the Father rather than in the will of the world.

When the master returns, he calls each to give an account of that with which he was entrusted. Once again, Jesus shows the meaning of stewardship in this parable. Gibbs states: “The master retains ownership of the talents while entrusting them to the temporary custody of his slaves.”¹¹ The slave does not have ownership over the talents to do with as he wishes. He is entrusted with them to serve his master. That is the key to understanding this parable. It is not about the number of talents nor about how much is made with each talent. Instead, the focus of this parable is upon servicing the master. Gibbs has stated: “They apparently believe that as slaves

¹⁰ Jeffery A Gibbs, *Concordia Commentary: Matthew 21:1–28:20*, (St. Louis, Concordia, 2018), 1326.

¹¹ Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:10*, 1326.

of this particular master, they have a purpose and that is to serve him and seek to increase his possessions.”¹² The Christian steward uses all he has to live according to the will of God, guided by that faith that sees God as the master of all things, who is entrusting him with those “talents.” Serving God, living according to His will, means that the Christian steward does not forget who the true Master is. That is where the steward falls short on Christian stewardship. He thinks that the talents are his to use as he wants rather than according to the will of God.

That failure in thinking is shown in the third slave in the parable. He states, “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours” (Matthew 25:24–25). This slave was not looking out for his master’s good or following his will. Instead of focusing on what the master would have him do, he did nothing. Gibbs stated, “The third slave was *not* guilty of doing too little, of not being faithful enough. He did *nothing* and was utterly *unfaithful* to his identity and to his master.”¹³ The unfaithful Christian steward does nothing. He does not consider what the will of God might be in that situation. He does not focus upon being faithful to God. Instead, he does nothing according to the will of God, following his own will instead, proving himself to be an unfaithful steward of that which God has given.

In this parable, Gibbs helps the Christian steward to understand what stewardship is truly about in his life. It is not about the amount you make, or how great your return is on that which you have been given. The emphasis of Christian stewardship is upon retaining an understanding of who the Master is and how the steward is to live his life. Gibbs states: “The danger is not that

¹² Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:10*, 1332.

¹³ Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1337.

a disciple would not try hard enough or be productive enough. It is that somehow, the disciple would lose sight of the Master's character and his own identity and not serve at all."¹⁴ The Christian steward will be able to see all the times that he has failed to fully use those talents that he has been given. Yet, the Lord does not look at that aspect of Christian stewardship. Instead, He looks at the steward and says, "Well done my good and faithful servant." Why does He say this? It is because the Christian steward has lived his life in faith, serving the will of the Almighty. Was he a perfect steward? Of course not. No one could be because of the continual struggle with the sinful self. But the Christian steward, knowing his failings, still tries to live according to the will of God. Gibbs concludes this section with this thought:

In the end – and at the End – it matters only that Christ is my Master who has purchased me and I have been his slave. He entrusted to me things that I was able to work with for his glory. If I keep my eyes on the Master, then I will remember to be his slave and to live that way.¹⁵

The Christian steward lives each day in service to the will of God, using his gifts that have been received from God, for the glory of God and for the good of others.

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager – Luke 16:1–15

This faithfulness is spoken of by Jesus in the Parable of the Dishonest Manager when He says, "One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in very little is also dishonest in much" (Luke 16:10). In this parable, Jesus brings the focus on the struggle that people have with material wealth. Material wealth can easily cause a person to lose sight of serving the Master, as the wealth itself becomes what is important to the steward. As Jesus continues with the discussion of material possessions and wealth, He points out that a

¹⁴ Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1338.

¹⁵ Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1338.

steward cannot serve two different masters. He says, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:13). Who is the Christian steward faithful to? God? Money? Possessions? The focus of Christian stewardship keeps coming back to faithfulness. The steward is to be faithful to God the Master not to that which is given from the generous hand of the Master. Arthur Just states, “Faithful disciples will be commended for seeing that Jesus is their treasure and for trusting his mercy.”¹⁶

At this point, we come back to Luke 12, which makes a much stronger statement concerning Christian stewardship. The question the steward needs to ask is, “Where is your trust? In God? Or in mammon?” As a steward, the challenge is to be a faithful steward in this world, with eyes focused not on the world but on the Master, God Himself, where He is found in His mercy, in the gifts that He has given, letting them lead the steward in action. One can understand οἰκονόμος as the steward who is faithful to his Master, not to that over which he is a steward. One might feel that in today’s world, a steward looks at what he has, the physical and material items and asks, “Am I stewarding these items correctly?” This is the wrong question. It is not so much are you stewarding them rightly or wrongly. The issue is are you faithfully serving your Master with that which you have been entrusted. The focus is upon faithful service to God, and not to the faithful use of the material possessions with which you have been entrusted.¹⁷

¹⁶ Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 621.

¹⁷ The understanding that even a faithful Christian still falls short of how he is to live in this world is important to understand this statement. The Christian steward will never be able to faithfully use that which he has been given. Therefore, to be a faithful steward, one is to follow the will of God, putting first the kingdom of God and the will of the Father rather than trying to prove that he is being faithful enough, as was shown in the Parable of the Talents.

The Christian's Struggle – Romans 7:7–25

To understand the preceding statement, we turn to Romans 7. Here Paul speaks of the struggles that the Christian has in his life. Even as he is a new creation in Christ Jesus through the waters of Baptism (Rom. 6:1–11), the life that is lived is filled with struggles. Paul states, “So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). Dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, the Christian steward faces daily life. How does he go about living that life? Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Christian steward seeks to do the will of God in daily life while also looking out for the good of others, helping and assisting them. But that does not always happen. The Christian steward finds that he falls short of that which is expected. Here is where Paul brings into focus the daily struggle that the Christian steward has. He states, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing” (Rom. 7:15, 18b–20). Paul acknowledges the struggle that each Christian will have in this life. This is the struggle between the one made new in the waters of Baptism by the power of the Holy Spirit and the old man that continues to live according to the sinful nature and not according to the will of God. Where does the Christian steward receive the power to live according to the will of God in his life? It is found in the Means of Grace,¹⁸ through the working of the Holy Spirit. Living as a new creation in Christ Jesus, the Christian steward is empowered by the Spirit to live according to the will of God in his daily life.

Paul continues to bring this forward as he writes in the letter to the Colossians. While he is

¹⁸ As I speak of the Means of Grace, I use the traditional Lutheran understanding, meaning the Word, Baptism and Lord's Supper.

writing specifically about how we are to interact with fellow Christians, it is applicable to the life of the Christian steward. He writes, “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have *put on the new self* (emphasis mine) which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:9).¹⁹

God’s Grace as the Basis of Stewardship

One cannot leave the Biblical Foundation section without briefly looking at Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Looking at this will assist the movement to the Theological Foundation where the Apostles’ Creed shall be discussed as it applies to Christian stewardship. We are God’s workmanship (1st Article), created in Christ Jesus (2nd Article), for good works (3rd Article). Paul has shown that justification by grace through faith is the foundation of the new life that that Christian lives each day. Without the grace of God, the person is “dead in the trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), and unable to live the life that God would have him live. Therefore, it is of necessity to understand that the change in a person’s life does not take place by trying to act differently or trying to be pure in thought or action, but only is the grace of God. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). Justified by the grace of God, made new in the waters of Baptism (Rom. 6:4), the Christian steward lives in that grace, that newness of life, and does those good works that he was created to do. What are those good works? Put simply, it is living as a Christian steward, which means that instead of working to be a good steward, the Christian steward will live according to the will of God, made

¹⁹ The reference to the Creator will be addressed in the next section.

new in Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. As Paul states about the life of the Christian, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Doing these good works is a necessary part of the life of the Christian steward, necessary not in the sense that it is needed for salvation, but that as a person who has been saved by grace through faith, the Christian steward will live according to the will of God.²⁰

In the Formula of Concord: Epitome, Article IV, we read, “We also believe teach and confess that all people, particularly those who have been reborn and renewed through the Holy Spirit, are obligated to do good works.”²¹ While at the same time the Formula of Concord: Epitome IV also states, “We also believe, teach and confess that not our works, but God’s Spirit, working through faith, preserves faith and salvation in us. Good works are a testimony of his presence and indwelling.”²² As a Christian steward who seeks to live his life according to the will of God, using all that he has in his life, we hear Paul say, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward” (Col. 3:23–24).²³ The Christian steward sees himself as living and working for Christ, even as he serves the fellowman. Christian stewardship does not look at the “how do I use this life or possession rightly?” Instead, Christian stewardship finds itself living according to the will of God, as Paul says, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him” (1 Cor. 7:17). Again, Paul writes, “You are serving the Lord Christ”

²⁰ The topic of good works will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section, the Doctrinal Foundation.

²¹ Epitome, IV, 8 in Robert Kolb, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 498.

²² Ep IV, 15, in Kolb and Wengert, 499.

²³ This inheritance is the life eternal given through Christ. In Colossian 1:12 Paul writes, “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.” We are no longer separated from God by sin but have been made children of God through Baptism.

(Col. 3:24b). Living in this way, one is not out to further oneself or to make oneself look better in the eyes of God. No indeed. One lives the life of faith, trusting in the Lord, following His will here on earth, going about each day in accordance with the will of God. Then, as Jesus says in Matthew 25:

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:34–40)

Conclusion to Biblical Foundation

In living the life of the Christian steward, doing the will of God is not something that you are consciously doing. It is a part of that new life that you have in Christ Jesus, and it shows itself in how you live in this world. The Christian steward, living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God’s name and working for the good of others, is living in the way that God would have him live each day.

Introduction to Creedal Foundation

Having come to understand οἰκονόμος as being the Christian steward who seeks to follow the will of God in her life by using that with which she has been entrusted by God for the glory of God and the good of others, it is now time to turn to the creedal framework of Christian stewardship.

The purpose of this section will be to do a study into the Apostles’ Creed, specifically focusing on how the three Articles of the Creed apply to the Christian steward. Each Article will

assist in gaining a clearer understanding of this foundational creedal framework concerning stewardship.

Looking at the Apostles' Creed, it shall be shown that Christian stewardship follows the three articles of the Creed. Martin Luther wrote in the Large Catechism, "Hence the Creed could be briefly condensed to these few words: 'I believe in God the Father, who created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Spirit, who makes me holy.'"²⁴ Indeed, Christian stewardship has at its foundation this understanding of the life of the steward according to such a confession. The Christian steward knows that she is created by God the Father, which allows her to know that she is not the owner but is one who has been entrusted with all she has in this world. She understands that without God the Son, she would not be able to live the life according to the will of the Father for sin would still rule her thoughts and actions, thus making it impossible to do the Father's will in this life. And finally, the Christian steward sees that it is only through the work of God the Holy Spirit that the life is changed, and she is enabled to live as that Christian steward, seeking to do the will of God each day instead of following the will of the sinful nature.

The First Article of the Creed - Creation

The First Article states: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth..."²⁵ Simply put, what this means is that God the Father has created all things. Luther wrote:

I hold and believe that I am God's creature, that is, that he has given me and constantly sustains my body, soul, and life, my members great and small, all my

²⁴ LC II.7 in Kolb and Wengert, 432.

²⁵ LC II.9 in Kolb and Wengert, 432.

senses, my reason and understanding, and the like; my food and drink, clothing, nourishment, spouse and children, servants, house and farm, etc.²⁶

The Christian steward believes that God the Father has indeed created the life that she lives. But it is even more than that. God the Father has made “creation help provide the benefits and necessities of life.”²⁷ These necessities include sunlight, moonlight, air that is breathed, water, earth and all that is needed to support the life of the human. Even still, it goes much further than that. The Christian steward understands that God has given both physical and temporal blessings such as “good government, peace, security.”²⁸ Luther would conclude the thought that God is the Creator of all things with the stewardship application: “Thus our hearts will be warmed and kindled with gratitude to God and a desire to use all these blessings to his glory and praise.”²⁹ Writing in *The Concordia Journal*, Joel Bierman has stated, “We are creation’s stewards. Grounded in the concrete, creative work of God, our earthbound task is inherently holy.”³⁰ He then takes this to the point of life for the Christian steward, “What is done simply to fulfill the demands of the daily schedule may be deemed ordinary and unexceptional: but when undertaken for the sake of the creation, it is precisely the work that needs doing, and is important and precious as it fulfills its place within God’s plan for his creation.”³¹ One could go in a slightly different direction than Dr. Biermann. That which the Christian steward does to fulfill the demands of the daily schedule are to be seen as being undertaken for the sake of creation, for the Christian steward is doing the will of the Father as she is living out each day,

²⁶ LC II.13 in Kolb and Wengert, 432.

²⁷ LC II.14 in Kolb and Wengert, 432.

²⁸ L, II.15 in Kolb and Wengert, 432.

²⁹ LC II.23 in Kolb and Wengert, 433.

³⁰ Joel Biermann, “*A Theological Foundation for Stewardship*,” *Concordia Journal*, 46, no.2, Spring 2020, 22.

³¹ Biermann, *Theological Foundation*, 23.

even in the most mundane ways. Even when the Christian steward is not thinking about creation, she is living where she should be living in creation. This would fall in line with the discussion on Matthew 25:34–40, “When did we see you...” Even when stewardship is not undertaken specifically for the sake of creation, that stewardship, if it is following the will of God, is being done for the good of creation.

That which one has in this life comes to us from God the Father. Luther wrote, “Because everything we possess, and everything in heaven and on earth besides, is daily given, sustained and protected by God, it inevitably follows that we are in duty bound to love, praise, and thank him without ceasing, and, in short, to devote all these things to his service, as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments.”³² Knowing that all things come from the Father, that He has entrusted “to each according to his ability” (Matt. 25:15b), we see that the Christian steward therefore will live in creation, not as owner or master over creation, but as steward, having received all things as a blessing from the hand of God. “Christianity actually drives us into the midst of creation, and anchors us in the material relationships that we have with every other creature,” Biermann has written.³³ At this point it is acknowledged that as one to whom much has been entrusted, the steward is called to live in such a way that reflects these blessings, as Luther stated in the Small Catechism, “For all this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him.”³⁴ The life of the Christian steward keeps the focus on the Creator, the Master, the Owner of all and avoids getting caught up in the thinking that it is hers to do with as she deems worthwhile. The one who lives in a way that considers that the things of creation are hers, is as Luther said, “This is the way the wretched, perverse world acts, drowned in its blindness,

³² LC II.19 in Kolb and Wengert, 433.

³³ Bierman, *Theological Foundation*, 23.

³⁴ SC II.2 in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

misusing all the blessings and gifts of God solely for its own pride, greed, pleasure, and enjoyment, and never once turning to God to thank him or acknowledge him as Lord or Creator.”³⁵ The temptation is great to fall into that thinking, but the Christian steward can avoid that by keeping the focus on living each day according to the will of God, living in creation according to His will, knowing that creation belongs to Him and not to the one in whom it has been entrusted.

The Second Article of the Creed - Redemption

Yet, as was stated before, the Christian steward struggles with the sinful nature. In fact, left to her own devices, the Christian steward would not follow the will of God at all and thus not be able to live in a restored creation but in a fallen creation. Biermann pointed out correctly, “The story of salvation, beginning with the proto-evangelion in the garden of Eden and culminating in the eschatological consummation of the apocalypse, is the story of God’s work to return us to the plan, and to restore us and all creation to the Creator’s design.”³⁶ Paul states the same concept when he writes, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have been the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:22–23). God’s plan of redemption was to bring humankind, and all creation, back into the proper relationship with Him, that which He created as “very good” at the beginning and was lost as humankind fell into sin as is seen in Genesis 3. Luther rightly acknowledges that fallen human being’s focus on creation is only to be found in how she might be able to use creation for her own desires, not following the will of God nor caring for the needs of others. To become a

³⁵ LC II.21 in Kolb and Wengert, 433.

³⁶ Biermann, *Theological Foundation*, 23.

Christian steward, one needs to be brought out of her sinfulness, to have her heart changed and to be given a new life.

This leads us into the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. It states:

And [I believe] in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary the virgin. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty. From there he will come again to judge the living and the dead.³⁷

Here one comes to see how God redeems the fallen sinner from the full impact of the Law and the demands that it makes upon humanity. No one is able to redeem themselves from the depths of sin as is shown in Romans 3:19–20: “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” He continues with the statement, “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:22b–23a). He makes the conclusion, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom. 3:28).

The works of humankind cannot return it into a right relationship with God. That relationship was lost. No matter how hard they may work to change, humanity cannot return itself to that original relationship with God or with creation. That becomes obvious as humankind has tried repeatedly to live according to the will of God only to find itself failing. As was stated earlier, Paul saw himself as a wretched failure in living the way that God would have him live. As he wrote, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24) That is the cry of the Christian steward as she tries to follow the will of the Father

³⁷ LC II.25 in Kolb and Wengert, 434.

only to find that she has wandered into the realm of serving her own sinful desires. The steward, relying upon her own powers, can only fall short of that stewardship life in which she does the will of God. Instead of following the will of the Father, the unchanged steward will only follow the will of the fallen, sinful nature. In fact, as was shown from Luther's words in the First Article, living in that life of sin, the steward will only live for herself, letting the perverse nature control the actions, leading her into a life of greed and sinful desire that cares nothing for the will of God and even less for the well-being of her fellow human.

It is here that the Second Article of the Creed applies to the life of the steward. Unable to change her status before God, unable to live as a steward is to live, doing all according to the will of the Father, God acted according to that which He desired to change the life of the creatures He had made. As is stated, "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord."³⁸ The steward lived in a way where the only lord she had was the devil, sin and death. Luther writes, "Before this I had no lord or king, but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness."³⁹ God showed the depth of His love for His creatures in that He completely and totally gave Himself for them, holding nothing back, sending His only-begotten Son into this world to redeem all humanity. Therefore, the incarnate Son is the Lord of all, giving Himself for all, which, as Luther wrote, "...means that he has redeemed and released me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all misfortune."⁴⁰ As such, the Son has changed the relationship completely. Instead of having the devil, the sinful world or the sinful nature as lord, the one who has been redeemed has a new Lord, which guides her into a new life as a steward. Here, Biermann would point out, "The Son's work is for the sake of the creation, and the Son's

³⁸ LC II.25 in Kolb and Wengert, 434.

³⁹ LC II.27 in Kolb and Wengert, 434.

⁴⁰ LC II.27 in Kolb and Wengert, 434.

work of redemption only makes sense when seen in the light of the Father's original action of creation."⁴¹ That work to restore creation, touches specifically on the Christian steward. As one who is redeemed by the Son, she lives in creation according to the will of the Father, which is to live in creation, caring for and using creation for the glory of God and the good of creation itself, which includes the life of those with whom the steward serves.

When Paul cries out that he is a wretched man, he is acknowledging that he was not in control but that he was under the lordship of the devil, which sought only his death and destruction. Paul answers this cry with, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom.7:25a) Made new in Christ, given a new Lord of life, Paul points out how the steward would go about living her life, writing, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2). Returning to Romans 6, with the understanding that the Lord makes each a new creature, the steward now have a different focus from that which she had before, a focus on living according to the will of God.

How does the sinful, fallen steward that lives only for her own will change from this fallen wretchedness to a new creation, living as the Christian steward, focused on living according to the will of the Father? This discussion about how the new man is made will be in the discussion on the 3rd Article of the Creed, but here, one sees this in the very fact that the Son of God incarnate, Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary the virgin, the One who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, also descended into hell and on the third day rose from the dead.⁴² Luther said, "The remaining parts of this article simply serve

⁴¹ Biermann, *Theological Foundation*, 23.

⁴² Paraphrased from the Apostles' Creed.

to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished.”⁴³ That work was accomplished through Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection as is stated in the Creed. Paul states, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4–5). Again, he writes, “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood” (Rom. 3:24–25). He did this through His sinless suffering and death, taking upon Himself the sins of all and paying the price of the law on behalf of all people. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Luther wrote, “Indeed, the entire gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article.”⁴⁴ Here is should be stated that the understanding of being a Christian steward depends on the understanding of this article, for it is the very place where one sees how it is possible for a worldly steward living for her own corrupt will is able to be changed into a Christian steward who is living for the will of God. It is in this action of the Son of God that the steward sees how it is possible to live not for herself but for God. Now the question becomes, how does this transformation take place in the life of the steward?

The Third Article of the Creed - Sanctification

To answer that question, it is time look at the Third Article of the Creed: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, one holy Christian church, the community of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting. Amen.”⁴⁵ It is here in this Article concerning

⁴³ LC II.31 in Kolb and Wengert, 434.

⁴⁴ LC II.33 in Kolb and Wengert, 435.

⁴⁵ LC II.34 in Kolb and Wengert, 435.

the Holy Spirit's work within the life of the steward, that it is shown how she becomes that new creation, having the new Lord and living according to the will of God. It is important to understand that the work of the Holy Spirit is nothing less than to make sinful people holy. Luther has written, "But God's Spirit alone is called a Holy Spirit, that is, the one who has made us holy and still makes us holy."⁴⁶ The sinner needs the Holy Spirit to act within her heart for as Luther wrote, "Neither you or I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe in him and receive him as Lord,⁴⁷ unless these were offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit."⁴⁸ Christ did redeem all humanity from sin, death and the power of the devil but without the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the individual human, that work would remain hidden, unable to be seen, let alone followed. As Paul points out, the Christian steward would still be living under the Old Adam (Rom. 5) except that the Holy Spirit has worked that change in the steward's heart. He writes, "Through him [Christ] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." (Rom. 5:2a). Again, Paul writes, "...because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5b). It is through the Holy Spirit that one is made holy, about which Luther states, "...being made holy is nothing else than bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive the blessings, to which we could not have come by ourselves."⁴⁹ Therefore, the Christian steward, brought to faith through the Spirit, now "set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5b).

⁴⁶ LC II.36 in Kolb and Wengert, 435.

⁴⁷ We need to know Jesus as Lord to be able to be the Christian steward. As was stated before, as new creations in Christ, we have a change in lordship, from the lordship of the devil to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Only as He is our Lord can we be the Christian steward to which we are called.

⁴⁸ LC II.38 in Kolb and Wengert, 436.

⁴⁹ LC II.39 in Kolb and Wengert, 436.

The question may be asked, where does this being made holy take place? This is answered in the Creed itself when it states, “one holy Christian church, the community of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting.”⁵⁰ The Holy Spirit works within the one holy Christian church and the communion of saints to bring the steward into faith in Jesus Christ, changing her old sinful self to a new creation, being made holy as the Spirit brings forgiveness of sins to the new believer, through the Means of Grace which are only found within the Christian Church. Turning to Paul once again, it is shown that the steward becomes a Christian steward through the waters of Baptism. He writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that...we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3–4). With that new life given by the Spirit, the Christian steward begins walking in this new life. For the steward it means a whole new Lord for her life taking her from being a steward in the world to being a Christian steward. “We know that our old self was crucified with him...so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For the one who has died has been set free from sin” (Rom. 6:6a, 7). The Christian steward then lives each day according to the will of God and for the good of others, using her life and being as a faithful steward.

Unfortunately, the Christian steward still struggles with temptation each day. The old man seeks to regain control of her life, leading back into slavery to the self, to sin, and to the power of the devil. Therefore, since the Christian steward finds that she daily struggles with the old man, she also knows that she needs the continued work of the Holy Spirit in her life. In the Large Catechism, Luther has written about Baptism, “Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily

⁵⁰ LC II.34 in Kolb and Wengert, 435.

baptism, begun once and continuing ever after.”⁵¹ As the Christian steward lives each day, always growing in the life of faith, serving God with her whole heart and life, the old man seeks to overcome and take over the life that is lived in Christ Jesus. It becomes a daily battle that the Christian steward must face in the waters of Baptism, for the old man seeks to re-exert the sinful desire to live, not according to the will of God, but according to the sinful will that sets its desires according to that of the flesh. About this struggle, Luther pointed out, “Now, when we enter Christ’s kingdom, this corruption must daily decrease so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more we break away from greed, hatred, envy and pride.”⁵² Herein is the struggle the Christian steward faces daily and the reason that she continues to return to the waters of baptism each day. Luther has said, “Therefore let all Christians regard their baptism as the daily garment that they are to wear all the time.”⁵³ The Christian steward should let this be her glorious dress as she serves the will of God in life.

In order to receive all the assistance and help that the Christian steward needs in order to continue to recall her baptism and to live the daily life of steward, she needs to remain a part of the community of faith, most notably the local congregation in which she can be taught the daily life of the Christian steward, strengthened by the regular reception of the Sacrament of the Altar and regularly confess her sinfulness and be blessed by absolution. Luther brought forward, “For creation is now behind us, and redemption has taken place, but the Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work.”⁵⁴ One of the ways that the Christian

⁵¹ LC IV.65 in Kolb and Wengert, 465.

⁵² LC IV.67 in Kolb and Wengert, 465.

⁵³ LC IV,84 in Kolb and Wengert, 466.

⁵⁴ LC II.61 in Kolb and Wengert, 439.

steward is continually strengthen in her walk of faith and life of stewardship is through the regular preaching of the Word of God and the application to the life of the Christian steward. As it has been defined Christian stewardship is living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God and caring for the welfare of others, it becomes apparent that the Christian steward does need regular teaching and preaching in which the life of the steward is shown to be tied completely and totally to the Word of God for the life of the steward is nothing more than the life of the Christian. One cannot be a Christian without being a steward, nor can one be Christian steward without being a Christian. The whole of the Christian's life is seen in living according to the will of God each day. As the Christian steward daily recalls her baptism, she is being shown how to live as a steward that day. The two are tied closely together.⁵⁵

Conclusion to Creedal Foundation

It is at this point that one sees Christian stewardship as living according to the will of God in daily life, for His glory and for the welfare of others. It is as Luther stated,

Through this knowledge (the grace given through Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit) we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God because we see here in the Creed how God gives himself completely to us, with all his gifts and power, to help us to keep the Ten Commandments: the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts.⁵⁶

These three Articles of the Apostles' Creed show the basis for the believer to be that steward of creation and the steward of daily life. As is said in the Large Catechism:

For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this purpose, he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy, and, moreover, having granted and

⁵⁵ This close tie shall be addressed in the Historical Foundation of our understanding of stewardship as it applies to the life of the Christian, shown in the goods works that she does.

⁵⁶ LC II.69 in Kolb and Wengert, 440.

bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself.⁵⁷

With this theological foundation, the door now opens to the concept of good works as it applies to Christian stewardship. To do this, attention to the doctrinal perspective for the concept of good works as it helps to understand Christian stewardship must be addressed.

⁵⁷ LC II,64 in Kolb and Wengert, 439.

CHAPTER THREE

DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

Within this section one will see the doctrinal analysis of Christian stewardship, focusing attention upon the writings of Joel Biermann, C.F.W. Walther, Francis Pieper, Martin Luther, the writers of the Book of Concord, and others. It will be shown that Christian stewardship, as it has been defined, draws in the concept of good works in the life of the steward. The teachings of good works and Christian stewardship intersect in many ways, assisting the pastor in preparing to preach on Christian stewardship. In this doctrinal setting, it will be shown that at one point in time stewardship became focused on finances instead of following the will of God.

Definition of Good Works as Applied to Stewardship

To begin with, there needs to be a definition of what is meant by “good works.” In the Formula of Concord, it is written, “...that true good works are not those which people invent for themselves or that take their form according to human tradition but rather are those that God himself has prescribed and commanded in his Word.”¹ For the believers, good works are those things which are done not from his own will, but from the will of God. Pieper states, “Good works a) are done according to the norm of the divine Law, and b) flow from a willing spirit.”² He continues, “Works which are done in obedience to the commandments of men instead of in obedience to the commandments of God lack the quality of good works.”³ The struggle of the Christian steward is to be living according to the will of God, which says to him that he is living

¹ SD IV.6 in Kolb and Wengert, 575.

² Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume III*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 37.

³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 37.

in such a way that he is doing that which is well pleasing to God and according to His Word. Living as the Christian steward, he is seeking to follow that will of God. For the Christian steward to know what that will of God is for his life, he must spend time within the Word of God. Without the Word of God, the believer would be bound by his own sinful nature which, as we have seen in the creedal understanding of stewardship, is fallen. Therefore, he does not know nor is he able to follow the will of God. The Christian steward may “ascertain the norm of good works only from Scripture.”⁴ It is within the pages of Scripture that the Christian steward is shown what the will of God is, and how he is to be living according to that will. Here the steward returns to the words of St. Paul in Ephesians, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The good works which the Christian steward does, follows the will of God, and leads him into a life of stewardship. The acts of stewardship which he does, are the good works that are meant to be done within all areas of his life.

The challenge of speaking of good works is that one often tries to develop a series of types of works that are considered good. When it comes to Christian stewardship, this could happen when the preacher, using the Parable of the Talents,⁵ begins to exhort the hearer to give a certain amount, perhaps a tithe or some other amount, which then shows that he is truly a good steward. What the preacher is doing is removing the will of God from the picture and making the thoughts and words of the preacher or the action of the hearer that which determines what is a good work. Instead of doing this, the preacher should exhort the hearer to see that the point of the parable is not in the amount that is given, but it is being faithful to the will of God in the action of

⁴ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 39.

⁵ As is shown above in the Scriptural Foundation.

supporting the ministry of the church. Pieper stated, “Good works are not those which we choose of ourselves, but those which God has commanded, those which our vocation calls for.”⁶

Building upon that which Paul wrote to Titus, “For the grace of God has appeared...training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 3:11a, 12, 14b), one can state that the life the Christian steward lives according to the will of God, reflecting the faith that lies within his heart, guided by a faith given by the Holy Spirit, is indeed good works, the life of a sanctified Christian. Pieper wrote, “...since we have heard what blessed hope we should look for, we should also learn that the works which we do by faith in our appointed calling to God’s command and order are good works.”⁷ The Christian steward continues to seek the will of God in his life, asking how God would have him live within his vocation. Luther includes one’s vocation when he wrote in the Small Catechism concerning confession of sins: “Here reflect on your walk of life in light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant.”⁸ Living according to that vocation, one continues to follow the will of God and in so doing, finds himself to be a Christian steward, doing good works.

Joel Biermann and Three Kinds of Righteousness

The challenge that one finds when talking about living the Christian life is the confusion between the different types of righteousness. Martin Luther spoke of two types of righteousness: alien righteousness, that which the person receives passively from God without any action by the

⁶ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 40.

⁷ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 41.

⁸ SC Confession, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 360.

receiver (or believer), and proper righteousness, the righteous life that the believer lives according to that alien righteousness. In the discussion of stewardship, the Christian steward is living in the proper righteousness. This helps one understand what is being discussed in this chapter on the doctrinal foundation for understanding stewardship, good works, and the life of the Christian believer.

Unfortunately, this still leaves much to be desired when discussing stewardship. A study of the work of Joel Biermann, *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue of Ethics*, one finds help in understanding that which Luther was trying to explain. Biermann moves from two forms of righteousness to three forms of righteousness. He begins by calling them the first, second, and third righteousness. To help clarify that which he means, he titles them governing, justifying, and conforming righteousness.⁹ The governing righteousness would be what Luther called civil righteousness, that which “rules and directs all of life in this world.”¹⁰ Pointing out this governing or civil righteousness helps to understand how it is that people that do not believe in God or in Jesus Christ are able to do good works in the world. The works are good in the sight of those around them but because they are not Christian, the works are not good before God. Therefore, an unbeliever could be seen as a good steward by those in the world, but before God, would not be a Christian steward.

The other two forms of righteousness will help the reader to understand the next section on the difference between justification and sanctification in the life of the Christian steward. The second type of righteousness that Biermann presents is the justifying righteousness. This corresponds to Luther’s alien righteousness. This is the vertical relationship between God and the

⁹ Joel D. Biermann, *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2014), 129

¹⁰ Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 129.

individual. There is no action in the life of the individual, instead, he passively receives this righteousness from God. Luther writes about this in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel."¹¹ This is the vertical relationship between God and man, where God brings the individual into a relationship with him, creating that faith in his heart. This justifying righteousness is that which changes the Old Adam into the New Man.

Once justifying righteousness has taken place in the life of the individual, the third righteousness or conforming righteousness (Luther would call it the proper righteousness) is to be found in the life of the believer. Biermann writes, "Justifying righteousness flows into the third kind of righteousness, conforming righteousness, which in its expression often seems to the outward observer quite similar to the governing righteousness. It is unique, however, in its intimate relationship to justifying righteousness, and in its deliberate striving to emulate, or be conformed to, the example of Christ."¹² It is here, in this conforming righteousness, that this MAP finds itself working. Christian stewardship is much different from the stewardship done by the unbeliever, in that Christian stewardship is a reflection of the will of God. While governing and conforming righteousness might run parallel courses to one another, the difference between them is found in the justifying righteousness that has taken place in the life of the Christian. We take this understanding of the three forms of righteousness, as Biermann presents them, and put them into practice in this next section on the discussion between justification, sanctification and the will of God.

¹¹ SC, Creed, The Third Article: On Being Made Holy, 6 in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

¹² Bierman, *A Case for Character*, 129.

The Difference Between Justification, Sanctification, and the Will of God

The challenge when one talks of good works is to be certain that what is meant is not works that lead to faith and salvation but works that follow the gift of faith. Here one must hold fast to what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8–10). There are three things that is learned here: 1) justification, 2) sanctification, and 3) the will of God.

First, there is justification. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8–9).” As was said earlier, the Son of God came into the world to save humankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This is totally and completely the work of God, not the work of man. God sent His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world, through His sinless suffering, death, and resurrection. Luther wrote in the explanation of the Second Article of the Creed, “He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.”¹³

This is given to the lost sinner by the grace of God working through the power of the Holy Spirit, using the Means of Grace. As was discussed earlier, the Holy Spirit works in the heart and life of the sinner to bring him into the family of God. Here Luther also wrote in the Small Catechism, “I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel,

¹³ SC Creed, The Second Article: On Redemption, 4 in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

enlightened me with his gifts and kept me in the true faith.”¹⁴ When this happens, the old man is put to death and buried in the waters of Baptism and then a new man is brought to life (Rom. 6:1–11). In the Formula of Concord, it is written, “Therefore, it is proper to reject the *propositiones* that good works are necessary for the salvation of the believers or that it is impossible to be saved without good works.”¹⁵ This is important to understand during any discussion about good works. In the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, it is written,

Besides, we have sufficiently shown above that we maintain that good works must necessarily follow faith. For we do not abolish the law, Paul says [Rom. 3:31], but we establish it, because when we receive the Holy Spirit by faith the fulfillment of the law necessarily follows, through which love, patience, chastity, and other fruits of the spirit continually grow.¹⁶

Salvation is completely and totally by the grace of God shown through Jesus Christ, given by the Holy Spirit, which leads to point number two.

Second, the new man lives the life of sanctification, which is the life of the holy and saved person. Roger L. Sommer wrote,

Here we limit our discussion to the consideration of sanctification in the narrow sense, and we define it by stating that sanctification in the narrower sense refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian (the regenerate) whereby the Christian, the believer, daily puts off more and more the old Adam and daily put on the new man.¹⁷

Concerning the relationship between justification and sanctification, which is important for this MAP, Pieper stated, “There is an inseparable connection (*nexus indivulsus*) between justification and sanctification: where there is justification, there is in every case also

¹⁴ SC Creed, The Third Article: On Being Made Holy, 6 in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

¹⁵ SD IV.22 in Kolb and Wengert, 578.

¹⁶ Ap XX.15 in Kolb and Wengert, 237.

¹⁷ Roger Sommer, “Sanctification” in *The Abiding Word: Doctrinal Essays, vol. 2*, Theodore Laetsch, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947), 278.

sanctification.”¹⁸ Within this life of sanctification, the new man does the good works that are expected of him. Jesus spoke of these good works, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit” (Matt. 12:33). One who has been made new by the working of the Holy Spirit is expected to bear good fruit, to live the holy life of the believer, to do good works in his life. Again, Jesus said of good works, “So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit” (Matt. 7:17–18). Sommer wrote, “Sanctification in this narrow sense includes also the Holy Spirit’s work whereby He produces in the Christian the fruit of the Spirit.”¹⁹ It is always through the working of the Holy Spirit that the new man does any good work as Pieper wrote, “It is the Holy Ghost who produces the activity of the new man.”²⁰ The Christian steward is living the life of a new man, being guided by the Holy Spirit, and is to be bearing good fruit, doing good works.

Third, Paul is showing that the new man is to live according to the will of God. He wrote, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The good works that are done are according to the will of God, which is the life that the Christian steward is to live. It is stated in the Formula of Concord, “...it is God’s will, order, and command that believers shall walk in good works.”²¹ Again, Pieper stated, “By faith in Christ a “new man” has been born, whose will agree perfectly with the will of God.”²² The Christian steward, as the new man created by the

¹⁸ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 7.

¹⁹ Sommer, “Sanctification,” in *Abiding Word*, 279.

²⁰ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 14.

²¹ SD IV.6 in Kolb and Wengert, 575.

²² Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 15.

Holy Spirit, lives the life of a child of God, doing the will of God, bringing glory to God, and serving others.

The Christian's Good Works: An Option?

With this doctrinal analysis, one turns to the Lutheran theologians to seek a theological understanding in which the Christian steward is to live according to the will of God, doing those good works that flow from the faith which lives in the steward.

Does the Christian steward have the option of doing good works or not doing good works, to live according to the will of God, or to not live according to the will of God? Pieper stated, "No man in his right senses will get the impression that Scripture leaves it to the discretion of the individual whether he will or will not do good works."²³

The Confessors of the Lutheran Church stated,

For good works in believers are an indication of their salvation when they are done *propter veras causas et ad verso fines*²⁴ (that is, in the way that God demands them) by those who have been born again. For as it is God's will and express command that the faithful should do good works, which the Holy Spirit effects in the faithful, so God allows these works to please him for Christ's sake and promises a glorious reward for them in this life and in the life to come.²⁵

The Christian steward does not look at that which he is doing as something that is intended to bring him into the mercies of God but lives in this way, doing the good works, as naturally as breathing. We read in the Apology, "Do good works to preserve your calling and to keep from losing the gifts of your calling, which were given beforehand, not on account of the works that follow, and which are now retained by faith."²⁶ Some might try to make good works that which

²³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 30.

²⁴ SD IV.38 in Kolb and Wengert, 580. The footnote states "Literally, 'For the right reasons and to the right ends.'"

²⁵ SD IV.38 in Kolb and Wengert, 580-581.

²⁶ AP, XX.13 in Kolb and Wengert, 237.

ensures that one is saved, quoting 2 Peter 1:10, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.” But what Peter is speaking about is not the fact that doing good works ensures that one is saved. Instead, as the writers of the Formula of Concord stated, “Peter teaches why people should do good works: namely to confirm our calling, that is, that we may not fall away from our calling by lapsing into sin. Do good works, he says, so that you may remain in your heavenly calling, so that you do not fall back into sin and lose the Spirit and his gifts.”²⁷ Peter wrote in the previous verse, “For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (2 Pet. 1:9).

The good works flow from sins that are forgiven and the faith that has been bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they are done without any thought other than to do that which is God’s will for his life, which in itself, is not a conscious thought of the Christian steward. He is merely living the life of faith, which exhibits itself in the works that are done. It is not to ensure salvation or to retain salvation. That is already given through the working of the Spirit as was said earlier. It is as Paul wrote, “For the grace of God appeared...training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (Titus 2:11–12). God’s grace leads the Christian steward into a life of following God’s will and of action. That action is the good works that he does each day, in accord with that grace of God, and living that self-controlled, upright, and godly life.

The Christian steward, therefore, does not see the good works of daily life as an option. Luther very clearly teaches this very thing as he wrote the explanations to the Ten

²⁷ SD IV.33 in Kolb and Wengert, 579.

Commandments.²⁸ In each commandment, he detailed what should be avoided as one follows the commandment. For example, in the Fourth Commandment Luther wrote “We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority...”²⁹ All actions that lead to the person angering those in authority are to be avoided as that would be considered breaking the commandment. Luther then continued, “...but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them.”³⁰ Living according to the will of God, the Christian steward would seek ways in which he can show this respect and love to those in authority. As he lives in that way, he is living according to the will of God for his life, showing that this is not an option for him, but that it flows naturally from the heart that has received the gift of forgiveness of sins.

Johann Gerhard wrote about the necessity of the Christian doing good works.³¹ “The reasons why we must do good works are (1) the authority of Holy Scripture, (2) the proper nature of faith, and (3) necessity itself.”³² He continues showing why good works were necessary in relation with God, with our neighbor and with ourselves. He expands each of these areas, concluding with the question, “In how many ways are good works necessary?”³³ Here he has 5 reasons that they are necessary.

- (1) The necessity of the command, because in the Decalogue God demands zeal for good works.
- (2) The necessity of duty, because we owe this filial obedience to God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and we also owe our neighbor all eagerness for kindness and all the duties of love.
- (3) The necessity of order, because there remains a permanent order of justice that a rational creature is to obey its Creator.
- (4)

²⁸ In the discussion of the Commandments, the teaching of the third use of the law is to be applied. This teaching states in effect that the law shows Christians how to live a God-pleasing life. This aspect of the law is meant to be applied only to the believer. As such, here in this section, it is being applied to the Christian steward.

²⁹ SC Fourth Commandment, 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 352.

³⁰ SC Fourth Commandment, 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 352.

³¹ Which at the time of writing, Gerhard would not speak of stewardship but focused upon good works.

³² Johann Gerhard, translated by Richard J. Dinda, *Theological Commonplaces: On Good Works*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2019), 28.

³³ Gerhard, *On Good Works*, 31.

The necessity of consequence, because good works always accompany and follow faith. (5) The necessity of hypothesis, because unless we wish to cast away our faith, lose God's grace and eternal life, and summon up all punishments of every kind, it is incumbent on us to pursue good works.³⁴

Gerhard points out, as was shown earlier in this chapter, that the Christian steward owes it to God to live a life filled with good works. To live in such a way, Gerhard wrote, "The ultimate and chief end of good works is the glory of God."³⁵ In other words, to be a Christian steward, doing the good works which flow from his faith, he is following the will of God for his life, and to that end, he is bringing glory to God.

A Misunderstanding of Stewardship in Lutheran Theology

It has been shown that living the life of the Christian steward is doing nothing more than living according to the will of God, doing the good works that he is meant to do according to that same will, and living the life of sanctification. But that has not always been the understanding of Christian stewardship. Through time, Christian stewardship came to be understood as dealing only with the financial and material aspect of the life of the Christian. As this became more entrenched in theology and thinking, the aspect of living according to the will of God was lost. In this section it will be shown how this misunderstanding took hold and showed itself.

Stewardship as Financial Giving Rather than Christian Living

Waldo Werning, writing about Christian stewardship, stated, "Stewardship seems to be regarded too much as a financial project or program that is to be promoted periodically, and especially when there is a need."³⁶ When stewardship began to focus primarily on finances, it lost

³⁴ Gerhard, *On Good Works*, 31.

³⁵ Gerhard, *On Good Works*, 23.

³⁶ Waldo Werning, *Christian Stewards: Confronted and Committed*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), 1.

the dynamic that Christian stewardship was living according to the will of God, doing the good works, and bearing good fruit. Werning was looking at the problem of stewardship and how to correct that problem. He continued:

We have often given people the wrong impression and let them believe that they are good stewards when (1) they meet their individual pledge, (2) they meet the congregational or denominational budget, (3) they burn a mortgage, (4) they give a large sum, (5) they give “Till it hurts,” while their pain level is very low, (6) they have finished a major project.”³⁷

Werning shows that this understanding of Christian stewardship robs the individual from living out his life of faith in his daily life. He stated, “Manipulation and coercion in stewardship campaigns do not foster good stewardship, but poison and kill.”³⁸ He finally brings this to a conclusion in stating: “There is something tragically wrong if members continue to sit in pews, bringing their offerings regularly and serving in some way with their talents, yet they become so preoccupied in their daily lives with unrecognized selfishness and greed as they fail to make their voices heard in the world.”³⁹ This shows that the Christian steward is not living according to the will of God, nor is he bearing the good fruit, the good works, which are prescribed for him in his life.

T.A. Kantonen brought forward the concept that theology and stewardship are often seen as two differing parts of the Christian life. Theology was seen as that which is done by those in academia, which has little or no impact upon the life of the Christian in the congregation. Kantonen wrote, “Stewardship, on the other hand, suggests such a mundane thing as money and is considered the concern of practical men of action who have little use for the subtleties of

³⁷ Werning, *Christian Stewards*, 5.

³⁸ Werning, *Christian Stewards*, 5.

³⁹ Werning, *Christian Stewards*, 11.

theology as they seek to devise methods for meeting budgets.”⁴⁰ Modern day Christians have separated stewardship from theology, feeling that there is no connection between the two.

Kantonen replied to such thinking, “Even if stewardship, then, dealt only with the Christian’s use of his pocketbook, it would still be of theological concern, for theology cannot be indifferent to any activity in which the Christian faith expresses itself.”⁴¹ As has been shown, one cannot separate stewardship from Biblical and Confessional theology. They are tied closely together. In agreement, Kantonen stated, “It is the *vita nova*, the believer’s whole life as a response to that revelation of divine truth with which theology deals.”⁴²

Unfortunately, as one continues through the various writings on Christian stewardship, it becomes more obvious that the focus is not on the whole life of the Christian but only on a portion of the person. The teaching that stewardship involves time, talent, and treasure became a popular catch phrase in the Christian culture. In 1951, the Department of Stewardship, Missionary Education and Promotion of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod published a manual on pastoral leadership entitled, “The Chief Steward.” Writing at that time, J. E. Herrmann sounded like he could be writing to the church in the 21st century. He wrote, “The time has come to educate our people in the stewardship of time, talent and treasure by means of a complete unit of study divorced from any particular organizational effort.”⁴³ What Herrmann is showing to the reader is that stewardship is very much an all-encompassing aspect of the Christian life. He continued, “The God-pleasing stewardship of time, abilities, and material possessions must be more generally recognized and appreciated if greater personal participation

⁴⁰ T. A. Kantonen, *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), 1.

⁴¹ Kantonen, *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 2.

⁴² Kantonen, *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 2.

⁴³ J.E. Herrmann, *The Chief Steward: A Manual on Pastoral Leadership*, (St. Louis: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1951, reprinted St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 16,

on the part of our people in the work of the church is to be realized.”⁴⁴ Yet, even as this teaching of time, talents, and treasure has become a central aspect of the stewardship teaching of the church, it has fallen short of the goal it has set. What is that goal? It is teaching the Christian that stewardship encompasses the entirety of his life, not just the financial aspect of that life. For Herrmann, it is the lack of the fullness of the message of Scripture concerning stewardship that has caused the downfall of teaching stewardship relating to time, talent, and treasure. He stated, “Because we have generally failed to win and use the time and the abilities of our people, we have so few active members and liberal contributors.”⁴⁵

Kantonen would agree with Herrmann as the problem with stewardship is that it is divorced from the entire life of the Christian. Instead of the Christian steward living according to the will of God, Kantonen would say that he is living his stewardship life in a portion of his life, while the remainder of his life is lived only for himself. That portion of life that was considered “stewardship” was generally the financial aspect of the steward’s life. Kantonen expounded on this thought as he wrote,

While our European brethren have been in a position to develop what they often regard as a more “spiritual” type of religion, we have been led to relate our faith to the material realities of life and to look upon the giving of money as the “acid test” of the genuineness of a man’s commitment to Christ.⁴⁶

The materialistic aspect of stewardship seemed to take over the thoughts of the church as it sought out ways to meet budgets, build churches and reach into communities. In doing so, stewardship lost its impact in the lives of the Christian sitting in the pew. Kantonen would point out that because of this loss of solid theology, the church’s teaching on stewardship moved away

⁴⁴ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 15.

⁴⁵ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 16.

⁴⁶ Kantonen, *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 5.

from a true Scriptural understanding.

Kantonen, writing in the mid-1950s, put his finger on the focus of stewardship. He pointed out that stewardship was meant for the whole life of the Christian, not just for the material segment of his life. Instead of living in legalism as promoted by the concept of the tithe or the promised prosperity that will come to the person who gives according to the needs of the church, he pointed out that a fuller understanding needed to be brought forward. He quoted W. H. Greever from his writing *Work of the Lord* published in 1937, “Christian stewardship is the *practice* of the Christian religion. It is neither a department of life nor a sphere of activity. It is the Christian conception of life as a whole, manifested in attitudes and actions.”⁴⁷ As has been proposed by the proposition of this MAP, the Christian steward is to live his whole life according to the will of God. Herrmann would say it this way:

The life of stewardship is nothing less than “total devotion” to the Christ who is known as a “real, living personal presence in the hearts of believers,” a genuine loyalty that is expressed not in mere opinion or sentiment but in character and conduct.⁴⁸

The life of the Christian steward is one which is lived through faith, in accordance with the will of God without thought of personal praise or gain.

Continuing to Address Stewardship in Church Life

As Herrmann and Kantonen tried to correct the understanding of stewardship in the 1950s, the issue continued into the 21st century. Lutheran theologians continued to teach that stewardship was much more than giving money to the church, much more than just attempting to meet the budget of the church.

⁴⁷ Kantonen, *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 7.

⁴⁸ Kantonen, *Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 7.

Werning addressed this issue, writing 30 years later, as he wrote about how traditional stewardship campaigns had been developed and presented through the years. He said, “The traditional one, stresses results through group performance and has dollars as the product. Spiritual growth becomes a by-product.”⁴⁹ Roy Bleick would state it this way, “Many church members tend to define stewardship as something that refers to the giving of money to church – pledging, budgets, etc.”⁵⁰

As has been shown, there is much more to stewardship than just money, though that appears to have been what stewardship came to encompass. In looking at the writing of James E. Carter, in his book *A Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons*, it became abundantly clear that while discussion about the life of the Christian is indeed important, the reason one would talk of such a life is to help the Christian to become a better steward, which means that he will give more to the work of the church. He wrote, “My conception of Christian stewardship is that it is the total response of the individual to the grace of God.”⁵¹ This sounds very admirable. Many pastors when asked about Christian stewardship would speak of how the life of the Christian is lived in response to the grace of God, which indeed it is to be lived in that fashion. Carter continued, “Stewardship involved money, but it is more than money: it is the self.”⁵² Yet, when reading through the sermons presented in this book, the focus is upon the Christian steward giving money because of all that the Lord has done for him. What comes through clearly as one reads through the sermons is that the reason they would be preached is to assist the hearer to respond to God’s grace by giving more money.

⁴⁹ Werning, *Christian Stewards*, 6.

⁵⁰ Roy H. Bleick, *Much More Than Giving: Resources for Preaching Christian Stewardship*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 16.

⁵¹ James E. Carter, *A Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 5.

⁵² Carter, *Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons*, 5.

That continues to be the problem that is faced when discussion of stewardship takes places. The focus continues to be upon the financial aspect of stewardship. Werning stated, “Stewardship is the chief offender, as it centers mostly on finances because unpaid bills and unmet budgets seem the most urgent.”⁵³ He points out that congregations, and pastors, have developed a maintenance mentality when it comes to stewardship. The church needs money to survive and the only way to get that money is to convince the membership to give more money. How does the pastor or church go about getting them to give more? The sermon is preached that points out that there is the need and the only way to meet that need is to respond to the Gospel and to God by giving more money. The trap is not only set, but also sprung. The greater the need, the more stewardship becomes about giving more money. The more stewardship becomes about giving more money, the greater the need will be. Werning stated it this way, “Why is more attention given to the congregation’s fiscal bankruptcy than to the spiritual bankruptcy of some of its members?”⁵⁴ The cycle continues in the life of the church.

Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, stewardship has continued to be an issue for the church to address. Looking at the relationship between justification, sanctification and good works helps to see how good works, as a response to justification, flows from the life of a sanctified steward. Early Lutheran theologians did not use the concept of stewardship but allowed the doctrine of sanctification to guide the actions of the Christian. Good works and stewardship come together in this life of the Christian as he lives as the Christian steward. Unfortunately, the church began to turn stewardship into the understanding that it dealt with the time, talent, and treasure of the

⁵³ Waldo Werning, *Supply-side Stewardship*, 10.

⁵⁴ Werning, *Supply-side Stewardship*, 11.

Christian. As this happened, stewardship focused more upon the financial and material possessions of the Christian and less upon the life that follows the will of God. Even while theologians and preachers tried to stem the tide of financial stewardship, they would often get caught in the undertow because of the need in their congregations. The more there was need, the more they preached stewardship. James B. Lemler, writing in the forward to C.K. Robertson's book, *Transforming Stewardship*, makes a statement that could be said about most denominations and church. He stated, "For most Episcopalians stewardship is synonymous with pledge drives, budgets and capital campaigns, but the Bible is clear that God wants more than our tithes and offerings."⁵⁵ How preaching in the Christian Church has addressed stewardship will be the focus of the next chapter.

⁵⁵ C.K. Robertson, *Transforming Stewardship*, (New York: Church, 2009), viii.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGE OF STEWARDSHIP PREACHING

Introduction

So far, this MAP has delved into the biblical, creedal, and theological foundation of stewardship. The working definition for stewardship in this MAP is the Christian steward is living according to the will of God in his life, using his life and life's resources according to God's will and for the good of others in his life. The purpose of this MAP is not only to define Christian stewardship, but to seek out the best in preaching on Christian stewardship. With that definition guiding this MAP, it is time to turn the attention to various writers to understand how Christian stewardship is to be preached. This chapter will begin looking at the impact stewardship preaching has had upon the lives of the hearers and the struggles that pastors have in preaching stewardship. It will then address several different writers concerning stewardship preaching, beginning with C.F.W. Walther, and moving to the more modern writers of Timothy Bagwell, Craig Satterlee and J. Clif Christopher. The conclusion will show the importance of centering on God's Word in preaching and applying stewardship consistently throughout the year of preaching.

The Struggle of Preaching Christian Stewardship

Preaching on Christian stewardship has been a challenge throughout the years. In 1951, J. E. Herrmann wrote, "Instead of imagining that we as pastors have gained our purpose when we, through the Word, have won a soul for Christ, we need to be reminded that our pastoral responsibilities to that soul have only begun."¹ While the focus of the Gospel is the saving of the

¹ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 20.

soul, that same Gospel changes the old man to the new man.² That new man needs the continued teaching that the pastor brings with each of his sermons. Herrmann asked the questions, “Has our teaching and preaching been functional? Is it related to everyday living? All preaching and teaching must have a practical outcome or little or nothing will come of it.”³ When applying this thinking to preaching on stewardship, Herrmann stated, “Do we realize that it is just as important to teach the ‘how’ of stewardship as the ‘why’ of it?”⁴ Too often, the pastor finds that in the attempt to be true to Law/Gospel preaching, he focuses his attention upon the “how” the soul is saved and not enough attention upon the “now what” that the soul is saved. Now what does that saved person do in the daily life, specifically in living out the will of God in that daily life? Preaching Christian stewardship helps the believer to know how to go about living according to the will of God each day. As Herrmann wrote, “The Christian life is Christian doctrine in action.”⁵ That action is to be found in the stewardship life of the Christian.

Waldo Werning, writing in 1986, continues to point out that there is a struggle in the preaching of stewardship. He sees that the challenge is to be found in that most churches approach stewardship with a maintenance mentality, which means that the focus of stewardship in the life of the church is upon trying to find a quick fix to the financial problems that it is facing. In this stewardship thinking, the focus “centers mostly on finances because unpaid bills and unmet budgets seem the most urgent.”⁶ What this does to the mission of the church is that it limits what may be accomplished by the congregation. Werning stated, “We need to stop

² This has been addressed in Chapter Two: The Biblical and Creedal Foundation

³ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 21.

⁴ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 21.

⁵ Herrmann, *The Chief Steward*, 21.

⁶ Waldo Werning, *Supply-Side Stewardship*, 10.

appealing to members for support of partial and limited ministries, which expect low response from maintenance mentality of half-defeated, half-victorious Christians.”⁷ In preaching on stewardship, the pastor needs to remind his hearers that stewardship is knowing that God has supplied all that is needed for the mission and ministry of the congregation. Paul put it this way, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...” (Eph. 3:20).

In 1993, Timothy Bagwell wrote, “Stewardship preaching in the U.S. today is at a crossroads. Stewardship is central to the spiritual health of the church, and preaching is crucial to stewardship.”⁸ This thought is echoed repeatedly by many who advocate for stewardship preaching. It appears that stewardship preaching has continued to be at the crucial point time and again, generation after generation.

Charles Lane picks up that very thought in his book *Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*. In 2006, he wrote:

The conviction of this book is that we are called to be disciples. Furthermore, I am convinced that how we steward the time, talent, and particularly the finances that God has entrusted to us will have a huge impact on our discipleship. In a unique way, financial stewardship has the potential to be either a roadblock to discipleship or catalyst to growing discipleship.⁹

What Lane brings forward, is nothing new to the preaching of stewardship. He stated, “In order for the focus of our stewardship ministry to be the believer’s relationship with Jesus, God’s word must be at the center of all that we do.”¹⁰ This has been the assertion that is made in each

⁷ Werning, *Supply-side Stewardship*, 29.

⁸ Timothy Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving: Proclaiming Financial Stewardship with Holy Boldness*, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1993), 99.

⁹ Charles R. Lane, *Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 17.

¹⁰ Lane, *Ask, Thank, Tell*, 17.

generation. Beginning in the Word of God, the preacher is to show his hearers that Christian stewardship is central to their daily life of faith. Lane wrote, “The goal of our stewardship ministry is to help God’s people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents and finances God has entrusted to them.”¹¹

Walther on Preaching Good Works/Stewardship

Here it will be shown that how C. F. W. Walther and his writing, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, addressed how the pastor is to preach concerning good works. It will be shown that preaching the fullness of the Word of God, and not just a portion of it, will bless both the pastor and the hearer. Walther did not specifically lecture on what would be called stewardship, but he did focus on preaching good works and how the pastor should guide the hearer through the Gospel and not through the Law. Walther set forth this proposition in Thesis XXIII:

You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you use the demands, threats, or promises of the Law to try and force the unregenerate to put away their sins and engage in good works and thus become godly; and then, on the other hand, if you use the commands of the Law – rather than the admonitions of the Gospel – to urge the regenerate to do good.¹²

As Walther built this thesis, he pointed out that the preacher should not use the Law to try to change the way that the Christian lives and acts. No good work can be brought about by the Law. The preacher makes a mistake to think that he needs to preach the Law in all its force to the regenerate Christians. He might see that the Christian congregation is struggling with the old, sinful man, and does indeed need to hear the Law to point out that sinfulness. But he should also understand that to preach the Law will not bring about the change from the old man to the new

¹¹ Lane, *Ask, Thank, Tell*, 43.

¹² C. F. W. Walther, *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 429.

man, nor will it bring out the good works that should be a part of the life of the Christian.

Walther wrote, “This mingling of Law and Gospel also occurs when pastors become aware that all their Gospel preaching is useless because coarse sins of the flesh are still occurring among their listeners.”¹³ The pastor thinks that he should preach the fullness of the Law to the congregation to get them to begin doing good works. This is not how the pastor should preach. By hammering away with the Law, he will not bring about the life of the Christian according to the will of God. Instead, just the opposite will happen. Even if the Christian responds to the Law with some sort of action that the pastor wants to see happen in the life of the Christian, it will not be considered a good work before God. Walther used this example:

But he is quite mistaken. There is no change in the people, except that they become very angry with their pastor for not permitting them to do what they love doing. A collection is taken up, and he gets twenty cents when he had expected twenty dollars. He resolved to give these people hell and damnation next Sunday. This might increase the collection by ten or twenty dollars, but the offering is **worthless in the sight of God, because it was made under duress.** (Emphasis mine)¹⁴

The point that is being made by Walther is that when the Christian is forced into doing good works for any other reason than the Gospel, they are not good works before God. He wrote, “When people are forced to do good works by the threats or even the promises of the Law, they are not good works.”¹⁵

What does this mean for the pastor as he is going to be preaching on stewardship? When the pastor is preaching on stewardship, if he is going to use the Law to gain some action from the hearers, he will not be leading them to do the will of God in their lives. Instead, he will be leading them into actions that do not follow the will of God, nor do they bring glory to God. The

¹³ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 436.

¹⁴ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 436.

¹⁵ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 437.

actions will still flow from the Old Adam and not the New Man. The pastor that wants to assist his congregation in growing in Christian stewardship will guide them by use of the Gospel and not the Law. Walther wrote, “Good works are only those that a person does freely and from the heart.”¹⁶

How does the heart change so that the hearer will live the life of a Christian steward?

While this has been written about in Chapter two, the pastor realizes that it only comes from the heart that has been changed by the Gospel. Walther stated, “Rather than act as policeman in his congregation, he ought to change the hearts of his members. In this way they would cheerfully do what pleases God.”¹⁷ They do this only through the power of the Gospel acting in their lives.

As Walther wrote, “The moment people believe in His love, they cannot help but love God. They would do anything out of gratitude for their salvation, for love of God and for His glory.”¹⁸

Walther may not be speaking specifically about stewardship when he makes this statement, but the way he speaks sounds like the definition of stewardship – living according to the will of God. Living in gratitude for the salvation given through Jesus Christ, the Christian steward responds in gratitude. The pastor that properly preaches both Law and Gospel in his sermon, will find that instead of trying vainly to motivate his hearers with the words of Law, he could begin to see the change in the actions of his congregation as they are motivated to act according to the Gospel.

The pastor who is to preach in such a way that the hearer’s hearts are changed is the one who teaches “that God is gracious and merciful and has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but wants them to live. Moreover, they should teach that God has revealed His mercy by having His

¹⁶ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 437.

¹⁷ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 438.

¹⁸ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 438.

only-begotten Son become man.”¹⁹ Only when the pastor preaches this message for his congregation to hear, will changes be made in the lives of the people. Walther stated, “...there follows in the course of time other fruits, namely, a life in beautiful harmony with this doctrine and in no way contrary to it. But these fruits should **be regarded as genuine fruits only where the first fruit, namely, the doctrine of Christ, already exists.**” (Emphasis Walther’s)²⁰ In listening to Walther, the pastor needs to continue to preach Law and Gospel, not leaving the hearers in the Law, but letting the Gospel prevail in his preaching, for only then will there be changes in the lives of the hearers. In preaching Christian stewardship, he will continue to preach the Gospel, for only then, shall his hearers come to know the will of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Timothy Bagwell and *Preaching for Giving*

Searching for the best practices in stewardship preaching takes one to many different places. There are a variety of books that have been written on stewardship and stewardship preaching. One such writer is Timothy J. Bagwell who wrote *Preaching for Giving*. Looking into Bagwell’s writing, one gets some interesting guidance and tips when it comes to preaching on stewardship, specifically if the pastor is preaching on giving.

As one reads through Bagwell’s writing, it is easy to see that the focus is specifically on the pastor preaching to the congregation concerning their giving. He pointed out that for most pastors preaching on stewardship, “the watchwords are timidity, reluctance, paralysis, and embarrassment.”²¹ It is true that most pastors find it challenging and difficult to preach on

¹⁹ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 466.

²⁰ Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 466.

²¹ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 2.

financial stewardship. It makes many pastors uncomfortable and as Bagwell pointed out again, it leads many pastors to avoid preaching on financial stewardship at all. Though he wrote specifically on financial stewardship, there are some good points that Bagwell brings forward when it comes to preaching on financial stewardship.

Bagwell develops the theology of preaching on financial stewardship in much the same way that many theologians and pastors approach Christian stewardship. He presents an understanding of stewardship from the trinitarian perspective.²² He uses this foundation to present three ways in which the preacher should bring out financial stewardship:

It suggests that the role of the preacher is to lead the worshiping community in celebrating the relationship into which we were created and for which we are being redeemed. Preaching about stewardship is much more than just raising funds; it is an opportunity to respond in freedom and trust to what God has done in Christ.²³

Biblical theology enjoins the preacher to provide opportunities for people to respond in faith to the goodness of God.²⁴

Biblical theology instills in preaching a communal vision for ministry and mission in the wider community and world.²⁵

These three concepts present a good basis for the preaching of stewardship though it could be said that preaching on stewardship should not be limited to sermons on financial stewardship. He makes the point that the pastor should develop a solid foundation and understanding of Biblical stewardship based in the Trinity, which will then help the pastor to preach on Christian stewardship. While Bagwell's focus is upon financial stewardship, it should be pointed out that these three points will assist the pastor as he preaches on Christian stewardship that follows the will of God in the whole life and not just in financial giving.

²² This is the theological foundation that was laid in chapter 2 of this MAP.

²³ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 49.

²⁴ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 50.

²⁵ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 51.

As Bagwell continues to develop preaching for financial stewardship, he states that many pastors preach in such a way that it makes the hearer think that financial stewardship or giving, is somehow wrong or is only required as an obligation. Many times, pastors will apologize for a sermon dealing with financial stewardship. He wrote, “Sadly, I think many of us approach our financial stewardship sermons only from the left brain.”²⁶ To preach for the left brain, Bagwell feels, is to preach for those things that are already taking place in the life of the hearer. The pastor will preach in such a way that his hearers are able to state that they are saved, that they do serve God and that they are faithful stewards. While there is nothing wrong with this type of preaching, this left-brain preaching traps the hearer into the area of external concepts or behaviors. When the pastor preaches in this way, he makes his hearers feel as though they have done something wrong, and therefore feel guilty about their life of stewardship. At this Walther would point out that there are times when the law must be preached to awaken in the hearer the fact that they have sinned, they have not lived the life as the faithful Christian steward that that they should be, but this is not where the sermon should end. Bagwell wrote that to preach in this way causes the congregation to feel as though they have done something wrong. “They walk away from traditional stewardship sermons feeling “whipped” and guilty.”²⁷ That is the work that the Law has done in the lives of the hearers but is not where the pastor would like to leave his hearers when he finishes his sermon.

Instead, Bagwell stated that right brain preaching brings out “process, intuition, invitation, feeling and sensing.”²⁸ He believes this is what makes Jesus’ sermons so natural is that He

²⁶ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 57. In this discussion, Bagwell speak of preaching in such a way that the pastor engages the right brain of her hearer.

²⁷ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 57.

²⁸ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 57.

preached to the right hemisphere of the brain. When it comes to stewardship, the pastor preaching to the right brain would challenge his hearers to see the actions that they could take in living the life of stewardship. Walther would say that the pastor is bringing forward the gospel, which then changes and equips the hearer for those good works that could be called Christian stewardship.²⁹ Right brain preaching for Bagwell, leads into the feeling and the action that is trapped by left brain preaching. He would have the pastor focus his attention on reaching that part of the hearer that does not see Christian stewardship in a negative or judgmental fashion. The right brain will see Christian stewardship as putting into action that which the left brain holds onto and yet fails to cause the hearer to act.

There is something to be said about this type of preaching. Put in the Lutheran context, it would focus the attention of the hearer upon the life of sanctification, bringing out the power of the gospel to change the life and lead into action. Bagwell would have the preacher not speak in such a way that makes the hearer think that the pastor is somehow sorry that he must preach about financial stewardship. Bringing the gospel to bear, using the concept that Paul brings out in Romans 8, he would show that stewardship can only be lived by the Christian steward through the working of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh could not do” (Rom. 8:3). The law only crushes the steward. The pastor preaching on stewardship will not be able to work that change in the heart of his hearers if his focus is only on the law.³⁰ Paul said, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit”

²⁹ It should be remembered that Walther did not speak specifically of stewardship. As was shown, he would call that the life of sanctification or doing good works.

³⁰ Such statements as “you must,” or “you should,” only continue to cause the hearer to feel unable to act as God would have her act. Only the gospel can change how the pastor preaches and the steward acts.

(Romans 8:5). The pastor is to have his stewardship sermons focus on the action that is only brought about by the preaching of the gospel.

Finally, Bagwell makes some good points when it comes to preaching on Christian stewardship. He stated, “The task of the preacher is to articulate the connection among spirituality, faith and financial stewardship.”³¹ He points out that as the pastor preaches to his congregation, he should point out that “Giving is not drudgery! Giving is a joyful opportunity! Through our giving, God is able to make an impact in this world.”³² To preach in this fashion, the pastor will show his congregation that moving from the basics of faith, the Christian steward will begin to live in the will of God, using life and life’s resources as a joyful expression of the faith that is given to him through the working of the Holy Spirit. Bagwell stated, “When preaching for giving, draw from the dreams and discussions that have taken place with the laity in your local church.”³³

Stewardship preaching is important for the pastor. Bagwell is speaking specifically about financial stewardship, but his thoughts could easily be used when preaching on more than just financial stewardship. The pastor can broaden these thoughts as he preaches that Christian stewardship is living according to the will of God. He wrote, “Financial responsibility and accountability are very important parts of the good news. The preacher then should preach the gospel, and the gospel inevitably calls the listener to consider the integration, the interconnection among faith, spirituality, and money.”³⁴ Bagwell sees that there is hope for the pastor to preach on stewardship.

³¹ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 85.

³² Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 89.

³³ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 93.

³⁴ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 5.

Law and Gospel – Broad and Narrow Sense

It is at this time that one must understand the difference between the broad and the narrow sense of the gospel. If one does not understand that there is a difference, the works of Walther and Bagwell, as well as other writers that deal with stewardship, there will be some confusion. In order to help understand the difference between the broad and narrow use of the gospel, as well as the law, one can look at the Formula of Concord. Timothy Bagwell is using the term “gospel” in the broad sense. In the Solid Declaration it is written,

When the word “gospel” is used as a *generalis definitio* (that is, in its broader meaning apart from the proper distinction of law and gospel) it is correct to define the word as a proclamation of repentance and the forgiveness of sins. For John, Christ, and the apostles began their proclamation with repentance, and thus they set forth and emphasized not only the gracious promise of the forgiveness of sins but also the law of God.³⁵

As one reads Bagwell’s writing, it should be understood that he is writing about the gospel in the broad sense, thus he would include the work of the law in bringing the person to repentance and the work of the gospel in giving the person forgiveness of sin and the change from the Old Adam to the New Man.³⁶

On the other hand, Walther speaks of the law and gospel in more the narrow sense of the words. Walther uses the term “gospel” in a different sense from Bagwell, speaking of the gospel in the narrow sense. Reading in the Solid Declaration, one finds this: “Alongside this definition, the “gospel” is used in another (that is, in a strict) sense, when it includes not the proclamation of repentance but only the proclamation of the grace of God.”³⁷ As Walther is writing, and as it is applied in this MAP, the law and gospel is used in the narrow sense. The reason for this usage is

³⁵ SD V.5 in Kolb and Wengert, 582.

³⁶ Bagwell does not speak in the terms of law/gospel or Old Adam/New Man. That is the understanding that is used in this MAP.

³⁷ SD V.6 in Kolb and Wengert, 582.

to show how Christian stewardship is only possible after the gospel (narrow sense) has changed the person from the Old Adam to the New Man. Then, living in that gospel (narrow sense), the Christian will then follow the will of God in his life, guided by the law (narrow sense) as it shows him how to live the Christian steward's life.

As this MAP continues, it is following the law and gospel in the narrow sense when it is talking about good works and the life of the Christian steward. It is being done in order to avoid the confusion that comes from not distinguishing between the two senses. In the Solid Declaration is it written:

However, in order to avoid all misunderstanding as much as possible and to teach and maintain the real difference between the works of the law and the works of the Spirit, it must be diligently noted that, when we speak of good works that are in accord with the law of God (for otherwise they are not good works), the word "law has one single meaning, namely, the unchanging will of God, according to which human beings are to conduct themselves in this life."³⁸

Following this teaching, this MAP uses the law in the narrow sense for the works of the steward, as he lives according to the will of God in his life. The gospel, in the narrow sense, has changed him into the New Man, thus making it possible for him to live according to that will of God.

J. Clif Christopher and Not Your Parents' Offering Plate

J. Clif Christopher's book on financial stewardship is not specifically written for the preacher. It is meant to assist the pastor to be a fund raiser within his pastoral setting, helping him to have a new vision on how to raise money within the church. Yet there are some good points that he makes concerning the preaching on stewardship in the congregation.

One point that Christopher makes is that the pastor does need to make a "sales pitch" for

³⁸ SD VI.15 in Kolb and Wengert, 589.

giving in the congregation. What is that sales pitch? It is the message of the gospel. He stated, “I guess some people would call the pastor’s pitch sales, but I call it great preaching in the spirit of those such as Joel, Isaiah, Paul, Peter, John Wesley, and Martin Luther King Jr. Your pitch is nothing more than what you can believe can be IF we succeed in this campaign.”³⁹ Christopher seems to resonant with what Satterlee was stating in that he wrote, “In churches where I consistently see exemplary stewardship, its importance is evidenced in the preaching done in that church. The members will tell you that they are reminded on a regular basis of the centrality of stewardship to the Christian faith.”⁴⁰ Christopher’s focus is upon the financial giving that is done in the congregation, thus for him the exemplary stewardship that is spoken of is a congregation where the giving is beyond what is commonly seen in congregations.

Christopher speaks about “preaching” regularly throughout this book. He has a specific concept that he means by this term. “When I say ‘preach’ I mean that the theme of the message deals with materialism and the use of money.”⁴¹ He would have the pastor openly talk about giving and the use of material blessings. He said, “Just slipping in the words *tithing* or *giving* in some other sermon will not have nearly the same effect.”⁴² For Christopher, the pastor must be openly proclaiming what he would like to see as the response of his hearers. If he wants them to give more money, tell them to give more money. Don’t back off from that proclamation of stewardship. “Your people are looking for clues as to what is important in the Christian life and what is not. When you talk about financial stewardship, let them know you mean every word of

³⁹ J. Clif Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship*, (Nashville, Abingdon, 2015), 48.

⁴⁰ Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 92.

⁴¹ Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 93.

⁴² Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 93.

it.”⁴³

While Christopher is approaching stewardship as financial fund raising within the church, there is something lacking from his writing. He wrote, “My words to those of you who have been given a church to serve is for you to add not one more JOB to your day planner, but simply to make stewardship the hallmark of who you are each and every day.”⁴⁴ He misses the point of preaching stewardship in the church. The point is not to get people to give more, as you would expect from a not-for-profit organization, but the pastor is to preach the gospel in such a way that it changes the hearts of his hearers, bringing them into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as their Savior, and in so doing, his hearers become better stewards in their daily lives. The pastor would benefit from Christopher’s writing in understanding that there is need to include stewardship regularly in the sermons preached throughout the year, with the understanding that it will impact how his hearers react to that message with their material possessions and their financial resources.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought forward the challenges the pastor has as he preaches concerning Christian stewardship. It is a continual challenge for the pastor to lead his hearers in the scriptural understanding of stewardship. As was pointed out by the authors, it is important for the pastor to keep the Word of God front and center in his preaching on stewardship. Instead of trying to preach about stewardship and fitting God’s Word into that preaching, he is to preach the Word of God, allowing the teaching of stewardship to flow directly from that Word. As he preaches the Word this way, he will find that it will have an impact upon the hearer, especially as

⁴³ Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 93.

⁴⁴ Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 111-112.

he focuses on the gospel message that changes the heart and life of the hearer. It is also important for the pastor to preach stewardship throughout the year, and not just on the annual stewardship Sunday. In preaching in this way, the pastor will find that the Holy Spirit will use that Word to change the hearts of his hearers concerning their stewardship life.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain how this project came into being. It started with a desire to understand the concept of stewardship and the application of that understanding to the life in the parish. At the same time, there was a deepening desire to become a better preacher, knowing that it had been nearly 30 years since I had any structured study of homiletics. This chapter will explain how this project came to be.

Development of Stewardship and Homiletics in the Ministry

In the fall of 2009, I began to serve on the Southern Illinois District (hereafter SID) Stewardship Committee. This committee was tasked with the development and implementation of various stewardship programs within the SID congregations. As a new member on the committee, I came with a limited understanding of the concept of stewardship. I understood it to mean the annual stewardship campaign that preceded the development of the congregational budget, which was something I did not like to do, nor was such a campaign done very often in my parish. I believed that if the pastor was to preach the Word of God to his congregation, then they would respond with the renewed life of stewardship. The finances would be met because the pastor faithfully preached God's Word. I had spent most of my ministry with this understanding. Therefore, I did not have an annual stewardship campaign in the congregations which I served. As I began to serve on this committee, my concept of stewardship began to change.

In February of 2010, I attended the annual Stewardship Conference in Tempe, AZ. This conference was sponsored by the districts of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. At this conference, I was introduced to various programs that could be used in the congregations to

assist the pastor and congregation to grow in their stewardship life. At the same time, the concept of whole-life stewardship was part of the discussion. Through this discussion, I became interested in the how the pastor could help his congregation to understand stewardship beyond the annual stewardship campaign and budget setting. Coming back from that conference, I brought those ideas and thoughts to the SID Stewardship Committee as well to the congregation which I was serving at that time.

In May of 2011, I went to the Annual Day of Homiletical Reflection at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. It began to awaken in me the desire to learn how to improve my own ability in homiletics. Following the May 2012 Day of Homiletical Reflection, I decided that I needed to take advantage of the opportunity that I had to improve my preaching. Having graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO in 1987, I had not had any structured study in homiletics. I realized how much I had missed in those 25 years. There had been many advances and breakthroughs in the study of homiletics that I had not even heard about in my serving as a parish pastor.

The summer of 2012 the decision was made to apply to the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, with the focus in the area of homiletics. September 2012 brought my acceptance into the program. My desire was to grow in my homiletical understanding, as well as my ability to preach a better sermon. For the next 4 years, I would continue to grow in homiletics through the various courses being offered. During that time, I searched for a direction for the Major Applied Project (MAP) that would be required to complete the degree.

Homiletics and Stewardship Converge

In 2016, I worked through the course “Stewardship Development.” This course touched upon the very thing that I had been working with since I had been on the SID Stewardship

Committee. It helped me to begin to understand the importance of stewardship in the life of the pastor and the congregation. As I worked on this course, I came to see that I needed to develop my ability to preach on stewardship, in the annual campaign, as well as bringing stewardship into the regular preaching throughout the year.

At that time, I began to develop a MAP that would seek to find out how the members of the congregation understood stewardship while at the same developing a series of sermons that would focus upon the topic of stewardship. I wrestled with this thinking while also growing in homiletics. During this time, I learned about the concept of dialogical structure in preaching. Dialogical preaching happens when the pastor will “integrate conversational interaction within the progression of the sermon.”¹ I was interested in using a form of dialogical preaching when it came to preaching on stewardship.

As I continued to wrestle with the concept of the focus of this specific MAP, I thought that first person dialogical preaching might fit well within the framework of preaching on stewardship. While serving as pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Troy, IL, in 2017, I worked with my stewardship board to develop a form of dialogical preaching with the congregation. The outline for this dialogical preaching was as such:

- The sermon series on stewardship would last for 3 months.
- On the first Sunday of the month, I would preach a topical sermon on stewardship.
- On the second Sunday of the month, I began the sermon on stewardship. After a brief introduction, the congregation was given a survey form in which they could ask their questions about stewardship. I would then take those questions and answer

¹ David Adams, preacher. “*Dialogical Structures.*” Concordia Seminary Chapel, St. Louis, MO. November 17, 2017.

them from the pulpit. While this is not directly “dialogical,” the concept was based upon a dialogical format.

- On the third Sunday of the month, I would continue to address the questions of the congregation, only this time after having some time to develop more in-depth answers.
- After taking a Sunday break from this, the process would be repeated for the next two months.

The idea behind this was to see if this form of preaching had an impact on people’s understanding of stewardship for better or for worse. It was a challenging exercise that I thought might develop into a MAP. Along with this sermon, the first Sunday of the series, the hearers were asked to answer in writing this question: How do you understand stewardship? This question was then asked each month to see if there was any change or growth in understanding stewardship. The difficulty with this was that the hearers did not sign their names to the forms, so there was no real comparison, to see if the same person had grown in understanding stewardship.

After wrestling with this concept for the next two years, spending time talking with various professors and with those involved in the Doctor of Ministry program, I came to realize that this concept, while sounding like it might work into a MAP, would not actually be able to be accomplished in the time and fashion that is provided by the Doctor of Ministry program. I still wanted to somehow wed together my interest in homiletics and stewardship.

A Change in Ministry Location

During this time, I was serving as pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Troy, IL. I had finished the course work for the Doctor of Ministry at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and

had been working to find a direction for my MAP while serving as their pastor. I was working on the MAP plan while serving in the SID, looking for a way to reach out to the pastors of the SID concerning the preaching of stewardship.

On December 12, 2018, I received a divine call to serve as pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA. This meant that I had to prayerfully decide if I would continue to serve the congregation in Troy, IL or the congregation in Clarinda, IA. During the months of December and January, I visited the congregation in Clarinda, IA, discussing the ministry needs and challenges of that congregation, while at the same time, I discussed the ministry challenges and the direction of ministry at St. Paul's, Troy, IL. On January 20, 2019, I accepted the call to serve as the pastor at St. John, Clarinda, IA. During the months of February and March, I made the transition from serving at St. Paul's, Troy, IL to St. John, Clarinda, IA. I moved from Illinois to Iowa in March 2019. I was installed as the pastor at St. John on March 31, 2019. During that time, work on this MAP took a backseat to the adapting and learning the ministry needs and direction of St. John. It remained that way until September 2019, when I began to focus on the work of defining the direction of my MAP.

The Project Refined and Defined

In August 2019, I applied for and was granted an extension on the development and writing of the MAP. I began to collaborate with my advisor on the direction to take with the MAP. We began to work out a solution on how to incorporate both stewardship and homiletics into a workable MAP. The thought of developing a MAP which included a series of sermons on stewardship which would be preached and then surveying the hearers in both a large group and a small group showed itself to be a difficult project to evaluate. It would be difficult to figure out exactly what impact a series of sermons would have upon the hearers, for there would need to be

surveys done prior to the sermon series, during the preaching of the sermon series and again after the series had been preached. This also would not consider the background of the hearers on the topic of stewardship. This would vary from congregation to congregation, thus making it difficult to come to any acceptable conclusion. Reluctantly this direction was abandoned.

The discussion continued as we tried to figure out how to meld homiletics and stewardship into a workable MAP. It was in June 2020 that we worked out what concept that has become the basis of this MAP – In Search of the Best Practices in Preaching on Christian Stewardship. The goal of this MAP developed to the point where it would present the best practices for preaching on stewardship gleaned from interviews with exemplary preachers that will be helpful for the parish pastor when he preaches on stewardship in his congregation. To reach this goal, the question was asked: How can I identify, and encourage the use of, the best practices in preaching Christian stewardship? This seemed broad and unmanageable. So, the focus was refined to asking the question: How can I identify, and encourage the use of, the best practices in preaching Christian stewardship in the Iowa District West of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod?

The Methodology Developed

Having developed the concept and goal for the MAP, the question was raised as to how to go about putting the pieces together. Since the focus was upon reaching out to the pastors in the IDW, I decided to begin by contacting the IDW President. I received permission from Pres. Turner to do the research in IDW in August 2020. After receiving this permission, I asked him for the names of a dozen pastors that did an exceptional job with stewardship in their preaching. Unfortunately, he could only point me to those congregations that included the IDW in their annual budget, all of them at an exceptional rate. Beginning there, I reached out to the pastors of

those top five congregations.² After receiving that list of 14 pastors from Pres. Turner on December 2, 2020, I contacted each of them, asking if they would agree to be a part of the study that would assist in the writing of this MAP. Out of those 14, only two agreed to be a part of the study.

At the same time, as this was not a complete list of pastors in the district, I expanded my search for those pastors in the IDW who were doing an exceptional job preaching Christian stewardship. I reached out the circuit visitors here in the IDW. In 2014, the LC-MS in convention adopted the visitation circuits within each District. Each visitation circuit has a “circuit visitor,” a clergyman who, among other responsibilities, visits each congregation in his circuit when requested to do so by the district president.³ I reached out to these 17 circuit visitors at the end of November 2020, requesting that they would supply the names of men in their circuit that they felt did an exceptional job preaching Christian stewardship. Many of the circuit visitors responded that they did not have any pastor that did an exceptional job preaching Christian stewardship, showing the importance of this MAP. From four of the circuit visitors, I did receive the names of six pastors around IDW what fit the criteria for this MAP.

In November 2020, I reached out to nine pastors who had expressed interest in being a part of my research, via email, asking if they would consent to being interviewed for this MAP. After receiving word back from five of these pastors, I mailed each of them the consent form.⁴ Upon receiving consent from four of the pastors to being interviewed, in January 2022, I set up a Zoom

² I was disappointed that the criterion that was used was the giving to District. It showed me that there is a challenge in the preaching on Christian stewardship, for it was considered that a pastor was doing an exceptional job should his congregation give a certain amount to the district for the mission of the district.

³ Paula Schlueter Ross, *Congregations Ratify ‘Circuit Visitor Convention Action, Reporter* (St. Louis: LCMS, March 6, 2004).

⁴ See Appendix One.

meeting with each of the pastors. I conducted Zoom interviews on January 12, 13, and 15, 2021. Each of these interviews lasted between 30–45 minutes. Each pastor was asked the same questions. I recorded the interviews and took extensive notes during the interviews. The verbatim for each of these interviews may be found in Appendix 3. The results of those interviews will be found in Chapter Six.

The Interview Questions Developed

The Questions Introduced

Developing the questions to be asked in the interviews was challenging. Trying to figure out which questions would help this MAP and those which would not help, was something that grew out of the study on preaching Christian stewardship. After developing a list of questions, talking them through, refining the questions, talking them through and refining them even more, I finally came to six questions that I felt would help me to understand how pastors preach on the topic of Christian stewardship. Before I asked any of these questions, I asked the interviewee to describe his background in the pastoral ministry, along with where he has served and where he is currently serving. This question was for my sake, so that I would get to know a little more about the pastor before I began asking the questions pertaining to this MAP.

Those six questions each pastor was asked are:

With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?

With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?

What is the one driving thing that helps him to preach on Christian stewardship?

I will show how each of the questions were developed from the research on preaching Christian stewardship.

Developing the Questions

The first question which I asked each of the pastors was: *With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?*

What I did before I asked this question was to explain to the interviewee how I had come to understand what Christian stewardship was for the life of the believer. I felt that it was important for him to know where I was beginning. This would give him the opportunity to think out what he has come to understand as Christian stewardship.

At the end of chapter two, *The Biblical Foundation of Christian Stewardship*, I wrote: “The Christian steward, living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God’s name and for the good of others, is living in the way that God would have him live each day.”⁵ Continuing to build upon that understanding, I wrote in chapter three, *The Doctrinal Foundation of Christian Stewardship*, “Living according to that vocation, one continues to follow the will of God and in so doing, finds himself to be a Christian steward, doing good works.”⁶ I explained to the

⁵ See page 23.

⁶ See page 39.

interviewee that I understood Christian stewardship as the believer living out each day according to the will of God for his life, which would then bring glory to God and be for the good of those in his life. The people it would bring the blessings of God to in his life would be his family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other with which he had contact throughout the day. It was important to understand that all of this is wrapped up in the Christian steward living according to the will of God, which meant that he would be living as one who was made new by the Holy Spirit through both Word and Sacrament. To exhort the old man to live according to the will of God was to be living according to the law instead of the gospel and therefore could not give guidance to the person in how he should live as the Christian steward.

I found that it was important for the Christian steward to be doing good works according to the faith. In chapter three, I pointed out that the Apology to the Augsburg Confession stated, “Do good works to preserve your calling and to keep from losing the gifts of your calling, which were given beforehand, not on account of the works that follow, and which are now retained by faith.”⁷ This means that the believer is to do that which is according to the will of God, which flows from his life of faith, from the calling that God has given him according to his various vocations of life. It is challenging to stretch the definition of stewardship beyond the giving of money to the church, for while that is a part of the life of the Christian steward, that is not the end of the steward’s life. Roy Bleick stated, “Many church members tend to define stewardship as something that refers to the giving of money to church – pledging, budgets, etc.”⁸ I found that even as I was looking for candidates to interview concerning preaching Christian stewardship, the focus of those I asked for names of pastors who did an exemplary job preaching on

⁷ AP XX.13 in Kolb and Wengert, 237.

⁸ Roy Bleick, *Much More Than Giving: Resources for Preaching Christian Stewardship*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 16.

stewardship, was upon those who did a good job raising money in their church, either to support the mission work of the district or the budget of the congregation. I felt that while this is a part of Christian stewardship in the congregation, it is not all that it entails.

It was with this explanation that I began the interview with the individual. I felt this gave them the starting place for this MAP, which would give them the opportunity to go whatever direction they felt they could go as they understood and preached on Christian stewardship.

The second question I developed was: *With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?*

As I struggled to develop this question, my mind kept returning to the question of should preaching stewardship be just about giving money to the church? James Carter helped me to come to grips with this question. As I wrote in chapter three, there is much more to preaching Christian stewardship than just the preaching of giving money. I quoted Carter, “Stewardship involved money, but it is more than money: it is the self.”⁹ This preaching of giving of the self is exactly what I wanted to find out if that is what was being preached by the pastors as they preached Christian stewardship. Were they preaching about money or were they preaching about much more, such as the whole self being a Christian steward?

Once again, I came upon the struggle of who the pastor sees himself preaching to as he prepares for preaching on Christian stewardship. Is he preaching to the old man or the new man? Does he find that it easier to preach to the old man or to the new man? And while I was struggling with this thought, I came to realize that it might be a follow up question but should not be the focus of the question. As a follow up question on preparing for preaching on Christian stewardship, I could ask the pastor if he focused on the old man or the new man in his preaching.

⁹ James Carter, *A Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), 5.

As I looked at that question, I realized that it was more of a leading question, since in the Lutheran tradition of preaching, we talk regularly of preaching to the new man since we are preaching the Gospel. The old man cannot hear or act upon the Gospel. Instead, the Gospel means little to the old man nor does it have much effect on his life. Therefore, I decided to not pursue this course of questioning unless the pastor being interviewed brought it up on his own. As I drew this question together, I purposefully left out the discussion on the old/new man to see if that would be a part of the best practices in preaching by these pastors.

The third question I developed was: *Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?*

I was seeking to find out if the pastor who exhibits the best practices in preaching on Christian stewardship thinks about Christian stewardship as he prepared to preach regularly. I wondered if he was searching for certain types of actions from his hearers when he preached on Christian stewardship, such as increased giving, more involvement in serving at the local congregation or reaching out beyond the congregation. As I looked at the Parable of the Talents in chapter two, it is easy to make the parable about seeing some action by the steward, earning more talents, doing some action, and therefore preaching with the thought being that you wanted the hearers to act in a certain way. As I came to understand the Parable of the Talents, I came to see it more about serving the Master by learning about His will for your life and then living according to that will rather than trying to do one specific thing, such as extra financial giving.

I wanted to find out if the pastor had his thoughts tuned to stewardship. When he opens the Bible and begins to study the text that he has for the coming Sunday, does he have the thought in

mind, “How can I preach about Christian stewardship?” Or does he find himself so in tune with the doctrine of stewardship that it shows itself as he studies the text, leading him to ask the question, “How will this sermon help the hearer to live his life as a Christian?” As I focus on Christian stewardship, my thinking is that when you are helping the hearer to live the Christian life, you are helping him to be a Christian steward. In asking that question, is the pastor bringing stewardship forward as it presents itself?

I thought a little deeper about the issue, asking myself if the pastor seeks to find stewardship in most readings on any given Sunday? This thought developed for me as I served as the Junior Pastoral Counselor for the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (hereafter LWML).¹⁰ When a pastor is elected to serve the LWML on the national level, it is a four-year term. The first two years he serves as the Junior Pastoral Counselor. The second two years, he serves as the Senior Pastoral Counselor. Each position, while serving as counselor to the entire Board of Directors and the LWML in general, will also serve on certain committees which each have a different emphasis. While serving as pastoral counselor for the Planned Giving Committee, I was asked to write a short paragraph for the weekly letter that was sent out to the women and men of the LWML. That which I did each week was to look at one of the three readings assigned by the church lectionary, and write a stewardship thought that flowed from that reading. It was a challenging exercise, one that lasted for two years. At the end of those two

¹⁰ **LWML Mission Statement: As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions, and equip women to honor God by serving others.** Assisting the women of the LWML to put the new Mission Statement into practice, the committee also provided five LWML Core Values:

- Christian Women — We live as redeemed children of the Triune God.
- In God’s Word — We live in joyful response to the Holy Scriptures.
- Mission-Focused — We answer God’s call to share His Gospel at home and abroad.
- Embrace Diversity — We are sisters in Christ who value and benefit from each other.
- Servant Leaders — We are called and equipped by God to serve others.

years, I found myself looking at the readings in a different fashion, finding stewardship in most of the readings, coming to see how that specific reading helped the Christian to live according to the will of God in his stewardship life. This led me to the point where I was seeking to find out if the pastor that exhibited the best practices in preaching on Christian stewardship did this very same thing. I sought to see if the pastor would find stewardship in most texts. This led me to ask these questions to come to understand how the pastor would go about seeking Christian stewardship in his preaching.

The fourth question that I developed is: *As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?*

This is the heart of what I am seeking from the pastors that I would interview. I am trying to figure out what it is that the exemplary preacher does to raise the level of stewardship thinking among his hearers. I began by working through Romans 6–7 as it applies to the life of the Christian steward, as I did in chapter 2, the Biblical Foundation. The Christian struggles with the old and new man. But for the pastor, as he preaches according to Romans 6, he would find that he is preaching to the new man and not the old man. As it says in Romans, “So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:11). To preach on Christian stewardship, I would assume that the preacher would approach it from this point-of-view, so I was interested to see if that would come up as the pastors answered this question.

As I continued to build this question, I brought in what Timothy Bagwell stated, “The task of the preacher is to articulate the connection among spirituality, faith, and financial stewardship.”¹¹ I was seeking how the exemplary pastor tied stewardship into his regular

¹¹ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 89.

preaching. How did he develop his preaching to bring stewardship into his regular preaching routine? Does he consciously focus on stewardship each week? Does he work to tie together the lesson upon which he is preaching and stewardship? J Clif Christopher brings the point to the front when he stated, “In churches where I consistently see exemplary stewardship, its importance is evidenced in the preaching done in that church.”¹² This question, as stated, is meant to help me find out what the pastor does in his preaching to expand the stewardship life and thinking in his congregation.

The fifth question is: *As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?*

This is opposite side of question four. Here I wanted to find out what it is that the pastor has found to not be helpful in preaching on Christian stewardship. I wondered if he found such things as the annual stewardship campaign to be beneficial. While I did not include that in the question, I thought that it would come out in the interview. I had in my mind with this question that the pastor probably did not ignore the issue of stewardship, nor did he ignore the issue of giving in his preaching. Bagwell writes that one of the most common pitfalls that a preacher does is not talk about giving. He wrote, “The final pitfall that we mention here is the danger of being silent. How tempting it is to say little or nothing about giving.”¹³

I was interested to see if the pastor said anything about giving so that the giver will be blessed by God. While I have not delved into that aspect of Christian stewardship, with one’s giving being done in such a way that the giver feels that he would be blessed by God, I wondered

¹² Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*, 92.

¹³ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 83.

if that would come out in what the pastor said. I have not addressed the stewardship thought expressed in Malachi where it is written, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down a blessing until there is no more need” (Malachi 3:10). Bagwell wrote about this focus for stewardship, “One of the frequently used yet faulty appeals is the ‘we give in order to receive blessings from God.’”¹⁴

In asking this question, I was looking to receive insight into the thinking of the preacher concerning what should not be done when preaching Christian stewardship.

Finally, question six is: *What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?*

This question grew out of the development of all the other questions. When all was said and done, I wanted to see if there was one certain thing that focused the thinking of the pastor so that he would continue to focus on Christian stewardship in his preaching. As I thought about the rest of questions, I felt that this would be the capstone to all that the pastor would say. I was looking to find that nugget of truth that would be helpful for other pastors who were wanting to improve their preaching on Christian stewardship.

Assumptions, Limitations and Role of Researcher

There are several assumptions that I am making as I work through this MAP:

1. Many parish pastors have a hard time figuring out how to preach on Christian stewardship.
2. There are some pastors who demonstrate greater fruitfulness (i.e., positive effectiveness

¹⁴ Bagwell, *Preaching for Giving*, 8.

and impact) in preaching regularly on Christian stewardship.

3. Parish pastors need the support and insights of other pastors to continue to grow as steward leaders in their congregations.

These three assumptions were basic to my work on this MAP.

The limitation that I have placed upon myself in this MAP is that I will focus specifically on the preaching of Christian stewardship. It would be easy to move into a wholistic approach to teaching and preaching Christian stewardship, meaning that besides the weekly preaching, the pastor teaches stewardship in Bible class, in various board or committee meetings, as well as including stewardship as a regular part of the weekly bulletin, the monthly newsletter and his regular congregational blog. This MAP needs to be limited specifically to the preaching that the pastor does on a regular basis. This preaching could be in the annual stewardship campaign and sermon, regularly including stewardship in the weekly sermon, having stewardship sermon series throughout the year as well as any other times that he might include Christian stewardship in his preaching.

My role in the research part of this MAP will be in interviewing the various pastors. I will begin by explaining my working definition of Christian stewardship to help each one understand where this MAP begins. Then each pastor will be given the opportunity to answer the six questions concerning preaching Christian stewardship in his congregational setting and throughout his ministry. I will then take their responses and organize them into a series of best practices on Christian preaching. I will analyze these results and develop the best practices in Christian stewardship.

My Definition of Stewardship Clarified

As I have worked through this MAP, I have been developing my definition of stewardship.

At this time, I have this as my definition: The Christian steward, living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God's name and for the good of others, is living in the way that God would have him live each day. I understand that this is a broad definition of stewardship compared to some of the narrower definitions. On the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod's website, stewardship is defined as the free and joyous activity of God's family – the church – in managing life's resources for His purposes. This also is a broad definition of stewardship.

One can narrow this definition to become much more focused on a certain aspect of stewardship. T.A. Kantonen writing in *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, narrowed the various aspects of Christian stewardship to cover such topics as “Stewardship and the Word of God,” “Stewardship and the Nature of God,” and “The Priesthood of All Believers.”¹⁵ One might decide that the focus of stewardship is to care for the planet, making the focus of stewardship caring for the natural resources, thus making it important to care for such resources as clean water. Therefore, with that definition, the focus of the steward would be on finding ways to care for the natural waterways, working to overcome pollution. The steward would then spend his time and finances in finding ways to remove pollution from the rivers, ensuring that the ones that use the rivers would ensure that they would not allow the exhaust from their engines to pollute the water.

Another might define stewardship as caring specifically for their finances. Thus, like the author Timothy Bagwell, the focus of what one does in ensuring that the steward would use his finances in a God-pleasing fashion. Many of the stewardship authors focused their attention on giving, especially giving to the local congregation. This is an important aspect of stewardship as the local congregation does indeed need the financial assistance from those who are being good

¹⁵ T. A. Kantonen, *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, ix.

Christian stewards of their money. Many others define stewardship as time, talent, and treasure, which is a beneficial definition of stewardship. Though it is a common definition, there is much that can be done to narrow that definition. One could focus upon the use of the individual's time in church work, family life, work, school, or any other part of the vocational life of the individual. The pastor in his preaching, would need to find the direction that he would want to take that definition of time, talent, and treasure.

Roy Bleick, writing in *Much More Than Giving*, pointed out that for many people, they work with a narrow definition of stewardship. In doing so, they tend to limit themselves in how they approach Christian stewardship, often keeping the focus just on money. Bleick pointed out that many denominations have tried to counter that narrow definition of stewardship by becoming much broader.¹⁶ He sees the benefit of the broader definition in assisting the denominations in helping their membership understand and become a part of the stewardship life. He was writing to help the pastor preach on stewardship, working to help the pastor focus his thinking on stewardship for the sermon.

I have chosen to keep my definition broad, to help the pastor who is reading this MAP to find a definition that will fit with his theology and practice. I did not want to be too focused upon one certain aspect of stewardship. I felt that would limit not only the focus of this MAP, but also the usability of it. As I kept the definition broad, I believe it will help the pastor to study the will of God for the life of the individual, and then move that theology into how he will use that definition to prepare and preach sermons for his members.

¹⁶ Bleick, *Much More Than Giving*, 17.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

In this chapter, I will take the interviews that were done with the parish pastors and record the responses that are pertinent to this MAP. After presenting all their responses to the questions, I will then analyze the data for two things: 1) the best practices in preaching Christian stewardship; and 2) the pitfalls to avoid when preaching Christian stewardship.

The questions that were asked of each interviewee are:

1. Briefly describe your background in the ministry.
2. With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I have presented it, how do you define stewardship?¹
3. With your understanding of Christian stewardship, how do you go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?
4. Do you specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time you prepare a sermon? Do you bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Do you find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as you prepare the sermon?
5. As you preach Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for you to bring stewardship into the sermon and why do you see that as effective?
6. As you preach on Christian stewardship, what are ways of preaching on Christian

¹ While the questions were written in the 3rd person, when I asked the interviewee the questions, I asked them in the 2nd person.

stewardship that have not worked as you expected and why do you see those as not working?

7. What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?

The complete verbatims are in Appendix three.

Data Reviewed

Question Number One

The first question asked of each pastor was: Briefly describe your background in the ministry. Because of the need for anonymity, the answers to this question are not recorded in this MAP. Each pastor serves within the IDW and is active in parish ministry. Following this introduction, I described to each pastor the purpose of this MAP, along with my definition of stewardship.

Question Number Two

After the introductory time, the second question asked of each pastor was: With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I have presented it, how do you define stewardship? From each of the interviews, I have gleaned this following information.

Interview #1

We live to the glory of God. This allows me to talk faithfully of stewardship as a whole vocation. It encompasses the various vocations: all the places God has placed you in your life. God makes you through your Baptism. It makes a calling on your whole life.

If we steward rightly, it is impacting the entire globe and the course of all eternity.

Interview #2

It is not just preaching, give us this or give us that, or provide money or time/talent, but it is

much more than that. Where does it all come from? It comes from our Creator. It is every aspect of your life. The hope that I have in myself, how does that radiate out in my life?

Interview #3

I like using the 3 parts to the Apostles' Creed. I would add the word "owner" to God the Father, maker of heaven and earth. God...(has) entrusted us with those gifts to use, not to use them for our own glory and good, but for the kingdom work.

Second Article – God has bought us back. We can serve Him fully and totally.

Third Article – The Holy Spirit leads us to be living out the godly, holy, life in totality.

There is a movement to make stewardship Gospel motivated. The 3rd use of the Law motivates the direction that we live...It guides me and tells me how I am doing. Stewardship in the narrow sense...is not gospel oriented. It is a 3rd use of the Law motivation. Not just totally gospel. While the gospel is our motivation, we need to take it further.

Interview #4

Time, talent, and treasure is the LC-MS go to. This is what God has called us to do. Not just to believe in Him but to live in Him each day. I would suggest that because we preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, what does that do for me during the week?

Question Number Three

After learning how each pastor defined stewardship, I asked him the question: With your understanding of Christian stewardship, how do you go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship? Here is where I wanted to find out what it was that made his preaching exemplary, giving insight into how to go about preaching Christian stewardship.

Interview #1

I preach vocationally. What is your calling? To support the proclamation of the church. I am

always driving toward the eternality of the Kingdom of God, be heavenly and eternally minded.
Store up that which lasts, the treasures of heaven, the souls of man.

Interview #2

I would say it probably comes in without my planning it. There are times I plan to preach it.

Over the course of preaching a sermon, even after I have written a sermon, things come to mind over how we live this in our lives. Not just who we are, it all starts in our identity in Christ and the basic truths of who we are without Christ, who we are in Christ.

How do you go about your daily life as God's redeemed child, receiving His gifts, with that reality in place? Obviously, that is playing into the preaching of stewardship.

Interview #3

I use a multi-approach in writing a sermon. There is a conscious effort to put stewardship themes in sermons. It may not be the total sermon, but there are pieces.

Sometimes it is a Stewardship Sunday, where we talk about finance, and the use of our time, talents, and treasure. I do think that there is an aspect where doing the pledge Sunday and doing the Sunday theme of stewardship is helpful. It requires the 3rd use of the Law...

I think it is helpful to mark on the calendar when I preach stewardship. Not once a month or once a year. But when it becomes a part of the sermon. Being intentional about it.

I think that it is probably a good way to bring stewardship into the pericopal system rather than a special theme...

It is a constant throwing pieces out there.

Interview #4

I am intensely textual. My main goal is to bring Jesus Christ and Him crucified into effect, from there I let the text speak out.

Question Number Four

Having asked each pastor how they go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship, I wanted to find out if they looked specifically at stewardship when they are writing the next sermon. The questions they were asked are: Do you specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time you prepare a sermon? Do you bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Do you find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as you prepare the sermon?

Interview #1

No, stewardship is not in every text. I am on the lookout for it. Where it exists, I preach it as I see it.

No, I do not seek it in every sermon. I do not focus on it. I do not think, “We need to have a stewardship Sunday.” I am not laser focused on stewardship. I am on the lookout for it.

You would be hard pressed to find that I use the term stewardship in a sermon.

Interview #2

From my definition of stewardship, everything comes from God and certainly you can see it in every text. I would say it is there in each text. It is in the back of my mind, there are different parts of the sermon that you can preach on.

Because of my attitude of stewardship...it comes naturally in each text. Rather than focusing on it specifically, you don't have to do a special time since you are touching on it regularly.

Interview #3

I don't force the text. If there is application of being a follower of Jesus, aspects that talk about following the Lord and being obedient to His will, that becomes my emphasis.

We do have regular stewardship Sundays, but it is not consistent. I surprise them (with the Stewardship Sunday). I try to be aware of who my audience might be.

Interview #4

I let the text speak as to what it says. Look at the epistles. They also speak about the Savior and what He has done. But how many times does Paul write...how often does Paul write about Christian living? ...how this speaks into their lives in the course of the week.

I focus not only on the Gospel, but also how does this point them towards Christian living during the course of the week.

This is third use of the Law. It is driven by the Gospel. I am in fact saying, “do something,” or “don’t do something.” So, it is in fact the third use of the Law.

We do a fall stewardship emphasis every year. It is never exactly the same each year. Sometimes we skip the money talk.

Question Number Five

At this point, the questions come to the focus of this MAP. Having come to understand the way each pastor defines stewardship, and how they might go about looking for or not looking for stewardship in each text that they preach, the question is asked: As you preach Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for you to bring stewardship into the sermon and why do you see that as effective?

Interview #1

I find the most effective way to bring stewardship into the sermon is to recapture the notion of the communion of the saints. When you talk about what I do, how I go about preaching it. I try to make stewardship a far more universal thing, part of the family of God, bring the one thing that truly matters, the life-giving Word.

No, I don’t do it. (Have a regular time to preach stewardship.)

Interview #2

I think towards the end of the sermon I bring it in. I summarize at the end of the sermon what God has done for us. Think about that when you prayerfully consider giving an offering or a gift. What value is it to be redeemed by the Lord? We give, contribute based on the value. At the end of funeral, I talk about the eternal legacy that saint in Christ has given to his family. (What is that legacy?) To share the Gospel with the family.

Interview #3

I go back to a textual approach, the pericopes, because then it is seen not so much as my agenda to promote and teach stewardship, but it flows from the Word of God. God is speaking to them more than my stewardship agenda. When we preach, we are not preaching to their crisis that day...but are equipping and preparing them for when that crisis happens.

Interview #4

I want it driven from the text.

But if it is the Lord speaking, this is the text and I step aside and let the text say it. This is what the Lord is saying to us in our Christian living today.

We preach the church year...write sermon series that fit into the church year. Worship is the most important thing we do every week. It is where we touch more lives than any other time of the week. God draws us to worship. Then we find the preaching task.

Question Number Six

Having asked each pastor what they found to be the most effective way to preach Christian stewardship, I turned the question upside down and asked: As you preach on Christian stewardship, what are ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as you expected and why do you see those as not working? Often, the most effective insight comes after the preacher has learned what is not effective.

Interview #1

The place where we have failed and failed miserably is the stewardship of time in congregational service. I rebuked a lot with the law with people who were unwilling to do such things as Sunday School.

You never really unpack God's law but don't explain why it matters. These are things that you can do for the kingdom of God, in His service and in your vocation.

If you want to make it very Lutheran in terminology, you find a way to speak of stewardship to the new man rather than to beat down the old man. The old man is just going to do what the old man does. The new man will say, "That sounds cool. I would like to do it."

Interview #2

I haven't gotten negative feedback on what I done. I have encountered people who perceive the church, ministry and pastors are asking for money.

No specific stewardship Sunday. Why? It creates, comes off as too Law based versus Gospel based. Do we give as response to the Law or to the Gospel? What is going to produce the cheerful giver? The law or the gospel? The Gospel.

I don't do a stewardship Sunday due to fear of a negative reaction based around giving to the church.

Interview #3

The biggest part that I can point to, when I declare stewardship Sunday and that, there is an absenteeism that shows itself. That is one of the motivations of mine being scattered a little here and there.

The tension that I walk with as I do some of those things is between those who are good stewardship liverers – life, worship, all their lives is reflection Godly sanctification – vs. those who

are very weak and undisciplined in that area.

That balance of what God is wanting and saying. This reflects back on earlier comment, I am speaking from God's Word vs. my agenda. Programs fail by coming across as my agenda.

Interview #4

I think that the only way to answer that when it came from a personal bent of mine rather than being God's Word.

I will say because I don't preach a lot of sermons on giving, I preach Christian stewardship, I don't get ignored that much. That is a hot button with people.

This is the way I preach. I think that because stewardship is regularly mentioned through the course of the year, this is what we do, this is how we give.

Question Number Seven

Having asked each pastor the same questions about their preaching concerning Christian stewardship, I ended each interview with this last question: What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship? This question is meant to draw all their thoughts together into a summary of their preaching on Christian stewardship.

Interview #1

Driving people towards eternity. I think that in our time and place, as we watch, the things that they took for granted, our economy, our values, that gives special credence to the deck chairs on the Titanic.

To get them to see that the benefits of that investment are not necessarily seen in this body and life directly.

I drive people towards the eschatological fulfillment of their stewardship rather than focusing on the immediate, temporal gratification.

Interview #2

I would say, it starts with the fact that I am a child of God. I realize how precious that is and I want others to know who their God is. He is their only provider.

What He has done for His pastor, He has done for you. That is what makes me focus on Christian stewardship.

Interview #3

A larger view of ministry. There is the local congregation and the local needs, people will respond to that a little easier in some ways. However, the Kingdom of God is so much greater and the harvest so much bigger, stewardship missions is a part of that.

Interview #4

Matthew 16:24, “Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.” Of course, He calls us to faith. He also calls us to follow.

You should preach Christian stewardship. It should be a regular practice. If 2/3 of the NT has Christian living in it, why shouldn't we be preaching it?

I think you can make a case the New Testament also presents sanctification.

Data Conclusion

The interviews with the pastors gave insight into what they found were the best practices when preaching on Christian stewardship. This helped me to understand what is going on in the thoughts of pastors who make a point at preaching on Christian stewardship on a regular basis in their congregations. Each one had a different thought concerning how to go about such best practices in preaching on Christian stewardship. Having gleaned their interviews for insights into how to develop the best practices concerning Christian stewardship, I will take those insights and show the way that a pastor can develop beneficial practices for preaching Christian stewardship.

Findings Detailed

After I interviewed each pastor, recorded their responses, gleaned through their thoughts and practices, I have come to some conclusions about how to help pastors develop best practices for preaching Christian stewardship in their congregations. In this section I shall give the details on these best practices that I learned from the interviews.

1. Define stewardship for yourself and then use that definition in your regular preaching.
2. Take that definition of stewardship and preach stewardship according to the Gospel, with the 3rd use of the Law guiding the application of the sermon to the life of the hearer.
3. Define your application to either the Old Adam or the New Man.
4. Know the congregation and the make-up of the people to whom you are preaching.

This helps to decide on the use of regular stewardship Sunday. This also helps to know to the makeup of the hearers on any given Sunday.

5. Preach stewardship regularly, not just on a special stewardship Sunday, keeping track of those times when stewardship is preached and what was said.

I will now explain each of these findings and show how to apply them into the regular preaching of Christian stewardship.

Define Stewardship

The first thing to do if a pastor wants to preach on Christian stewardship is to define what he means by stewardship. In many congregations, stewardship has not been clearly defined. At one time it might have been defined as how you go about using your time, treasure, and talents. This seems to be the most common definition of stewardship, as it is shown by the number of writers that begin there or include time, treasure, and talents in their definition. In interviewing

each pastor, the time, treasure, and talents was mentioned. It was mentioned either as the basis for understanding stewardship or as a way of saying that stewardship begins with time, treasure, and talents and grows beyond that concept.

The pastor needs to also come to grips with the fact that for many people, the understanding of stewardship is based around money and giving to the church. When asked for pastors that exhibited the best practices in preaching Christian stewardship, my District President gave me a list of men whose congregations were supporting the IDW with their offerings. He defined best practices in preaching on stewardship as having a congregation that gave well and regularly to the IDW. When talking with Circuit Visitors of the IDW, they defined pastors who exhibited best practices in preaching Christian stewardship as those pastors whose congregations had fewer financial difficulties than other congregations. Often, when members of the congregation are asked what stewardship means to them, they will respond that it means giving to the church.

There is the financial aspect of stewardship. Rather than fight against that understanding, the pastor who wishes to develop his stewardship preaching, will incorporate that into his definition of Christian stewardship. I have defined it this way: The Christian steward, living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God's name and for the good of others, is living in the way that God would have him live each day.² This definition helps me to include the financial stewarding of the money and goods that a person has been given by God, and then to move beyond just the financial and material into the attitude that the Christian has concerning his life, the way he goes about in his vocation and the following of the will of God for his life. The pastors that I interviewed showed that having a good working definition will help in the

² See pages 28-29.

preaching of Christian stewardship in such a way that will assist the hearers to gain a deeper understanding of stewardship in their own life, thus helping them to become better stewards.

For the pastor to define stewardship for himself, he will need to study Christian stewardship, beginning in the Word and then moving through the theology of his church, to come to a fuller and complete understanding of Christian stewardship. He must begin in the Word, even as this MAP did, for that is where the pastor will be able to bring his theology, doctrine, and practice to bear on his preaching. As he develops a solid working definition, he will then be able to move to the next item that will assist him to become more confident in preaching Christian stewardship.

Applying the Working Definition to Preaching

Having defined stewardship for himself, the pastor can then begin to apply this definition into his preaching. The next step is to take that definition of stewardship and preach stewardship according to the Gospel, with the 3rd use of the Law guiding the application of the sermon to the life of the hearer.

This really made the difference for the pastors that preached on Christian stewardship. Having defined stewardship, the pastor must come to understand that preaching stewardship is best served by allowing the Gospel to lead, and to do so, the pastor must then understand that he should bring the third use of the Law into his sermons. As Interviewee #4 said to question #4, “I focus not only on the Gospel, but also how does this point them towards Christian living during the course of the week. This is third use of the Law. It is driven by the Gospel. I am in fact saying, “do something,” or “don’t do something.” So, it is in fact the third use of the Law.”³ The

³ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

third use of the Law is only applied to the Christian, and therefore it must flow out of the Gospel. Only after a person believes in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior can this part of the Law be applied into his life. This goes back to the discussion on whether a Christian has the option of doing good works.⁴ As was shown, a Christian that is living according to the Gospel, he is living under the Gospel with the Law showing him how to go about living that Christian life. This is the third use of the Law.

The pastor who is going to make stewardship a regular part of the preaching in his congregation must understand that when he is preaching this aspect of the Law, he is not subverting the Gospel but instead is showing his hearers how to live according to the Gospel. The question that should be a part of any sermon, should be, “Now what? Now what should I do? How should I live as I have heard what Jesus Christ has done for me and my salvation?” The pastor should then show to his hearers how this message of God’s Word impacts his daily living. This is what leads me to the definition of stewardship of living according to the will of God, bringing glory to God’s name, and living for the good of others. The third use of the Law shows the hearer how to go about living as a Christian steward under the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is the challenge for the pastor who might be used to preaching Law and Gospel, ending his sermon with the Gospel, with the understanding that the Gospel is what will make the difference in the life of the hearer, helping him to become a Christian steward. This brings the pastor seeking to preach Christian stewardship to the next point that will help him to become a better stewardship preacher.

⁴ See pages 48-49.

Preaching to the Old Man or the New Man

The pastor has developed his working definition of stewardship and has been relating that definition to his congregation. He has come to preach the third use of the Law, not subverting the Gospel, but applying that powerful Word into the hearts of his hearers. Now he must decide at what point in the sermon is he preaching to the Old Adam or the New Man? The discussion on the difference between the Old Adam and New Man took place in chapter 2, The Creedal Foundation, Third Article. Preaching to the Old Adam calls for the application of the second use of the Law in the sermon, while preaching to the New Man calls for the application of the third use of the Law.

In Question #6, Interviewee #1 made the comment: “If you want to make it very Lutheran in terminology, you find a way to speak of stewardship to the new man rather than to beat down the old man. The old man is just going to do what the old man does. The new man will say, “That sounds cool. I would like to do it.”⁵ The Old Adam will not respond to the Gospel. He will not listen to the Gospel because he is still self-focused, guided by the sinful nature. Therefore, every application of the Gospel or the third use of the Law will fall upon deaf ears. If there is any change made, it will not be made for the right reason. The hearer may feel the pinch of the Law and respond to avoid some sort of punishment or consequence, but the heart will not have changed. If a change is going to be made, it will only happen as the Holy Spirit changes the heart of the individual, moving him from being guided by the Old Adam to being the New Man, made new by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is what presents a challenge to the pastor who is going to preach stewardship to his congregation. He will at the same time be preaching to the Old Adam and the New Man.

⁵ Interviewee #1, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 13, 2021.

Consequently, he will find himself facing the challenge of when to preach according to the second use of the Law, which is meant to convict the person of his sin, thus preaching to the Old Adam in the person, and preaching the third use of the Law, which gives guidance to the New Man in the person. Many times, the pastor will find himself preaching both in the sermon, which also applies to preaching on stewardship. Along with this complication comes the fact that to preach the third use of the Law to the unrepentant, will only have it fall on deaf ears, for the unrepentant does not see that there is any need to change how he lives as a steward.

It is because of this very tension that the pastor must know those to whom he is preaching. Within the stewardship sermon, he will often need to point out how the hearers have not been living according to the will of God in their lives, in doing so, he will be preaching the second use of the Law. He preaches this, praying that the Holy Spirit will use this portion of the sermon to convict his hearers and cause their hearts and lives to be opened to the message of the Gospel, which changes their hearts, moving them from living according to the Old Adam to living as the New Man. After presenting the life-changing Gospel, the pastor can then begin to preach to the New Man, the one who is now open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. In doing so, he will bring in the third use of the Law, giving them guidance on how they can live their lives as Christian stewards.

This is the challenge the pastor faces when he is preaching the Word to his congregation. He must know when and how to apply the second use of the Law when it comes to stewardship, while then bringing the Gospel into the lives of those who are repentant, and finally guiding them in their stewardship lives with the third use of the Law. It is not an easy task. It is here that the pastor will begin to see the importance of knowing how he is going to preach stewardship to his congregation.

Know the Congregation to Whom You Are Preaching

The pastor has defined stewardship and has been preaching that stewardship to his congregation. He sees them as the New Man who therefore can hear the third use of the Law in the sermon, learning how to apply that Gospel into his daily life, living as a Christian steward in this world.

That which the pastor must do is know his congregation. There are those who advocate knowing what each member or family gives in their offerings. I did not find that to be advocated by the pastors that I interviewed. This is not what I mean by knowing the congregation. What this means is that the pastor should know the makeup of those who are attending any given service. Each community will be different. There will be those congregations who are set in communities where there are regular visitors, guests, and people who are church shopping. Then there will be congregation that are in communities where there are few visitors or those that are visiting are from a neighboring congregation. This will impact how the pastor approaches the preaching of Christian stewardship. As the Interviewee #3 said, “If you have good givers, you want to reinforce the work they are doing and how they have progressed in their stewardship life.”⁶ The pastor should know those who are regularly in worship, and as he preaches on Christian stewardship, he can address where they stand in their stewardship life. This could be concerning the stewardship of finances, but it could also be how they steward their time at work or at home, as well as how they steward their spiritual lives. Knowing those who are regularly in worship helps the pastor know how he needs to be preaching on stewardship.

On the other hand, if he knows that a certain service will bring in those who are not regular in worship, such as Christmas or Easter, he may want to approach stewardship in a slightly

⁶ Interviewee #3, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

different manner. At these services, there will be members that are not regularly in worship, thus they have not had the opportunity to hear the pastor preach on stewardship and thus will not be able to grow in their stewardship life in the same way that those who are regularly in worship. The pastor, being aware of this difference in those who are attending the worship service, will have the opportunity to approach Christian stewardship in his preaching in a way that will be beneficial to the hearers. For those members who regularly attend worship, the pastor will be able to do as has been written about already. He can define stewardship and help his hearers to learn and grow in that definition, preaching to the third use of the Law to the New Man who is a part of the congregation.

As the pastor regularly preaches on stewardship, the hearers will be on different levels of their spiritual walk. There will be those who are walking according to the will of God in their stewardship life, and then there will be those who are not walking according to the will of God in their stewardship life. In knowing his hearers, depending upon where he perceives them to be at the time, he can gently guide them to grow in faith as the New Man in Christ Jesus. Preaching on Confirmation Sunday, the pastor might know that there will be family members who are not regularly living out their walk of faith. Perhaps they haven't been in worship for quite some time. Instead of addressing the sermon towards those who are walking according to the will of God in their stewardship life, he could take the sermon more towards those who are just beginning in this walk of faith, such as the confirmands who will need to continue to be guided to live according to the will of God. At the same time, this application can be made to all members, making it especially meaningful for those who have not been in worship for a while.

Interviewee #2 stated, "At the end of funerals, I talk about the eternal legacy that saint in Christ has given to his family. Beyond the wills, what is the greatest legacy? To share the Gospel

with the family. I absolutely see myself bringing stewardship into funeral sermons.”⁷ He brings that in because he knows that there will be those who have not been regular in worship, nor have they had opportunity to hear stewardship preached in a variety of different sermons. Knowing those who will be at the funeral service gives him the opportunity to bring in the eternal spiritual legacy that the faithful Christian makes as they live their lives according to the will of God, living as faithful Christian stewards.

It is therefore very important that the pastor knows his members, knowing where they are in their walk of faith, so that he can help them to continue to grow in their spiritual life.

Preach Stewardship Regularly

In walking through these areas that will assist the pastor to become focused on preaching Christian stewardship, there is one last thing that he needs to decide in his preaching. The pastor needs to make a regular practice of preaching Christian stewardship in his congregation. This means that he will do more than mention stewardship in a sermon every now and then. What he will do is make every effort to preach stewardship. As I interviewed the pastors, the one reoccurring theme was that they made a point of preaching stewardship. In the interview with Interviewee #4, I was told, “There is a conscious effort to put stewardship themes in sermons. It may not be the total sermon but there are pieces.”⁸ As the pastor develops his own definition of stewardship, he needs to incorporate that definition into his regular preaching. As Interviewee #4 stated, “You should preach Christian stewardship. It should be a regular practice.”⁹

How does a pastor go about preaching stewardship? It goes back to the third use of the

⁷ Interviewee #2, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 12, 2021.

⁸ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

⁹ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

Law. That aspect of preaching is challenging as the pastor does not want to preach in some way that takes the hearer's eyes off the Savior. But when you preach the third use of the Law, you are taking the Gospel that has formed the New Man, and then applying that new life to daily Christian living. In the New Testament epistles, there are many sections that deal with Christian living. This is showing the New Man how to go about living life in Jesus Christ. It is the third use of the Law showing the life of sanctification. Interviewee #4 pointed out, "You can make the case that the New Testament also presents sanctification... We are just followers, following the paths of the apostles and should do the same things."¹⁰ What that often means is that the pastor will bring stewardship, living the Christian life according to the will of the Father, at the end of the sermon. He has already walked his hearers through the Law with all its fullness which leads them to confess and repent of their sins, taken them to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, shown them the forgiveness of sins for their daily lives and then, he needs to help them understand that as a New Man, they will live each day according to the will of God, which means they will be living their stewardship life to the fullest. Interviewee #2 stated, "What are you moved to do, based on how you see yourself as God's redeemed child?"¹¹

Should the pastor consider a regular Stewardship Sunday? That depends upon several factors. If that is the only time that the pastor preaches stewardship, it is probably not as effective as he thinks. In fact, if the only time that stewardship is preached is in the fall, at budget setting time, then it will not have the effect that it is meant to have. Instead, Interviewee #3 stated, "When I declare a Stewardship Sunday...there is an absenteeism that shows itself."¹² When that is the only time that the congregation hears about stewardship, the members of the congregation

¹⁰ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

¹¹ Interviewee #2, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 12, 2021.

¹² Interviewee #3, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

may make that the unofficial vacation Sunday, because they think that the only thing that it is meant to do is ask for money. And they are probably correct. If this Sunday comes before the annual setting of the congregational budget, then the Stewardship Sunday is meant to help the Church Council, or the Finance Committee, make plans for the budget by tying together the Stewardship Sunday and the budget, perhaps using pledge cards. Even if it is not tied to the budget, the annual Stewardship Sunday tends to be the time when the pastor asks each member to give more money to the church. Therefore, people will avoid such a Sunday.

But when they are hearing stewardship regularly from the pulpit, then even if the pastor using a specific Stewardship Sunday, it will not be seen with such distain. Instead, the hearers will accept such a Sunday because they are already thinking and living the life of a Christian steward. It is not seen as having a negative impact upon the life of the hearer. It helps them to gain a stronger focus on the life they are already living as a Christian steward.

Here the question could be raised, how does the pastor go about preaching stewardship regularly? Does he search for worthwhile stewardship texts, and then preach sermons based on those texts? While he might do this for a Stewardship Sunday, it is not the most beneficial way for a pastor preach on Christian stewardship. One thing that those that were interviewed brought out was that instead of preaching free texts, which are texts that the pastor comes up with for that Sunday, it is good for the pastor to focus on either preaching according to the lectionary or the Church Year. What this does is that it helps the pastor to stay focused in the Word of God, avoiding the first pitfall, which is the pastor preaching his own agenda. If he is preaching stewardship according to the readings in the lectionary, he will be showing his people that stewardship is not an isolated part of their lives. Instead, with stewardship being found throughout the Word of God, it is important for them to hear that Word and live according to it.

Lectionary preaching gives the pastor the opportunity to preach the Word, bringing stewardship into the lives of his hearers, not just from one or two texts but from throughout the Old Testament as well as within the New Testament. It was pointed out by one interviewee that while he preaches from the epistles, that does not mean that stewardship cannot be found in the Old Testament. Stewardship is found throughout Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. As the pastor becomes more attune to seeing stewardship within the regular Sunday readings, he will become better able to regularly preach on stewardship.

Another aspect for the pastor, should he want to take a different direction other than preaching from the lectionary is to preach according to the Church Year. As one of the interviewees stated, he does not follow the lectionary in his preaching, but he regularly preaches sermon series, which are based upon the Church Year. Therefore, stewardship is shown to be as applicable in the Advent & Christmas seasons as well as in the Epiphany or Lenten seasons. In preaching sermon series based on the Church Year, this keeps the pastor from preaching his own agenda, still focusing the sermons upon the Word of God. It also shows that stewardship is not just for one season of the Church Year but is applicable to every season.

One last idea that would be helpful for the pastor in regular preaching of Christian stewardship is for him to keep track of the times that he includes stewardship in his sermons. He can use a calendar in which he will write down the specific dates he includes stewardship in his preaching. Or he can use a notebook in which he will record the date he included stewardship in his sermon as well as what he said concerning stewardship. In including what he has said, the pastor will begin to develop an understanding in how he has been relating stewardship to the congregation. It is easy for the pastor to think he is including stewardship regularly in his sermons, but he might find as he keeps a running record of when he preaches on stewardship,

that he is either preaching it more than he realizes or is preaching it less than he realizes. This would help the pastor to know if he is staying within the definition of Christian stewardship that he has developed. It might also help him see that he needs to expand his definition or move it into a different direction.

Conclusion

It is important for a pastor to take each of these pieces and put them together in his practice of preaching on Christian stewardship. The five main points that I learned from the study of Christian stewardship and the interviews from the pastors who exhibited some of the best practices on preaching Christian stewardship are:

1. Define stewardship for yourself and then use that definition in your regular preaching.
2. Take that definition of stewardship and preach stewardship according to the Gospel, with the 3rd use of the Law guiding the application of the sermon to the life of the hearer.
3. Define your application to either the Old Adam or the New Man.
4. Know the congregation and the makeup of the people to whom you are preaching. This helps to decide on the use of regular stewardship Sunday. This also helps to know the makeup of the hearers on any given Sunday.
5. Preach stewardship regularly, not just on a special stewardship Sunday, keeping track of those times when stewardship is preached and what was said.

These five points will help the pastor to do a better job at preaching Christian stewardship regularly within his ministry setting.

Pitfalls to Avoid When Preaching Stewardship

As the pastors were interviewed, each one was asked what they found to be less than

effective when preaching on Christian stewardship. Each one had a distinct perspective on what they felt did not work. Sorting through their comments, I have gleaned what I feel are three areas that a pastor should avoid that will help him to preach better concerning Christian stewardship. Those three areas are: 1) personal agendas, 2) rarely preaching on stewardship, and 3) apologizing for preaching on stewardship.

Personal Agendas Instead of the Word of God

Often, a pastor will find that there are certain issues or doctrines that he feels he needs to impart to his hearers as he preaches. There are times when that is beneficial, especially if the pastor is following the Church Year. It is important to preach about the incarnation at Christmas and Epiphany. It is also important to preach about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the need for repentance during the season of Lent. When the pastor arrives at Easter, he needs to preach about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the importance of the resurrection for the believer. In doing this, the pastor has not put his own personal agenda in those sermons but is preaching according to the time in the Church Year. But at other times during the year, the pastor does need to avoid adding his own personal agenda into the sermons. This applies to the issue of stewardship as well. If the pastor is feeling as though his congregation is not giving enough money to meet the bills, pulling out a stewardship sermon that focuses specifically on giving might seem appropriate at the time, but in the end, will have more of a negative impact than a positive impact. The pastor will at this time find that he is preaching the Law to his hearers, feeling that they need to hear the Law and that it will make a change for them in their lives. Preaching the Law in this situation will not change the hearts of the hearers, as was discussed earlier in this

MAP. This harkens back to what C.F.W. Walther stated in the lectures on Law and Gospel.¹³ The pastor, letting his personal agenda on stewardship cause him to preach a certain way on stewardship, will only create more challenges for himself in the end.

Interviewee #4 stated, “They are not listening. I think that the only way to answer that is when it comes from a personal bent of mine rather than being God’s Word.”¹⁴ Interviewee #3 said that he found that his hearers listened more to a stewardship sermon when it flowed from the Word of God rather than from his own person agenda. Both pastors felt that when they preached stewardship from the Word of God, following either the pericopes or the Church year, that it was much more beneficial for their hearers.

The first thing that a pastor should avoid when preaching Christian stewardship is to allow his own personal agenda to cloud the Word of God. Let the Word of God speak. When he allows that to happen, he will find that he is preaching the Gospel much clearer and when he is applying the third use of the Law, he will be addressing the New Man rather than to the Old Adam, which will have a greater impact upon the lives of his hearers.

Preaching Stewardship Infrequently

Many times, pastors are uncomfortable preaching Christian stewardship. Because of this, they will avoid bringing stewardship into their sermons. When they do preach on stewardship, it comes across as their own agenda, going back to the point just made. Because of this, the pastor will find that bringing stewardship into a sermon causes many people to bristle or to have a negative reaction. Interviewee #2 spoke on this issue, pointing out that people have heard too many “fire and brimstone” sermons on stewardship. What this means is that too many

¹³ See page 53.

¹⁴ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

stewardship sermons have focused on giving more or encouraging members to “dig deeper” to meet the needs of the moment. This causes the hearers to not want to hear about stewardship. When the pastor preaches stewardship, they do not listen for they feel they might be hearing a sermon on giving once again.

The pastor can avoid this perception by including stewardship in his regular preaching. He will find that as he defines stewardship and brings that across regularly in his preaching, his hearers will begin to understand stewardship more in their lives and will be receptive to sermons on stewardship. Including stewardship regularly helps the pastor to build a better understanding in the lives of his hearers. It also improves their attitude towards stewardship. Instead of connecting it just with giving, they will begin to understand the importance of stewardship for their daily lives.

Apologizing for Preaching on Stewardship

Too often, the pastor that does not feel comfortable preaching on stewardship will begin his sermon on stewardship with a form of an apology. He will inform the congregation that it is time for the annual Stewardship Sunday sermon, and while it must be done, it isn't something that he likes to do. He might tell them that he was told that he needed to preach on giving since it was budget time, so he is doing as he was told, though he does not like to preach on giving or on stewardship itself. Interviewee #3 brought this idea out as he spoke about how to effectively preach on Christian stewardship. He stated, “When we preach, we are not preaching for the crisis that day in the pulpit but are equipping them for when that crisis happens. I like to think that is what I am doing in the sermon, I am prepping them for a later time in their life.”¹⁵ Interviewee #4

¹⁵ Interviews #3, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

stated, “This is what God has called us to do. Not just to believe in Him but to live in Him each day.”¹⁶ The pastor should not apologize for preaching the Word of God, which is meant to help the hearer to grow in his life of faith and in how he goes about living each day. To preach Christian stewardship on a regular basis is to assist the hearer in how to live each day according to the will of God, living as the Christian steward.

Conclusion

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, he should avoid the temptation to bring in his own personal agenda when preaching on stewardship. He should also preach stewardship regularly, thus eliminating the feeling that stewardship is only preached when money is needed, or the budget is being set. Finally, the pastor should not apologize for preaching on Christian stewardship. He should know that as he is preaching the Word of God, he is called upon to preach stewardship.

¹⁶ Interviewee #4, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CIRCUIT MEETING PRESENTATION

Introduction

In this chapter I will be presenting the findings of this MAP to the pastors of the Southwest Circuit of the IDW at a regular monthly meeting. I made this presentation to the Southwest Circuit on Wednesday, September 15, 2021. The circuit meeting was at St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA. There were six pastors present, which when I am included, constitutes the entire Southwest Circuit.

I presented to them the purpose and the goals of this MAP, followed by the presuppositions that I held as I began the MAP. I explained to the pastors that the way this MAP developed, starting with a desire to improve in my personal preaching and then tying it together with my growing interest in stewardship. I presented to the pastors the questions that each interviewee was asked. After this background work was completed, I then presented my findings on both the things that a pastor should do to preach Christian stewardship to the congregation as well as those things that the pastor should avoid as he preaches Christian stewardship.

What you will find here in this chapter is the script I used for presenting to the pastors of the Southwest Circuit of the IDW. Therefore, the wording will be in the first person, as that is how it was presented at the circuit meeting on September 15, 2021. I have included the Power Point slides that were used in this presentation. These slides are inserted into the presentation at the appropriate places so that it can be seen what was on the screen during the presentation. Each pastor also received a copy of the Power Point slides, so that that they could follow along, making notes and asking questions as the presentation was made.

Purpose, Goal, and Presuppositions of MAP

Purpose of Major Applied Project

- Purpose and Goal

- The purpose of this Major Applied Project (hereafter abbreviated MAP) is to discover preaching practices that are beneficial in helping congregations to grow in their knowledge and practice of Christian stewardship.

(Slide #2)

The purpose of this MAP is to discover preaching practices that are beneficial in helping congregations to grow in their knowledge and practice of Christian stewardship. The purpose of this MAP is to find the best practices of preaching Christian stewardship from pastors in parishes who regularly include Christian stewardship in their preaching.

Goal of MAP

- The goal of this MAP is to present the best practices for preaching on Christian stewardship as I have gleaned them from interviews with exemplary preachers. These best practices will be helpful for the parish pastor as he preaches on stewardship in his congregation.
- This MAP will also present some of the possible pitfalls that these same pastors have discovered through their regular preaching on Christian stewardship.

(Slide #3)

The goal of this MAP is to present the best practices for preaching on Christian stewardship as I have gleaned them from interviews with exemplary preachers. These best practices will be helpful for the parish pastor as he preaches on stewardship in his congregation. This MAP will also present some of the possible pitfalls that these same pastors have discovered through their regular preaching on Christian stewardship. This will be helpful to the parish pastor so that he will not fall into those same stewardship traps in his preaching.

As I present this to the pastors of the Southwest Circuit, I will explain that it is possible to learn from one another concerning the best practices in preaching. The challenge that we have as pastors is that we do not always take the time to discuss what we find is working within our congregation and what is not working for us. This is especially true when it comes to preaching. I feel that it is challenging to be open about what we do when we preach on such a topic as Christian stewardship because it becomes very personal. For a pastor, speaking from personal

experience, it is difficult to open yourself up to scrutiny. This could be for a variety of reasons such as personal and professional insecurity, fear of not doing things “correctly” or in the way that it is supposed to be done as taught at the Seminary, or an unwillingness to open oneself up to others.

I feel that this goal of bringing forward the best practices on preaching Christian stewardship can be helpful to pastors, giving them insight into preaching that they might not have considered or done in their ministry. I also feel that it is beneficial to know those things that other pastors have found were problematic in preaching on Christian stewardship.

Research Presuppositions

1. Many parish pastors have a hard time preaching on Christian stewardship.
2. There are some pastors who demonstrate greater fruitfulness (i.e. positive effectiveness and impact) in preaching regularly on Christian stewardship.
3. Parish pastors need the support and insights of other pastors to continue to grow as steward leaders in their congregations.

(Slide #4)

Having said that, I need to present my presuppositions, for this will explain why I find that this would be a beneficial exercise for the pastors of the Southwest Circuit. These presuppositions are:

1. Many parish pastors have a hard time preaching on Christian stewardship.

2. There are some pastors who demonstrate greater fruitfulness (i.e., positive effectiveness and impact) in preaching regularly on Christian stewardship.
3. Parish pastors need the support and insights of other pastors to continue to grow as steward leaders in their congregations.

Here is what I mean behind each of these presuppositions. First, it is difficult to preach on Christian stewardship. Many people get uncomfortable at best and downright upset at worst when the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship. While this is very much a part of the life of the Christian, as each is a steward of the gifts God has given to them, many people feel that stewardship is merely talking about their money. Christians will look at stewardship sermons as the way for the pastor to tell them to give more money, and then the pastor will use some passage from Scripture to back up the request for more giving. Too many times, Stewardship Sundays tend to be tied directly to the setting of the congregation budget. Thus, it is felt that the focus of the sermon is that God has given the gift of money, each member has been given that gift, and as members of the congregation, they should use that money to help meet the budget, either the one that is ending or the one that is being set. Members may feel as though they are being manipulated by the pastor preaching such a sermon, so they do not want to hear it. Even if this is not a true scenario, the pastor has often heard from members of the congregation that all they ever hear is sermons about giving more money. Therefore, the pastor, tired of taking the heat from the members on trying to meet the congregational budget, throws in the towel and decides to avoid preaching on Christian stewardship, so that he does not have to hear the complaints of the congregation in that all he ever does is preach on money. That is my first presupposition.

The second presupposition is that there are some pastors who have found ways to preach on Christian stewardship in a way that the members of the congregation are not so upset or

negative towards hearing him preach on the topic. In these congregations, the pastor has found a way to reach the members of the congregation and help them to see that they are Christian stewards, called by God to faithfully steward those gifts which they have been given.

My last presupposition is that parish pastors do need the support and insights of other pastors to help them grow as steward leaders in their congregations. Pastors are the steward leaders. In hearing and learning from those pastors who have found ways to preach Christian stewardship that are helpful and beneficial for their congregations, pastors can become more confident in their own preaching on Christian stewardship.

In the next section, I will present the questions that I asked of pastors for the research of this MAP.

The Research Questions

I now move into the focus of this MAP, interviewing pastors to learn their best practices on preaching Christian stewardship. The initial question was to ask the pastor to tell me about himself, his time in the ministry as well as the time that he has spent in his current congregation. This was to help me to get to know the pastor a little before I began to ask him the questions.

Before I asked the pastor the six questions about their preaching of Christian stewardship, I explained to each one my definition of Christian stewardship. The working definition for stewardship in this MAP is the Christian steward is living according to the will of God in his life, using his life and life's resources according to God's will and for the good of others in his life. I did this so that he would understand how I was approaching Christian stewardship, and this might help him to begin thinking about how he himself defines stewardship.

Each of the questions that was asked of the pastor was meant to help me understand how he goes about preaching on Christian stewardship in his congregation. I was trying to understand

what made it possible for him to approach his congregation on this topic of stewardship. The six questions that I asked each pastor were:

Research Questions

1. Briefly describe your background in the ministry.
2. With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?
3. With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

(Slide #5)

2. With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?
3. With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

Research Questions

4. Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?
5. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

(Slide #6)

4. Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?
5. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

Research Questions

6. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?
7. What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach Christian stewardship?

(Slide #7)

6. As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?
7. What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach Christian stewardship?

Each pastor was asked the same questions. There may have been some extra questions asked during the interview. Those questions flowed from the answers that the pastors gave, helping to clarify those things which he has said. I was attempting to understand what he was saying and what that meant for his preaching and congregation. I will present those findings in the next section.

The Findings of this MAP

After interviewing the pastors, reviewing the notes, listening to the recordings, and typing out the verbatims, I discovered five things that a pastor can do to improve his preaching on

Christian stewardship. The pastors also shared three things that they did that should be avoided if one wishes to improve his preaching on Christian stewardship. In this section, I will present these findings.

Positive Actions to Improve Stewardship Preaching

Ways to Improve Stewardship Preaching

1. Define stewardship for yourself and then use that definition in your regular preaching.
2. Take that definition of stewardship and preach stewardship according to the Gospel, with the 3^d use of the Law guiding the application of the sermon to the life of the hearer.
3. Define your application to either the Old Adam or the New Man.
4. Know the congregation and the make-up of the people to whom you are preaching. This helps to decide on the use of regular stewardship Sunday. This also helps to know to the makeup of the hearers on any given Sunday.
5. Preach stewardship regularly, not just on a special stewardship Sunday, keeping track of those times when stewardship is preached and what was said.

(Slide #8)

As I listened to the pastors which had agreed to be a part of this MAP, I discovered that as they preached on Christian stewardship, there were five points that helped them to focus their preaching. Here in this section, I will present those points. They are:

1. Define stewardship for yourself and then use that definition in your regular preaching.
2. Take that definition of stewardship and preach stewardship according to the Gospel, with the 3rd use of the Law guiding the application of the sermon to the life of the hearer.
3. Define your application to either the Old Adam or the New Man.

4. Know the congregation and the make-up of the people to whom you are preaching.

This helps to decide on the use of regular stewardship Sunday. This also helps to know to the makeup of the hearers on any given Sunday.

5. Preach stewardship regularly, not just on a special stewardship Sunday, keeping track of those times when stewardship is preached and what was said.

We will now take time to look at these points in depth.

Define Stewardship

1) Define Stewardship

- You should take time to define what you mean by stewardship.
- This would give you the opportunity to do some exegetical work on the meaning of stewardship and the application to the life of the believer.
- After you have defined stewardship for yourself, you should take time to help your congregation to understand your definition, so they will know what you are meaning each time you preach on stewardship.
- There are many definitions of stewardship. This will take time to help your congregation to get a grasp on what you mean by stewardship.

(Slide #9)

The first thing that you should do is define stewardship for yourself. This is important so that you will know what you are saying when you preach stewardship. Is stewardship about time, talent, and treasure? Do you use the definition of stewardship as presented by the LCMS Stewardship Ministry, “Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of God’s family —

the church — in managing life’s resources for His purposes.”¹ Or do you have another definition of Christian stewardship.

To develop your definition of stewardship, it would be beneficial to delve into the Word, studying such passages as Luke 12:42, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?” or 1 Cor. 4:1–2, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” There are several parables that can be studied: The Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1–5) or The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30). There is the teaching of Jesus on being anxious about our lives (Luke 12:22–34) and the time of judgment between the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31–46).

It would also be beneficial to spend time in the Confessions, most especially as you look at Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms as they deal with the Three Articles of the Apostles’ Creed. Within the interviews, it was found beneficial to spend time in the Creed. I found it to be beneficial to study what the Confessions had to say about doing good works and applying that into my understanding of the life of stewardship.

Once you develop your definition of stewardship, it becomes important for you to share that definition with your congregation. The reason for this is that it will help them to develop an understanding of stewardship as they listen to your sermons on Christian stewardship. For your hearers to understand what you mean will help to clear up misunderstandings that develop between pastor and congregation, as they might have differing definitions of stewardship. As you become more comfortable with your definition of Christian stewardship, you will find that you

¹ Stewardship Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

can preach better sermons on stewardship, sermons that your members will understand more of what you are saying because they understand what it means to be a Christian steward.

The argument could be raised that people might not agree with your definition of stewardship. If your definition has grown out of your study of the Word and Confessions, then it should be one that is presented. Will everyone agree or accept your definition? Probably not. But then again, there are probably those in the congregation who don't always agree with that which you are preaching on other teachings within the Word. That doesn't stop you from preaching on those topics. So, it should be with stewardship. That which you define as Christian stewardship should be the same as preaching the Word of God, as the definition comes from the Word.

Apply Your Definition.

2) Apply Your Definition

- Once you have your definition, you should start to plan how you will apply this into your sermons, so that it has the greatest impact on your hearers.
- As you do this, you will need to preach the Gospel in all its clarity.
- You will also need to come to understand what it means to preach the third use of the Law. In preaching this third use, you will find that you are applying Christian stewardship into the lives of your hearers.
- This is a challenging aspect – preaching third use of the Law is difficult, as we do not want to make it seem as though we are usurping the Gospel.

(Slide #10)

Next, you will need to apply that definition to your congregational setting. Each pastor is in a different congregational setting. While the message of Law and Gospel is the same no matter

where a pastor serves, how he applies this varies with the congregational setting. A rural setting will be different from an urban setting which will be different from a suburban setting. One thing that I found in interviewing the pastors was that they had shown best practices in preaching Christian stewardship because they understood their congregation. It did not matter if the pastor was in rural Iowa or in suburban Iowa, in knowing their congregation, they knew how to apply their definition of stewardship to their setting. And because of this understanding, their congregations responded positively to the stewardship sermons.

It became apparent to me in the interviews with the pastors that it is important to know if you are going to approach preaching stewardship from the Law or the Gospel. This is the ongoing debate that appears in the various writings on stewardship. There are those who advocate that stewardship should be preached according to the Gospel. Then there are those who advocate preaching stewardship according to the third use of the Law.

I feel that it is appropriate to preach stewardship according to the third use of the Law. To do so, you will find that you are following the message of the Gospel, which is the only message that will change the heart of the individual to living according to the will of God. But once you have preached the Gospel, it is important to follow that up with the preaching of the third use of the Law, for that is where the Christian believer will come to know how to go about living his life as a child of God. It is here that it was pointed out that it is preaching the “now what” of the sermon. Now what do I do, knowing that I have been saved by grace through faith? How do I go about living my daily life? This third use of the Law guides the believer in that daily life. In this setting, it is the third use of the Law that helps the Christian to live a faithful stewardship life. It gives guidance in telling the Christian, “Here is the will of God in your life. Now the Holy Spirit is going to guide you in living according to that will of God, so that you may bring glory to His

name and do good in the lives of others.”

This is one area where there can be much discussion. As I stated, there are those who feel strongly that preaching stewardship can only come from the Gospel, while others feel that it appropriate to preach stewardship according to the third use of the Law. In my study, interviews, and preparation, I feel it is very appropriate to use the third use of the Law at this point.

Define Your Application

3) Define Your Application

- Do you preach to the Old Adam?
- Do you preach to the New Man?
- This changes the direction that you will go with Christian stewardship. This also goes right along with point #2, for the third use of the Law is preached to the New Man, not the Old Adam.

(Slide #11)

This application follows closely on the second one. As you are preaching, you must decide whom you are preaching to: the Old Adam or the New Man? This is the discussion that comes from Romans 6 and Ephesians 4. In Romans 6 Paul writes: “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin” (Rom. 6:6–7). And again, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). In Ephesians 4 he writes: “...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22–24).

As you preach to the congregation, you preach both Law and Gospel. But what we also understand is that the Old Adam will not respond to the Gospel. He cannot for he is still lost in his sinfulness. The Old Adam needs to hear the second use of the Law, for it is there that he will be convicted of his lack of being the faithful steward of the gifts God has given to him. Only after the Holy Spirit has brought him to his knees through the second use of the Law, will his heart then be changed by the Gospel to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament. It is there that the Old Adam is put to death. Paul states, “Do you onto know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:3–4). With the death of the Old Adam, the New Man comes forth and hears the words of the Gospel. Being made new in Christ, the New Man seeks to follow the will of the Father. What is that will? That needs to be revealed to the believer through the Word, which comes to him through the third use of the Law.

As the pastor preaching stewardship, you need to decide to whom you are going to preach this message of stewardship, the Old Adam, or the New Man. As you make this decision, it will affect the way you go about preaching Christian stewardship. It is important for you to know to whom you are preaching concerning Christian stewardship.

4) Know Your Congregation

- This seems like a strange point. What is meant, know the folks who are in your worship services.
- On many Sundays, you will have the faithful members, the regular givers, the workers in the parish. Here you can encourage them to continue to live their stewardship life, continuing to apply the third use of the Law.
- There are certain times that you will have more visitors, or more of the Christmas/Easter members, in which you will need to change your preaching of Christian stewardship, for they will not know how you have been preaching regularly. Thus, you may not be able to address them in the same way as those who are regular in worship.

(Slide #12)

The fourth thing that will help you to preach Christian stewardship, flows out of the second and the third actions on preaching stewardship. It is to know your congregation. This might seem a little bit of a “duh” statement. Of course, you know your congregation. For some of you, you have been at your current congregation for many years, making it seem like a strange statement to make. As I interviewed those pastors who show some of the best practices on preaching Christian stewardship, this came out repeatedly. What this means is that you need to know to whom you will be preaching the current sermon. If you are going to be preaching to faithful members, people who show themselves to be faithful in their stewardship life, as shown by financially supporting the congregation, serving in various fashions in the congregation, and living their daily lives according the will of God, then the way that you preach Christian stewardship will reflect that you acknowledge and know where they are at in living their

stewardship life (according to the way you define stewardship). You will encourage them where they are and help them to continue to grow beyond that present point. Here you will find the power of the Gospel working in their lives, giving you opportunity to apply the third use of the Law to assist them to continue in that spiritual growth.

But if you know that there will be extra visitors who are not members of your congregation, or members who are not regular in worship, members who are often only Christmas and Easter members, then you will know that you need to preach stewardship differently than in other occasions. In fact, if your approach is the same as usual, the preaching of stewardship will either be ignored or will not be accepted as the Word of God. This is often where a pastor will cause himself difficulties in preaching on stewardship, because those who are not there often will not understand where he is coming from on stewardship, not knowing his definition nor having been growing in faith and action through regular hearing of the Word of God.

It is important for the pastor to be aware of and know his congregation, those who attend regularly and those who come on an irregular basis. This will be different in the different settings. In many rural congregations, there are not that many visitors to regular worship. Those that do visit might be family from neighboring congregation, which presents a different challenge, for stewardship may not be being preached in that congregation. Therefore, the visitor might not know what the pastor is preaching about when stewardship is brought out in the sermon. The rural and small-town pastor might need to be more aware of those members who are starting to return to worship after a time of absence, for they will need to be guided by the pastor to grow in their understanding of stewardship. The pastor may well have to step back to the beginning and review and/or revive those things he has already preached concerning

stewardship. (See point #5 for help in this.) In the suburban congregation, the pastor may well have many more visitors, perhaps even having visitors every Sunday, as people shop for a new church home in their community. This presents a challenge to the pastor, for he might need to regularly reiterate what he is meaning by stewardship for those who are visiting.

In whatever situation, the pastor needs to know those to whom he is preaching to effectively help his hearers to grow in their stewardship life.

Preach Stewardship Regularly

5) Preach Stewardship Regularly

- Don't just preach stewardship once or twice a year, at budget time or just on Stewardship Sundays.
- Once you have the definition of stewardship, start to bring that into your regular preaching. As you study the readings and the text for the week, ask yourself how that will help you to bring stewardship into your sermon.
- Keep track of when you preach on stewardship. Include date and what was said. This will help you to know when you are bringing stewardship into your sermons.

(Slide #13)

All the pastors interviewed agreed that it was important to preach on stewardship more than just a time or two during the year. If you only preach on stewardship on the set Stewardship Sunday, you will not be helping your hearers to grow in their life as Christian stewards. In fact, that might be the Sunday when there is a higher rate of absenteeism than on other Sundays. Why would that be? It would be because the hearers do not understand or accept what you are saying

about Christian stewardship.

You should preach regularly on Christian stewardship. This does not mean that you throw out the word “stewardship” in the sermon. It means that you regularly bring your definition of stewardship into your sermons, explaining what it means and guiding your hearers to apply that definition to their personal stewardship life.

As you study the text, look for places where stewardship is developed. Let the Word guide the development of your stewardship preaching. As you become more focused on stewardship preaching, you will find it showing up in the regular texts from the Lectionary. As you become more comfortable with stewardship preaching, you will find that it will become easier to answer the question at the end of the sermon, “Now what should I do?” That becomes the stewardship answer. You are called to live according to the will of God in your life, using all of life and your life’s resources to bring glory to God’s name and for the good of others.

The pastors who were interviewed made a point out of saying that it is important to preach according to the Lectionary. This really did help the pastor to avoid pitfall #1 below. In preaching from the Lectionary, the pastor found that he had greater opportunity to study the Word of God and draw in those aspects of Christian stewardship that he might miss if he was trying to regularly preach a free text. Following the Lectionary helps the congregation to understand that it isn’t just that the pastor is trying to force stewardship upon the congregation, but they will see that stewardship is seen regularly throughout the pages of Scripture. This will help the pastor to preach regularly on this.

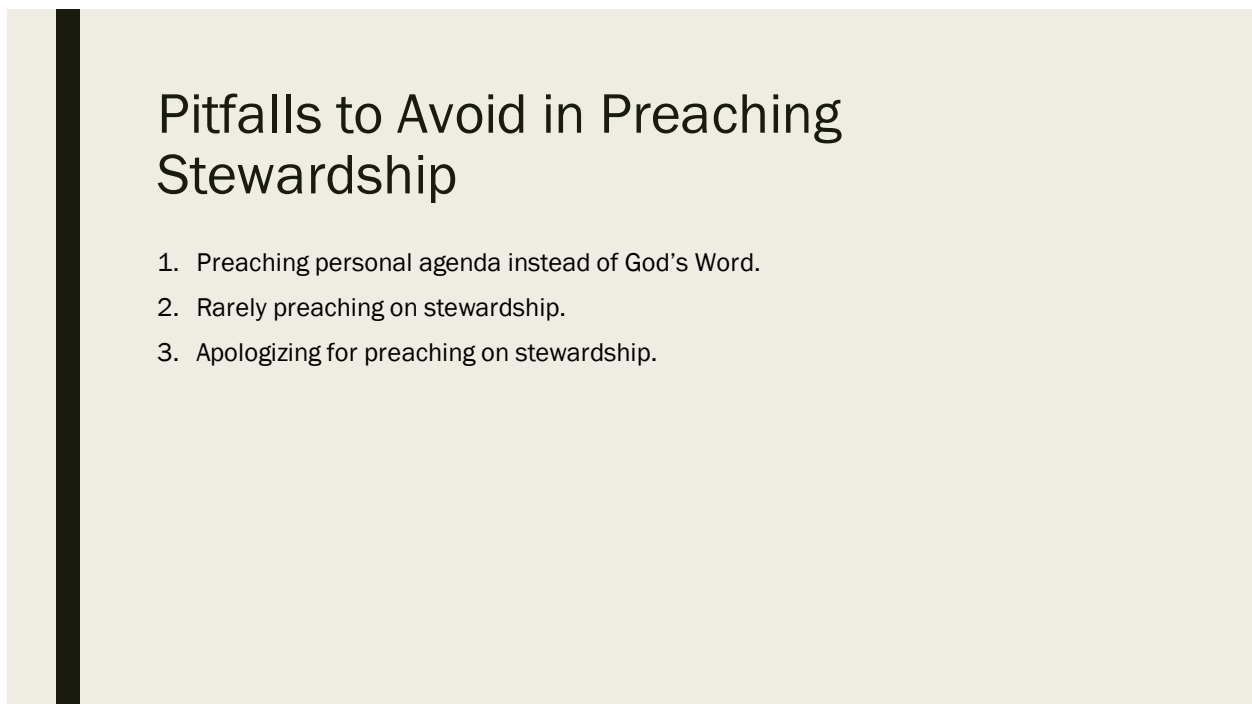
One thing that might assist you in preaching stewardship is to keep track of those times that you preach stewardship. Keep a notebook in which you record the date, the text and what was said about stewardship. This will help you to know how often you preach on stewardship. It will

also assist you in know if your working definition is one that you continue to hold or if it needs adjustment as you continue to preach God's Word to your congregation. Definitions can often change through time, with growth and a deeper understanding of God's Word.

Conclusion

These five points are ones that were presented by pastors who have shown some best practices in preaching Christian stewardship. For the parish pastor, these five points are helpful as they have been shown to be some of the best practices for preaching on Christian stewardship.

Pitfalls to Avoid in Preaching Stewardship



The slide features a light beige background with a vertical black bar on the left side. The title 'Pitfalls to Avoid in Preaching Stewardship' is centered in a large, black, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a numbered list of three items, each preceded by a small black square bullet point.

(Slide #14)

As I interviewed the pastors about their best practices in preaching Christian stewardship, I also asked them about the pitfalls, those things that they found did not work when preaching Christian stewardship. From what they said, I found three things that you should avoid when

preaching on stewardship:

1. Preaching personal agendas instead of the Word of God.
2. Rarely preaching on stewardship.
3. Apologizing for preaching on stewardship.

I will explain what is meant by each of these points.

Personal Agendas Instead of God's Word

Personal Agendas Instead of God's Word

- Avoid personal agendas when you are preaching stewardship.
- Do not allow yourself to be pulled into budget preaching.
- Preach the text.
- Pericopal or series texts should be the focus of what you preach

(Slide #15)

The first thing you should avoid when preaching on stewardship is your own personal agenda instead of the Word of God. In general, you should make it a point not to preach on your personal agendas. Preaching according to the Lectionary helps with this issue. When it comes to preaching on stewardship, you should not bring out stewardship sermons only when there is a need. This means that you don't pull out a stewardship sermon when it is budget time. Nor do you preach on stewardship only when the church bank account is running low. This makes it

appear as though the only purpose for a stewardship sermon is to cause the congregation to give more money, to dig deeper into their pockets, all to meet the current financial needs of the church. There are times when the pastor, feeling as though the congregation really needs to “hear it,” will preach a stewardship sermon based upon the Law. He will want to “give it” to the congregation, making sure they know how bad they are for not supporting the ministry and work of the congregation.

The thing that you will run into in this situation is that you have resorted to preaching to the Old Adam, nailing him with the second use of the Law, attempting to force the Old Adam to give more money to meet the needs of the congregation, even as everyone agreed they would do when the budget was adopted. By doing this, you will find that you will not be best serving your people, nor will you improve the financial stewardship of the congregation. C.F.W. Walther in *Law and Gospel*, said, “A collection is taken up, and he gets twenty cents when he had expected twenty dollars. He resolved to give these people hell and damnation next Sunday. This might increase the collection by ten or twenty dollars, but the offering is worthless in the sight of God, because it was made under duress.”² The agenda of the pastor has not changed the hearts of the congregation for it is addressing the wrong part of the person, addressing the Old Adam who does not wish to hear about stewardship, nor does he desire to change his sinful life. Instead of changing hearts, to preach your own agenda on stewardship, will only solidify the thinking that the only time that the pastor preaches on stewardship is when he needs more money.

This takes us back to the point #5 in the actions that should be taken by the pastor. You should regularly preach stewardship. To do this, it is beneficial to preach the according to the Lectionary. In doing so, you will find that you have many opportunities to help your hearers to

² Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 436.

grow in their spiritual life which will have a profound impact upon their stewardship life. You will be able to show that stewardship is not something that is divorced from the life of the believer but that it flows from a changed heart, a heart that seeks the will of God in his life. Another way to regularly include stewardship is by preaching according to the Church Year. This will, once again, bring this topic of stewardship forward regularly. This will give you opportunity to include stewardship throughout the Church Year, showing that there is regular application of stewardship to the various seasons of the Church Year, not just on Stewardship Sunday. Thus, you will avoid preaching your own agenda, or grinding your own ax. You will find that as you focus on the text, rather than the situation, you will become a better preacher of Christian stewardship and will therefore assist you hearers to know more about what it means to be a Christian steward.

Rarely Preaching on Stewardship

Rarely Preach on Stewardship

- Because of the way it is received, it is tempting to avoid preaching on stewardship.
- The pastor may feel uncomfortable about preaching on stewardship.
- As was mentioned earlier, include stewardship in your regular preaching. The more you preach stewardship, the more comfortable you will become with the topic and the more you can include it in your sermons.

(Slide #16)

The second pitfall that many pastors fall into is that they rarely preach on stewardship. They might have their own reasons, some of which might be that they are uncomfortable preaching stewardship, or their congregation does not like to hear about stewardship. They might even have a positive reason to not preach on stewardship which is that their congregation are good givers already. They do not have trouble meeting their budget and will often have extra left over with which they can do other types of ministry work. These are not good reasons to not preach steward.

No matter how a congregation feels about stewardship nor how you, as a pastor, feel about stewardship, the fact is that your people need to hear about Christian stewardship on a regular basis. While a congregation might have a positive spirit on stewardship, showing this in the financial support of the congregation and in the willingness to volunteer not only in the congregation but throughout the community, they still need to hear about how they can continue grow in their stewardship life. The pastor has not helped his congregation to continue to grow as stewards if he avoids preaching because he feels that they are doing fine as it is.

While a congregation might have a negative spirit towards stewardship, they still need to hear what the Word of God says to them concerning their stewardship lives. Here, the congregation might well need to hear the second use of the Law, for they might well be avoiding the will of God because they do not wish to allow His Word to change their hearts or their minds. You will do your congregation no favor by avoiding or rarely preaching on stewardship in this situation. Instead, you will be hurting their spiritual walk, for if they are not following the will of God in their lives, then their stewardship walk will not be appropriate for their calling. If they are not hearing what God's will is for their lives because the pastor has not been preaching stewardship in his sermons, they will not be able to follow His will.

The pastor should avoid the temptation to rarely preach on Christian stewardship. He should include it regularly in his preaching, helping his people to grow instead of causing them to not fully know the will of God concerning stewardship. He should follow the Lectionary regularly, to show that the teaching of stewardship is not merely for one or two Sunday a year but is for every Sunday and for every day of life for the Christian.

Apologizing for Preaching Stewardship

Do Not Apologize for Preaching Stewardship

- Once again, because of the pastor's personal uncomfortableness of preaching on stewardship and the perceived/real feelings of the congregation concerning stewardship, it is tempting to apologize to the congregation every time that you preach on stewardship.
- Be confident in your understanding of stewardship. Define it and own it. Then present it with confidence, never apologizing for preaching the Word of God.

(Slide #17)

Here again, this pitfall follows closely with the previous pitfall. When a pastor feels uncomfortable preaching about stewardship, even when it is regularly found with the texts that he is preaching, he will begin the sermon by apologizing for preaching on stewardship. It might sound like, "I know that we don't talk about stewardship that often, but here today, I don't have any choice. The Finance Board told me that we are having trouble meeting our bills. They wanted me to talk to you about stewardship." This does not give resounding confidence that the

Word of God speaks concerning their stewardship life. Instead, it makes it appear that stewardship is not really to be found in the text, but because of the need, the pastor states he is sorry, but he cannot help but preach on such a topic, and then he tries to stretch the Word to fit the situation.

This misses the point of preaching, not only on stewardship but on all doctrines. One of the pastors that I interviewed stated, “When we preach, we are not preaching for the crisis that day in the pulpit but are equipping them for when that crisis happens. I like to think that is what I am doing in the sermon, I am prepping them for a later time in their life.”³ When you regularly preach on stewardship, you are equipping your hearers to be able to live their lives as Christian stewards. There is nothing to apologize for when you are preaching the Word of God. Instead, you can boldly proclaim “Thus says the Lord,” as you preach stewardship according to the Word.

Conclusion

These are the pitfalls that I gathered from those pastors I interviewed concerning best practices on preaching Christian stewardship. The areas to avoid are preaching your own personal agenda instead of the Word of God, rarely preaching on stewardship and apologizing for preaching on stewardship.

What you should do when it comes to preaching Christian stewardship is to personally define what you understand stewardship to be in your ministry, present that to the congregation on a regular basis, bringing stewardship into your regular preaching. As you do this, you will find that you will be equipping your congregation for a life of faithful stewardship.

³ Interviewee #3, interview by author, Clarinda, IA, January 15, 2021.

Response from Southwest Circuit Meeting Attendees

This presentation was made to the Southwest Circuit meeting which was held at St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA on Wednesday, September 15, 2021. The pastors of the circuit listened and followed along with the presentation. Each of them had received a copy of the power point slides.

The response that they gave was helpful as I was reflecting upon the conclusions that I reached concerning the best practices in preaching on Christian stewardship. Following the presentation, one pastor pointed out that this was extremely helpful for him as he understands that preaching on stewardship is meant to affect the whole individual. He would like to include stewardship in his sermons on a more regular basis. He felt that he was doing so but was not sure how it was being accepted. I encouraged him to follow three of the items that were shown to be beneficial in preaching stewardship. First, he needed to define stewardship for himself. He pointed out that he felt that it included the vocational aspect in the lives of his members. As we talked about how he defined stewardship, he saw the benefit of writing his definition out so that he would know what he was meaning by stewardship. Second, we talked about how he would go about sharing that definition with the congregation so that they would know what he was meaning as he began to include stewardship in his regular preaching. Third, I encouraged him to keep track of how often he included stewardship in his preaching. This would help him to know if he truly is preaching stewardship on a regular basis.

The pastors that were present began to talk about the challenges that are presented as they preach Christian stewardship. One pastor spoke of talking with an owner of a business in his community who viewed stewardship only as the pastor preaching to get more money from people. As the other pastors joined in on the discussion, it was pointed out that preaching for money is the general impression of stewardship preaching, which is held by some people, both

inside and outside of the church. It helped them to see how important it is to know what they are meaning when they preach Christian stewardship. More than that, it showed how the pastor needs to be specific in his presentation of stewardship, helping the hearers to understand that which he is preaching, so they may move beyond just the concept of stewardship only being preaching for money. As we talked, they agreed that it is important to include stewardship in their preaching more often than is currently being done.

Overall, the pastors responded favorably to both the areas that are beneficial and helpful when it comes to preaching Christian stewardship in their congregations as well as those areas that need to be avoided because they are not helpful in such preaching. The discussion pointed out the importance of defining stewardship, making that definition well known in the preaching of stewardship, and making regular use of stewardship preaching. They agreed that to avoid preaching because of the negative thoughts that they hear from members and nonmembers, is not beneficial. It still is important to preach stewardship on a regular basis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This chapter will bring the MAP together in one conclusion that has three parts. First, this chapter will summarize that which I did in preparation for this project that improved the ministry at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Troy, IL. It will then present how the actual work on the MAP assisted St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA in its stewardship ministry. Second, this chapter will show how the work that I did on this MAP helped me to grow both personally and professionally. It will show how the Doctor of Ministry program and the writing of this MAP has made me a better pastor, helping me to minister to the congregation that I am serving at this time. Finally, this chapter will point out some work that could still be considered on the topic of preaching Christian stewardship.

Contributions to Ministry

Work on this MAP began while I was serving as pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran, Troy, IL (hereafter called St. Paul's). As I described in Chapter Five, there was a change in ministry location, taking me to St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA (hereafter called St. John). In this section, I shall describe how the work on this MAP assisted the ministry in both congregations. While serving at St. Paul's, I did the course work for the Doctor of Ministry program and began to do the preparatory work for the MAP. When I moved to St. John, I researched and wrote the MAP. Both congregations benefitted from the work on this MAP. In this chapter, I will describe how this MAP assisted the growth in ministry in both congregations.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Troy, IL

While I was serving as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Troy, IL, I completed the

course work required for the Doctor of Ministry program. As I began the program, I was looking to improve my skills in homiletics. I focused on this topic in Chapter Five. As I prepared for this MAP, I was unsure of exactly how I was going to prepare a project in homiletics. Therefore, the classes that I took opened a variety of forms of preaching that I had not been aware of as I had not studied homiletics for many years. St. Paul's benefitted in that I was branching out from the standard Law/Gospel sermon with two or three parts to a variety of different preaching approaches. I brought in visuals such as power points to assist the hearers to better understand what I was saying in a sermon. I learned how to use video clips in sermons to bolster the message that was proclaimed in the sermon. Each time I learned a different homiletical device, I would find a way to incorporate that into my preaching. This challenged me to become better prepared to preach week after week. It assisted the hearers at St. Paul's to start to receive a variety of different preaching styles, which I would learn, attempt to use, hone the presentation, and become better equipped in my preaching. Over the four years of work in preparation for this MAP, the congregation benefitted in hearing better prepared sermons that were much tighter in preparation and more focused in preaching. This helped the hearers to grow in their personal faith as I preached the Word in a clearer and better prepared sermon.

In June 2016, my understanding of stewardship was further developed as I took the course "Stewardship Development." In this course, I was challenged to develop my own philosophy of stewardship. At the time I was not aware of what was taking place in my thinking. This was laying the groundwork for defining what I meant when I spoke of stewardship. At that time I was beginning to equate stewardship with the sanctified life of the Christian believer. I was starting to understand that the Christian steward was living out the faith he had in Christ Jesus, living as a sanctified believer. I had written that Biblical stewardship is meant to be included in the life of

the Christian not to be relegated to a separate portion of his life. Continued work in this course helped me to further to develop in my understanding of stewardship, giving me the opportunity to become more focused on what it meant to be a Christian steward.

At the same time, I was beginning to focus on the topic for the MAP. The project was going to include both homiletics and stewardship, as I described in Chapter Five. As I was working to develop the concept for the project, I had several false starts. They were false starts for the MAP, but they were beneficial for the congregation. One such false start, as was described in section “Homiletics and Stewardship Converge” in Chapter Five, assisted the congregation to grow in its understanding of stewardship, through a series of sermons preached on stewardship, followed by several sermons that were opened up to the questions of the members of the congregation, which were asked over a period of two weeks. This series lasted for three months. During this time, the congregation grew in their understanding of stewardship giving them the opportunity to attempt to define how they understood the teaching of stewardship and how it impacted their daily lives. Each month the sermons continued to use this understanding of stewardship. I was seeking to ascertain if the sermons were helping them in their understanding of stewardship in their personal life as well as in their lives as members of the congregation.

I found that in working to develop this concept as a MAP project, it helped the congregation, as well as helped several of the boards to grow in their understanding of how stewardship impacted the work that each of the boards were tasked to do by the congregation. During the development of the concept, the Board of Finance and Stewardship of St. Paul’s, began a more in-depth study of stewardship, helping them in their understanding of how they could assist the congregation to continue to grow in this teaching. This impacted the members of

the Board of Finance and Stewardship as they felt better equipped to lead the congregation in their stewardship life. More than that, collaborating with the members of the Board, together we were able to guide the congregation in their financial stewardship. This helped the congregation to understand that it is important to discuss the issue of financial stewardship for the life of the congregation as well as the personal life of the members. This helped the congregation get a better handle on how to work with the financial aspect of stewardship.

The stewardship preaching that I did during this three-month sermon series also helped other boards at St. Paul's, such as the Board of Elders, the Board of Education, and the Board of Evangelism, to grasp that the work that they were doing was also part of the stewardship life of the congregation. As the MAP concept of Best Practices in Preaching Christian Stewardship developed and I began writing the MAP after arriving at St. John, I realized that a shortcoming that I had with this concept at St. Paul's was that I did not define stewardship clearly for myself or for the congregation. This was a downfall of what I was attempting at the time.

As I struggled with this preaching/stewardship concept as a project for the MAP, I received and accepted the call to serve as pastor of St. John. I was unable to continue to work with St. Paul's, which was unfortunate because it seemed to me that the members of St. Paul's were growing in their ability to know and understand the importance of stewardship for their congregational and personal lives. I will now turn to the impact the MAP had upon St. John.

St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA

As described in Chapter Five, I accepted the call to serve as pastor at St. John Lutheran Church, Clarinda, IA. After arriving at St. John and getting acclimated to the new congregation and the congregation life, I began to pursue the MAP project once again. While discussing the MAP with my advisor, I developed the concept of this MAP, "In Search of the Best Practices in

Preaching on Christian Stewardship.” I will describe how this MAP impacted St. John congregation.

I came into St. John with my background in stewardship that had developed over the previous four years while working on the course work and having worked on a direction for the MAP project. At the same time, I had to come to an understanding of where St. John was in their defining stewardship and how that applied into the daily life of the members. The background that I already had from the previous work made it possible for me bring the preaching of Christian stewardship into my regular weekend sermons. I did not wait for a special Stewardship Sunday to preach on stewardship. This benefitted St. John in that they were able to hear about whole life Christian stewardship, which is what I was defining stewardship as at the time. As I did the research and began the writing of the MAP, I realized that I needed a better working definition of Christian stewardship. As the writing of this MAP progressed, I defined stewardship as “the Christian steward is living according to the will of God in his life, using his life and life’s resources according to God’s will and for the good of others in his life.” This working definition I have been bringing forward in various sermons, helping the members of St. John to understand what I am meaning as I preach on Christian stewardship.

I have found that because of this MAP, I have included the stewardship into sermons that I preach here at St. John. Often, after I have written a sermon, I have stepped back, and realized that I did not include any discussion of stewardship, which has led me to return to the writing of the sermon to bring stewardship into the sermon with the idea that it will have a greater impact upon the hearer. I would not have done that prior to the work on the MAP. I have found that this has increased the awareness of the hearers at St. John to be thinking about stewardship more often.

Work on this MAP has also assisted the St. John Board of Stewardship in preparation for leading the congregation in their growth and understanding of stewardship. Recently, as the Board of Stewardship and I were looking at various Bible studies on Christian stewardship, the work I have done on this MAP opened my eyes to see how a Bible study that we selected could have an impact on the sermons during that same time. We discussed the way that we could weave together the Bible study and the Sunday sermons to better assist the members of the congregation in their stewardship growth.

Another way that this MAP has impacted the congregation is in the application of stewardship to the mission statement of St. John. The mission statement is, “Sent to reveal God’s love to the world.” This mission statement is expounded on with the three-part statement: “Glorify God, Serve Others, Imitate our Savior.” The Board of Stewardship, as we were discussing the various stewardship Bible studies that were available for use in the congregation, was able to see how one study fit nicely with the Mission Statement. The three-part explanation the congregation uses to expand the impact of the Mission Statement, was found in the three-part Bible study on stewardship. The Board of Stewardship brought stewardship into the mission of the congregation.

As I have explained in this section, this MAP has impacted the current ministry at St. John, bringing stewardship to the forefront in my preaching, causing me to be more observant in how I include stewardship in regular Sunday worship. It has helped the Board of Stewardship to gain a better grasp on stewardship and assisted them in applying that which I have preached on stewardship into the various programs that they are using to help the congregation to grow in their stewardship lives.

How This MAP Can Assist Other Pastors/Congregations

Within this MAP, the pastor can look at the findings to assist him in his preaching on stewardship in his congregation. The most important finding that will help a pastor in preaching stewardship is learning that he must define what he is meaning when he speaks on stewardship. I found that until I came to a solid definition, that which I meant by stewardship was a moving target. In reading this MAP, the pastor could get the full impact if he defines stewardship, then uses that definition in his preaching on stewardship. This will help him to be consistent in his preaching, which will then assist his hearers to get a better grasp on what is meant by stewardship. His hearers will then be able to listen to the pastor preach stewardship.

Pastors that use this MAP will find that it is not only important to define stewardship, but it is important to continue to preach stewardship. He needs to understand his congregation, which will help him to know if he should have regular Stewardship Sunday events. The pastor must know if his congregation will respond positively to a Stewardship Sunday. This MAP points out to the pastor the importance of preaching stewardship according to the lectionary, becoming more attune to the stewardship nuances found in the various texts throughout the year. As he starts to include stewardship regularly in his preaching, he will find that the topic of stewardship will not be so challenging or offensive to the members of the congregation, for they will come to a deeper understanding of what stewardship means for their personal lives. They will grow in their understanding that stewardship is living according to the will of God in their lives.

Finally, the pastor that uses this MAP will come to understand that it is helpful to begin to talk with his fellow pastors about preaching in general and specifically about preaching stewardship. This will help him to become more confident in his preaching about stewardship. He will also find that his fellow brothers in the ministry will often have the same concerns that he has, and will also benefit from a continued discussion concerning stewardship.

Conclusion

St. Paul's and St. John congregations were both helped to grow in their understanding and practice of stewardship because of the work that I was doing on this MAP. It benefitted the various boards with whom I worked while I was studying, researching, and writing the MAP. It was a benefit and blessing to each congregation and to the individual members of those congregations. They had the opportunity to study and grow as Christian stewards.

This MAP will be helpful for those pastors who take the time to read and study the research and the findings of the project. It is challenging when pastors preach on stewardship. This MAP will help them to gain some confidence and insight in how to go about preaching Christian stewardship.

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

This MAP had an impact upon me personally and professionally. In this section, I will show how the MAP helped me to become more confident in my understanding of stewardship. The MAP assisted me to become a better Christian steward in my personal life, giving me insight into how I am to live according to the will of God. Professionally, this MAP helped me to become more confident in preaching Christian stewardship. The MAP opened my eyes to see Christian stewardship in places that I had missed prior to working on this MAP. Finally, the MAP assisted me to put into practice those findings from the pastors that showed the best practices in preaching Christian stewardship.

Contributions to My Personal Life

Prior to working on this MAP, I did not fully understand what Christian stewardship was for my personal life. Focusing on stewardship meant that I would support the ministry of the local congregation financially. How I went about doing that was according to the tithe. I

understood stewardship as tithing ten percent of your income. If you were able to tithe that amount, you were a faithful Christian steward. So, in my personal life, I worked to reach the level of the tithe, convincing myself I was a faithful steward in reaching the level of the tithe. Since I was a pastor, I did not even consider stewardship as a part of my personal life since I was giving 100% of my life in service to the Lord.

Doing the research for this MAP, I found my personal thinking moving beyond just the tithe. As I developed the definition, “the Christian steward is living according to the will of God in his life, using his life and life’s resources according to God’s will and for the good of others in his life,” I came to see that I limited my thinking on Christian stewardship. Yes, the tithe is a goal for each person to strive to attain, and if they attain it, they should then work to move beyond that tithe, never stopping in the sacrificial giving of the finances to the ministry of the church. And yet, there was much more to stewardship. When the definition began to solidify in my thinking, I began to look at how I was living each day. I found myself asking the question, “Am I living according to the will of God?” This pushed me to think even beyond just asking the question. I helped to begin to look at each situation and ask, “What is God’s will in this situation?” I grew to look at the concept of stewardship as much more than time, talents, and treasure. When I began, that concept was the litmus test for stewardship in my thinking. The research, the writing, and the guidance of my advisor all helped me to understand that there was nothing wrong with time, talents, and treasure, but stewardship did not stop there. It begins in the will of God, and the Christian needs to listen to God’s Word and let the will of God be revealed to him each day. Each day begins in the will of God, progresses along throughout the day and when the day ends, the Christian is still to follow that will of God in his life.

As I focused on the Christian steward guided by the will of God, I also grew to understand

that my actions are meant to bring glory to God's name. Other folks will see how I live my life, not just as a pastor, but as a citizen in the community, as a husband and a father, and as a neighbor living on a city block, and the way I live my life should bring glory to God's name. My actions should bring glory to the name of God and in doing so, it will then be for the good of those around me. Stewardship is not meant just for me. I cannot live the life of a Christian steward on my own personal island. I am to live as a Christian steward amid the community and people in which I live. God intends for me to be a Christian steward wherever I am and in whatever I do. I can only do that if I first know His will in my life. This MAP has helped me to personally see that stewardship reality.

I am no longer just thinking of stewardship according to the tithe. Yes, I still see the tithe as an important part of my personal stewardship life, but it is much more than that. I now understand that stewardship is in all aspects of my life, not just one small portion of my personal life. I have changed in that I am thinking more about, "what is God's will for me in my life?" which is not really a question that I asked prior to working on this MAP. This MAP impacted my personal life.

Contributions to My Professional Life

Even as this MAP has contributed to my personal stewardship life, so it has contributed to my professional life. First, it has challenged me to become a better preacher. The purpose of the Doctor of Ministry program in my professional life was to help me to become a better preacher. I did a decent job with preaching, but it was becoming stale. I also looked around and felt that preaching in general was not what it should be. I entered the degree program to challenge myself to preach a better sermon week after week. I felt that anyone could preach a good sermon on occasion, but that was not beneficial to those listening to the sermon week after week. The

sermons that a pastor preached weekly should be ones that lift the hearer, points them to the Word of God, shows them their Savior and the salvation He brings and then challenges them to live their lives according to His will. I felt that going into the Doctor of Ministry program, with the Homiletics Concentration, would help me to become a better preacher.

I filled my studies with as much study on the topic of preaching, even including preaching in the core classes, to help me learn the various aspects of homiletics that had developed over the 25 years since I had entered the pastoral ministry. As I learned about a new technique of preaching, I would work to not only understand it, but I would then work at learning how to use that technique in my weekly preaching. I believe that it did improve my preaching. St. Paul's was the biggest recipient of this new knowledge and the various techniques, as I was serving that congregation at the time. St. John has received the outcome of the studies and the learning in that I have continued to hone the skills that I learned through the years of course work for the degree program.

In the research and writing of this MAP, the focus is preaching about Christian stewardship. Most of the work on this project was upon the preaching of stewardship. As a pastor, I had not spent much time preaching stewardship. Part of the reason was that I believed that if you preached the Gospel in its purity, then the people would become good Christian stewards. By this, I meant that people would give to support the ministry of the congregation. I limited stewardship to financial giving. I was uncomfortable preaching about the need for people to give more money to the church, therefore I did not do it very often. The only times I would preach on stewardship, meaning giving, was when the congregation was in financial difficulties and needed more money to pay the bills and meet the budget for that year. I did not need to preach about giving very often as the congregations that I served were good givers and supported

the ministry of their congregations. Seldom did the congregation fall behind in paying the bills, and therefore I felt justified in my thinking that preaching the pure Gospel brought the money into the church coffers.

This MAP helped me to see that I was not thinking clearly in my practice. I was not wrong that the Gospel does indeed lead people in their financial giving. That is the wonder of the Gospel, changing the Old Adam to the New Man, and therefore also guiding the actions of the believer. Where I was wrong is that as the pastor, I did need to include stewardship in my regular preaching. To go with that, I needed to redefine how I understood stewardship, which this MAP helped me to do. With a clearer definition of stewardship, I was open to seeing stewardship in places I did not originally see stewardship. I find myself now singing a hymn and noting a verse that is powerful in the statement of stewardship life. I pray a Collect of the Day and see the stewardship emphasis that is in the prayer.

I also learned that if I do not preach on stewardship, giving guidance to the members of the congregation, they will not be able to grow in their stewardship life. Left to their own, they will continue to be newborn babies on spiritual milk instead of becoming mature believers with a steady diet of spiritual meat. I learned that a pastor needs to guide his members in not only understanding the fullness of stewardship, but in how they go about living as Christian stewards. If the pastor does not give the guidance in his regular preaching, where is the member to get the guidance to live as a Christian steward? This MAP assisted me professionally to acknowledge that preaching stewardship is multi-faceted, like a diamond. Stewardship preaching does bring out the aspect of the financial giving. It encourages the hearer to consider striving to reach for the tithe and then going beyond the tithe. Stewardship preaching also shows the hearer the will of God for his life, assisting him to live according to the will of God. It allows the hearer to learn

how to bring glory to the name of God as he lives his stewardship life. It also helps the hearer to grow in the understanding of how to assist his family, neighbors, workmates, and others in their lives.

Conclusion

The writing of this MAP challenged me to think deeper and further about Christian stewardship, which broadened my personal self. As I continued to work on this MAP, my professional life was strengthened. My understanding of stewardship and the role of the pastor in preaching stewardship was expanded. The work in preparation for this MAP challenged me to become a better preacher, who preached the fullness of the Word of God, which includes Law and Gospel, touching the heart and life of the hearer concerning stewardship, helping him to grow in his understanding of the will of God for his life. This MAP has helped me to have a deeper understanding of both preaching and stewardship, as well as the way that preaching and stewardship can be woven together on a weekly basis.

Recommendations

Since the focus of this MAP was “In Search of the Best Practices in Preaching Christian Stewardship,” the focus of what it could accomplish was limited. There are several directions that further study could build upon the work that I have done in this project. First, a study could take a deeper look at the lectionary and build a base of stewardship applications that come from the regular readings. Second, a study could look more deeply into the development a sermon series or a set of sermon series for pastors. Finally, there could be the development of a series of Bible studies based around the lectionary readings or the Church Year.

Stewardship Applications from the Lectionary

One of the findings of this MAP was that it was important for the pastor to preach stewardship on a regular basis. One way to accomplish that is to preach stewardship according to the lectionary. To preach according to the lectionary also helps the pastor to avoid the pitfall of preaching one's own agenda rather than the Word of God. As the pastor preaches the lectionary, he can avoid preaching his own agenda to the congregation.

To assist the parish pastor in this preaching of stewardship from the lectionary, it would be beneficial for someone to undertake the project of looking into the lectionary, either the three-year series or the one-year series, to discover the stewardship connections found in those readings. This would be a large project which could be made into a workable size if the focus were one of the readings, such as the Old Testament lessons found in Series A. Or a project could be to develop the stewardship focus of the Gospel readings found in the one-year series. As there are a variety of directions that a project like this could go, several different people could undertake a study, each one taking the Gospel readings or the Epistle readings. The project could also take the Epistle readings from the three-year series, part C, in the season of Pentecost, and focus on the various books, such as Colossians, Hebrews or 1 and 2 Timothy, building the stewardship application for preaching as it is found in these books. There are many options that would be available for continued work in the preaching of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Sermon Series

Second, a study could look more deeply into the development a sermon series or a several sermon series for pastors. While this might be a useful project for a MAP, it could also become something that is published after the MAP is completed. While MAPs are beneficial, the outcome of the projects are not often publicized for the parish pastor to know the outcome of the

project nor is it made easily available to the parish pastor. There could be the possibility of publishing the sermon series through the various avenues available within the LC-MS. It is helpful for a pastor to have some insights into a sermon series on Christian stewardship, as he could then use that as a basis for learning to preach Christian stewardship in his own congregation. A sermon series of Christian stewardship could be developed that will help the pastor to understand stewardship better for himself and give him insight into how to preach stewardship. The sermon series could include the background study on the texts used, sermon outlines and sermon manuscripts. This would give the pastor a resource that he could study and use in his own congregation.

It would be useful for there to be several different sermon series which would address a variety of topics in Christian stewardship. They could include, but not be limited to, the development of a definition of Christian stewardship, stewardship of personal and congregational finances, stewardship of vocation, and stewardship of family. Each of these series would offer a background study on the stewardship topic with resources available to assist the pastor in developing his own understanding of how to apply the stewardship topic to his own congregation. This would fit with one of the findings of this MAP: know the congregation to whom you are preaching. The study and resources on the topic would help the pastor to grow in his knowledge of that aspect of preaching Christian stewardship. The outlines and sermons would give him some ideas, and some confidence, in how to preach this stewardship topic to his congregation.

Stewardship Bible Study Based on Lectionary or Church Year

Finally, another direction that could build upon the work that done in this MAP would be the development of stewardship Bible studies that are based upon the lectionary or the Church

Year. The finding of this MAP that a pastor should preach regularly on the Christian stewardship is bolstered when the pastor continues to preach according to either the lectionary or the Church Year. To have a Bible study that would tie closely with the lectionary readings or the Church Year, would benefit the pastor to be able to go beyond the preaching of stewardship to include the teaching of stewardship in the congregation. Once the project was completed, including the development of the Bible study, it could be published, making it readily available to the parish pastor for his use in the congregation.

A Bible study that is based on the Church Year would help the pastor to lead his congregation in growth through the festival time of the Church Year. During the first half of the Church Year, the readings do not consistently come from one book of the Bible, with the exception being the Gospel reading. Having a Bible study that takes the Old Testament or Epistle readings from the various parts of the Church Year, such as Epiphany or Lent, would help the pastor to not only preach on stewardship but also to teach according to the lessons. There are Bible studies for the Church Year and the lectionary readings, but these studies could focus specifically on the topic of stewardship.

Conclusion

This Map was specific in its direction. It specifically looked for the “best practices in preaching Christian stewardship.” There is further work that can be to assist the pastor to continue to preach Christian stewardship on a regular basis. Seeking stewardship applications for the lectionary readings in either the three-year series or the one-year series, presenting sermons series bases around the lectionary or Church Year and Bible studies that build upon the lectionary or Church Year, could be beneficial for pastor. These are just a few ideas that are possible for continued work on preaching Christian stewardship on a regular basis.

APPENDIX ONE

Informed Consent Form

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

DO YOU WISH TO BE AUDIOTAPED IN THIS STUDY?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher audiotape me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX TWO

Letters of Request

November 10, 2020

Rev. Dr. Steven Turner
409 Kenyon Rd. Suite B
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

Pres. Turner:

I write today with a request. As I am working on my Major Applied Project (MAP) for the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, I am entering into the phase where I am in need of interviewing several pastors for their input and thoughts. My MAP is “In Search of the Best Practices in Preaching on Christian Stewardship.”

I would like to have a Zoom meeting with you, according to your schedule, in which you might be able to point me in the direction of between 10-12 pastors in the Iowa District West, that you feel have shown themselves to have excelled on the preaching of Christian Stewardship in their congregation. I will then contact them to obtain permission to interview them via Zoom.

What I am seeking is pastors who through time, have brought Christian stewardship into their congregation through their regular preaching on this topic. Their preaching does not have to be specifically on Christian stewardship, but they should be actively including Christian stewardship in their regular preaching. I am not looking to develop a new program for Christian stewardship, but am seeking to find out what it is that helps a pastor to see the need to include such in their regular preaching.

I will be following up this letter with a phone call, so that we might be able to set up a time when we can talk via zoom. I do want to give you time to think about who you might suggest, but at the same time, I am also working under a deadline for completing the interview process of this MAP.

Thank you and God bless,

In Christ,

Rev. Mitchel Schuessler

December 15, 2020

Rev.:

Good morning. I am Pastor Mitchel Schuessler, St. John Lutheran, Clarinda, IA. I am currently working on my Major Applied Project in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

I have a request.

My MAP is In Search of the Best Preaching on Christian Stewardship.

I would ask if you know of any pastor in the ***** Circuit that has shown himself to be good at including stewardship in his regular preaching in his congregation. I am looking to interview those pastors selected for my MAP.

The pastor does not need to have a congregation that gives lots of money or have a large surplus of finances. I am seeking pastors who incorporate stewardship regularly in their preaching.

If you have any pastor/s in your circuit that you think might fit this study (including yourself), please pass on that information to me. If you do not have, let me know that as well.

Thank you and blessed Advent.

In Christ,
Pastor Mitchel Schuessler
St. John Lutheran Church
Clarinda, IA

December 16, 2020

Rev. :

Good morning. I am Pastor Mitchel Schuessler, St. John Lutheran, Clarinda, IA. I am currently working on my Major Applied Project in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

I have a request.

My MAP is In Search of the Best Preaching on Christian Stewardship.

I received your name from your Pres. Turner. I would like to know if you would agree to be interviewed for my MAP concerning your preaching on Christian stewardship. The interview would take place via Zoom in January 2021.

If you would be interested, then I would send you the appropriate form to fill out and return before we could set up the interview.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

In Christ,
Pastor Mitchel Schuessler
St. John Lutheran
Clarinda, IA

APPENDIX THREE

Interview Verbatims

Interview #1

Briefly describe your background in the ministry (i.e., where you have served, type of ministries you have served in) as well as your current ministry situation.

The respondent was asked this question, but because it would violate the nature of anonymity, his answers are not recorded here.

At the beginning of the interview, I describe my definition of stewardship as presented in the MAP.

With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?

I would say that I am pretty close there. You got my name from Pres. Turner. I never thought of myself as one who would preach stewardship. I have never done a stewardship program in my Bible study

Definition of stewardship, I would say, I shouldn't drink from other fountains. I am a big fan of John Piper, he is an arch Calvinist. He was a mega church pastor. One of the things he gets right is that we live for the "glory of God." Or according to His will. He does a nice job of giving the umbrella term of living for the glory of God. This allows me to talk faithfully of stewardship as a whole vocation. It encompasses the various vocations; all the places God has placed you in your life. There is a stewardship of parents, etc.

In terms of how that works out in stewardship preaching, when stewardship is explicit. I am sure that I am very standard in terms of the way that I preach it to people. God makes you through your Baptism. It makes a calling on the whole of your life. The significance of your

daily life. I am big in Romans 8:28. When I rest, I rest to the glory of the Lord, so I can serve Him again.

I then emphasize the support and engagement of missions with the local congregation reaching out into the broader community of Christ. It gets us out of the sad emphasis of the way it used to be, in years gone by, and helps to see that our mission is greater than what we do here at this time. Think about how glorious it will be when some person from a region of Africa or Korea sees you and embraces you, declares that God has use of you as you supported the mission work.

We can do things that ripple to the end of time and to all eternity. That's how I preach stewardship. If I have a hobby horse I ride when I preach, our work as the local congregation, if we steward rightly is impacting the entire globe and the course of all eternity.

With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

I preach vocationally. For example: If I see a blaring vocational example in the text, Galatians 6, "Share every good thing with the one who teaches." What is your calling? To support the gospel proclamation of the church. Or when Jesus shows up in the Temple, the vocation of the child. What is your calling as the church? I love it when lone women show up in the text, they are the one of the best pictures of the church reduced to one in faithful servanthood before Christ, both receiving the good gifts and then sharing the good gifts. Wedding at Cana – Mary is a model of Christian obedience, she will accept from the Lord in her own time, requesting that He will do something.

I am always driving towards the eternality of the Kingdom of God, be heavenly and eternally minded. One of the great mistakes the church made in the 70's and 80's. We are secular now in the world. We better find a way to make Jesus' churchly advice flow. We better find a

way to make Jesus show you how to make your marriage and your finances work. I think instead, tell people what really matters, what Jesus really said. Don't store up your treasures where thieves steal, and moths destroy. Store up that which lasts. The treasures of heaven, the souls of man. Perhaps this time of judgment upon our nation, to watch our earthly kingdom fail, is there to show us that which will last, the eternality of the soul.

Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?

No, stewardship is not in every text. I am on the lookout for it. Where it exists, I preach it as I see it. I could find it on some level of application. That can feel contrived to people. Where can I stick stewardship in here?

I will never miss an opportunity to preach it when I find it. No, I do not seek it in every sermon.

Do I focus on it? No, I do not focus on it. While I am on the look-out for it, I am not looking for it. I do not think, "We need to have a stewardship Sunday." I don't do things like that.

I am not laser focused on stewardship. I am on the lookout for it, but I do not start by thinking I need stewardship. You would be hard pressed to find that I use the term stewardship in a sermon.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

I find that the most effective way to bring stewardship into the sermon is to recapture the notion of the communion of saints. I think that a lot of congregations, especially in the rural communities, get stuck in this, a lot of anxiety of this. We know how small we are and how big

we used to be. We feel the social marginalization of the church. They feel bad about it

So, what I do, rather than be in that small purpose, we have to hang on, we have to survive. We are part of this truly, not just global church but the eternal church. Arthur Just, “The cosmic invasion, bringing the kingdom of God to all the cosmos.” I drive at the universal, across time and place. “You are a part of it,” I say. I find that emboldens some people’s giving for global initiatives. Yes, there is the local church – salary for word and sacrament ministry, keeping the lights and heat on. But being part of a wider ministry, the district, the synod, to send missionaries the world over. I think missions are important for every congregation.

When you talk about what I do, how I go about preaching it. I try to make stewardship a far more universal thing, part of the family of God, bring the one thing that truly matters, the life-giving Word.

(Do you have a regular time you preach on stewardship?) No, I don’t do it.

Why? I think that promotes anxiety in the worst way. It makes people feel the wrong kind of obligation. An obligation under the law in the wrong way. Because I have never had to preach about money, I don’t look, I never look at those sheets that tell who gives what. We are probably 80/20 congregations. I think it promotes giving out of guilt instead moving someone to be the person who gives out of the heart, God loves the cheerful giver who gives from the heart. If I can’t bring you to the place where the laying down your tithes and offerings is a joyful and purposeful thing that you see has eternal and saving significance, then I don’t want your money because I might be doing you more spiritual harm.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?

Are you asking what I have tried from personal experience that has failed?

I have failed and where it doesn't work. We are really good with well-to-do, faithful farmers who give enough to get the ministry done. The place where we have failed and failed miserably is the stewardship of time in congregational service. I rebuked a lot with the law with people who were unwilling to do things with such things as Sunday School. You should do this. You can rebuke from God's law; this needs to be done. It is easy to stop right there. "You should do this." You never really unpack God's law but don't explain why it matters. It is more effective when you want to exhort people to service, approach it positively. These are the things that you can do for the kingdom of God, in His service and in your vocation.

Example: In the closing comments of a sermon, I approached it this way. Not everything that you do in your life, in your family, is not always the most exciting and thrilling and sexy things. Nuts and bolts kind of stuff. In your own family it is not terribly exciting to balance the budget, but if you didn't, your family would be in trouble. We are the family of God, the body of Christ. Not everything that goes on in your body is exciting but all of it carries on this function of making life possible. This is the same thing in the family of Christ. Not everything is that exciting, but it is necessary. You can be a part of that. Even if it looks very normal and humdrum, you can be a part of it.

That is my thing. If you want to make it very Lutheran in terminology, you find a way to speak of stewardship to the new man rather than to beat down the old man. The old man is just going to do what the old man does. The new man will say, "That sounds cool. I would like to do it."

What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?

Driving people towards eternity. The greatest lie I was ever told, "You are so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." I think that in our time and place, people are watching the

things that they took for granted, our economy, our values, our basic social structures that have disintegrated, that gives special credence to the kind of deck chairs on the Titanic that is the reality in the fallen world. Investment people ask, “Where will I put my money to make it safe?” That is why people have gold and put it under their beds. I can tell you; you can invest in eternal souls for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. I drive people towards seeing stewardship as something of not just a personal kind of a well I give enough of my money to God, I want them to see stewardship as something of eternal, and global significance, that the way they steward their money will have a ripple effect across time, to the end of the world, and on into all eternity. To get them to see that the benefits of that investment are not necessarily seen in this body and life directly. They might have to wait, but that is ok. It is going to be a joyful time to be in the kingdom of heaven and suddenly see...I sometimes use this passage, “I put away childlike things, I see things through the glass darkly. We will know fully and will be fully known.” Usually that’s applied to knowing God, we will finally know God, the restoration of the relationship in Eden with God. And it is that. I think that is true. But I think that you will see at long last, in eternity, you will see every step of eternal significance in your life. These investments that you make now, don’t worry if they aren’t manifesting in an immediate gratification, because in eternity, you will, the Lord said, you will be paid back a hundredfold for what you do.

Hey, we can even use a fancy theological term. I drive people towards the eschatological fulfillment of their stewardship rather than focusing exclusively on the immediate, temporal gratification that might come from their stewardship.

That is all that I have. You have extracted all I have for you. And I have repeated myself many times.

Interview 2

Briefly describe your background in the ministry (i.e., where you have served, type of ministries you have served in) as well as your current ministry situation.

The respondent was asked this question, but because it would violate the nature of anonymity, his answers are not recorded here.

At the beginning of the interview, I describe my definition of stewardship as presented in the MAP.

With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?

Not just preaching, give us this or give us that, or provide money or time/talent, but it is much more than that. As Christians, let's look at the Means of Grace, God's Word, and Sacraments. We are stewards, not just as pastors but as Christians. These are the greatest gifts that we have received from God. How do we live knowing that we have received those, how do apply those to our lives? How do we apply those to our vocations?

It goes beyond, you start with Christian stewardship, isn't everything we have, our earthly lives and possession, our salvation. Where does it all come from? It comes from our Creator. It is every aspect of your life. You go forward as God's redeemed child. It encompasses all blessings that we receive from the Lord. Our confession of who we are in Christ. Time, talent, and treasure are part of that. The hope that I have in myself, how does that radiate that out in my life?

With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

I would say probably that it comes in without my planning it. There are times I plan to preach about it. Over the course of preaching a sermon, even after I have written the sermon, things will come to mind over how we live this in our lives. Not just who we are, it all starts in

our identity in Christ and the basic truths of who we are without Christ, who we are in Christ, living in Him as my Savior and my Redeemer. I try to extend that into my preaching.

Certainly, through vocation, it isn't just like time, talents, and treasure, but your vocation in your daily lives. When you go out, in every divine service, you have been given these gifts, you possess them in your Baptism. I use illustrations in sermons. Right now, the pandemic. How do you go about your daily life as God's redeemed child, receiving His gifts, with that reality in place? Obviously, that is playing into the preaching of stewardship.

One thing I always try to do is, some days are good, some days are bad, some have been given less, some have been given more, and everything in between. Job is an example. While he had lost everything, he had what? Everything. He had faith in God's promise of the blessing to come.

Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?

I think you can see it in every text. Yes, obviously there are more texts that point directly, that point more directly to it, and some point immediately to time, talent, and treasure. If you look at it in that way and that comes up. From my definition of stewardship, everything comes from God and certainly you can see it in every text.

(Do you see it in every text? As you are working on?) I would say it is there in each text. Sometimes it is not as apparent as others. It is in the back of my mind, there are different parts of the sermon that you can preach on. When you preach a text, how does this apply to stewardship. I ask myself that question regularly. Not every time. The majority of the time I do. If I am honest, not every single time, depending on what is on your mind or what jumps out at you as you prepare your exegesis.

(Do you specifically have different times of the year you focus on stewardship?) No, I have not.

(Why?) Basically because of my attitude of stewardship, based on how I define stewardship, it comes naturally in each text. Rather than focusing on it specifically, you don't have to do a special time since you are touching on it regularly. Why would I raise everyone's blood pressure? Why would I want to nail people on it one Sunday? Live it every week, live it as you preach it as a pastor and member.

This honey shop I go to down the road, knows I am a pastor, as I look at a new purchase, he says, "Well, pastor, you have to get out the bucket in the next sermon so you can make the purchase." This shows the perception of people about stewardship. He shows how people face and think about Christian stewardship – get out the bucket to get them to give more. You can see stewardship in every text.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

I think towards the end of the sermon I bring it in. I saw a previous pastor do this years ago. I summarize at the end of the sermon what God has done for us. Think about that when you prayerfully consider giving an offering or a gift. I am not going to tell you an amount. What value is it to be redeemed by the Lord? And what you would not have without being redeemed. This goes back to time and talents. What are you moved to do, based on how you see yourself as God's redeemed child?

What should you give, you tell me? What is that worth to you? We give, contribute based on the value.

At the end of funerals, I talk about the eternal legacy that saint in Christ has given to his family. Beyond the wills, what is the greatest legacy? To share the Gospel with the family. I

absolutely see myself bringing stewardship into funeral sermons. People have said, that is what it is all about.

Remember what your Savior has done for you, how he has forgiven you, so you should share that with one another. Remember who you.

I bring it into special sermons as well.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?

I use the guy that owns a gun shop. He has heard one too many sermons about people needing your money now. I haven't gotten negative feedback on what I done. I have encountered people who perceive the church, ministry and pastors are asking for money. I have never asked for money in sermons.

Our offerings are still ahead of schedule from the previous year, even with the pandemic. God's Word and the Means of Grace still need to be proclaimed, and people are supporting that. The monetary part, talent part will take care of itself if you proclaim the Gospel.

No specific stewardship Sunday. Why? It creates, comes off as too Law based versus Gospel based. Do we give as response to the Law or to the Gospel? What is going to produce the cheerful giver? The law or the gospel? The Gospel. So, some people give because they are scared, as when they used to publish the amount? I do not believe they should be shamed into or guilted into giving. You give back to what He has given you, to nourish the ministry to help sustain your faith and those outside the church.

I don't do a stewardship Sunday due to fear of a negative reaction based around giving to the church.

Why does stewardship sermons seem to focus specifically on giving? Why? Because of we

tend to worry about that, the Lord says do not be anxious about anything, human nature is anxious about those things. There are other things that need to be taken care of. That is why.

You have heard one to many fire and brimstone sermons “you have to give” and the anxiety and cares of this world are a distraction.

What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?

I would say, it starts with the fact that I am a child of God. That is my identity. I have been redeemed and blessed, not only salvation but all the earthly blessings come from the Lord. I realize how precious that is and I want others to know who their God is. He is their only provider. As much as God has loved me, I want to share that message with others.

What He has done for His pastor, He has done for you. That is what makes me focus on Christian stewardship.

Interview 3

Briefly describe your background in the ministry (i.e., where you have served, type of ministries you have served in) as well as your current ministry situation.

The respondent was asked this question, but because it would violate the nature of anonymity, his answers are not recorded here.

At the beginning of the interview, I describe my definition of stewardship as presented in the MAP.

With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?

When we work on the budget, we approach it is a “program of work,” we are doing the work of the Lord. This is the direction of the ministry.

Stewardship – I like using the 3 parts of the Apostles’ Creed. It helps me in that sense.

1st Article – I would like to add the word “owner.” God the Father, maker of heaven and earth. I would like to add “owner.” God has those things, we are entrusted with those gifts to use, not to use them for our own glory and good, but for the kingdom work. It includes all aspects of my life and what I do, it includes all aspects of using those gifts according to God’s will and purpose.

When I teach the confirmation class the 1st Commandment, we talk about God wants all our heart, body, soul, and mind. I use a pitcher of water, that is my being. I add food coloring to that water, to demonstrate God entering my life 100 %. The I pour it out into various areas, my leisure, my family, my school, etc. From that comprehensive view of being a follower of God and committing to Him 100%. That is one way that works out. God wants all of who I am. Being a follower of Jesus – the commitment of 100%. That is one way that works out.

2nd Article – God has bought us back. We can serve Him fully and totally. At great expense, by the way. He saved us. He bought us with the price of His life, His blood. We are to serve him fully, completely, totally.

3rd Article – The Holy Spirit leads us to be living out the godly, holy, life in totality. The Sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

There is the movement to make stewardship Gospel motivated. The 3rd use of the Law motivates the direction that we live. How I am doing in God’s sight. It guides me and tells me how I am doing.

Stewardship in the narrow sense of the word is not “gospel oriented.” It is a 3rd use of the law motivation. From that perspective, there is a law motivated use that guides our lives of stewardship. Not just totally gospel. At the same time as God calls, gathers, enlightens, and

keeps me in that true faith. When I fail, the Holy Spirit renews and forgives me and brings me back into line with God's way of life.

Those are my concepts of stewardship.

While the gospel is our motivation, we need to take that further.

With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

I use a multi-approach in writing a sermon. I mention the epistle lesson for this Sunday. It lends itself.

There is a conscious effort to put stewardship themes in sermons. It may not be total sermon, but there are pieces. It is like a diamond. It reflects different colors and parts. So, stewardship is a part of that reflection of the gospel and the commitment of the disciples. There are different parts of that stewardship process in my mind.

Sometimes it is a Stewardship Sunday, where we talk about finance, and the use of our time, talents, and treasure. That is a part of it. Not the totality.

Another church worker and I did a "Who wants to be a millionaire?" theme. As the host, I would ask him questions, and he would give various answers. The congregation followed along. Fun approach to the financial in context of the world.

I do think that there is an aspect where doing the pledge Sunday and doing the Sunday theme of stewardship is helpful. It requires the 3rd use of the Law, take time and effort to evaluate what they are doing, if we don't take time to help people do it, they won't do it.

A few months ago, I was doing the sermon and doing a part of it and thinking, this is a stewardship theme. Looking for those themes and being intentional about it. I think it is helpful to mark on the calendar when I preach stewardship. Not once a month or once a year. But when it

becomes a part of the sermon. Being intentional about it. At different times I have done it. Then recognizing who the audience is going to be for that Sunday. If you have good givers, you want to reinforce the work they are doing and how they have progressed in their stewardship life. If it is a group of people that are your Christmas/Easter kind of persons who are not always there to hear what you want them to hear, I can include parts so that they will at least get a taste of that and the like.

I think that is probably good to bring stewardship into the pericopal system rather than a special theme type of things.

I use Parish Publications. I will use part of it to make it work here. But not just a limited application. I did my three-part sermon series this year, so I am done. It is a constant throwing pieces out there.

Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?

The answer to include there, I don't force the text. If there is not any real direct reference to the use of my earthly possessions, I am not going to force it in. If there is an application of being a follower of Jesus, aspects that talk about following our Lord and being obedient to His will, that becomes my emphasis. And supports the stewardship themes through the year. When appropriate, I will tie that into the sermon, maybe it is the whole theme, maybe it is just a subpart of that theme.

(Do you do a regular stewardship emphasis Sunday?) We do, it is not consistent. That is intentional. I surprise them. Again, I try to be aware of who my audience might be.

(Do you find that as you approach it that way, is it more effective than a set Sunday?) I

think so. But there are times you do need to have the set Sunday. We don't do strong pledges to base our budgets on the pledges. I use that concept for them to measure their productivity.

(Do you tie your stewardship Sunday to the setting of the budget?) No. Not at all. I like to think about that budget while we do fall into the trap of making it about finance. I like to also hit it at different times and different ways to support that. I talk about the program of work when I talk about the budget. Some of those examples and I'll just throw it out. With Covid, obviously that challenges our traditional offerings and how we do that and stuff. We will be sending a letter out to the members. We like to write letters to members as we met our budget and things. Celebratory things. I did that after Easter and any time we had members send in money. First time or when they did it for a while, we follow up with a letter thanking them, putting their giving into perspective of partnership in ministry. Even they are not out there personally, the use of their gifts brought glory to God as we carried the gospel out into the world in various ways. Had some nice feedback from that, people saying thank you for encouraging them. In that sense it was gospel motivated.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

I go back to a textual approach, the pericopes, because then it is seen not so much as my agenda to promote and teach stewardship, but it flows forth from the Word of God. God is speaking to them more than my stewardship agenda. I think people pick up on bits and pieces, sometimes those kind of things stick.

When we preach, we are not preaching to their crisis that day in the pulpit but are equipping and preparing them for when that crisis happens. I like to think that is what I am doing in the sermon, I am prepping them for a later time in their life.

My declared major was systematic theology. The practical aspect is what came out in what I did.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?

Probably the question I haven't given a lot of thought about. The biggest part that I can point to, when I declare a stewardship Sunday and that, there is an absenteeism that shows itself. That is one of the motivations of mine being scattered a little here and there.

(Early on in your ministry did you have set Sundays and stop?) One of the things in my early ministry, there was Forward in Remembrance, His Love our Response, we had stewardship programs that was scheduled, and I used them, and they were beneficial. Forward in Remembrance was helpful in tying mission and stewardship. There was some benefit to them.

His Love Our Response was not as well put together as Forward in Remembrance and was not received as well.

(Other aspects that have not been beneficial?) The tension that I walk with as I do some of those things is between those who are good stewardship lovers – life, worship, all their lives is reflection Godly sanctification – vs. those who are very weak and undisciplined in that area. How do you preach to one group and say, “well done, good and faithful servant,” while preaching to the other group so that the law doesn't come back and smack that first group in the head? That balance of what God is wanting and saying. This reflects back on earlier comment, I am speaking from God's Word vs. my agenda. Programs fail by coming across as my agenda. Sometimes we have to be blunt about it. We are behind on the budget and people need to be helpful to the church local.

What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?

A larger view of ministry. There is the local congregation and the local needs, people will respond to that a little easier in some ways. However, the Kingdom of God is so much greater and the harvest so much bigger, stewardship missions is a part of that. Living our lives as disciples of Jesus. Back to the discipleship.

The funny thing is that I agree that discipleship is the purpose of God's call for our lives. When that was being pushed that way, they did not want to use the word stewardship. But there is a context, there is a part of stewardship that is about the use of our gifts, our time, talents, and treasure.

To try to change the word stewardship, is both unscriptural and not helpful. I think that is what we did when dropped the word evangelism. We talked about personal missions. That was not helpful at all. We need the word stewardship. Sometimes it is helpful to think in a narrow and a broad definition of the word.

In our current congregational handbook, in that area which used to be Department of Stewardship, we changed it to Stewardship and Finance. Stewardship is bigger than that. It is more than finance.

We need to be doing a lot of measuring when it comes to a Stewardship Sunday.

We have a newsletter and like all newsletters, there are those who read it and those who don't. There are stewardship dedicated articles in there a couple times a year. I am preaching and teaching but not from the pulpit.

Interview #4

Briefly describe your background in the ministry (i.e., where you have served, type of ministries you have served in) as well as your current ministry situation.

The respondent was asked this question, but because it would violate the nature of

anonymity, his answers are not recorded here.

At the beginning of the interview, I describe my definition of stewardship as presented in the MAP.

With the understanding of whole life Christian stewardship which includes the traditional understanding of stewardship as well as vocational stewardship, as I present it, how does he define stewardship?

Time, talent, treasure is the LCMS go to. I don't know any sermon or Bible study that does not speak into that very thing, this is what God has called us to do. Not just to believe in Him but to live in Him each day. Hence why I ask, how you define it, I am not just a time, talent, treasure guy but we do a sermon series every year in the fall. Sometimes I do not have to talk about money. The congregation is financially well taken care of. I would suggest that because we preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, what does that do for me during the week? What does that faith lead me to do every week?

The "we" that I speak about is the myself and the associate pastor who preach at the same time, two venues, as we have a contemporary service and a traditional service. He preaches alongside me. I normally take the traditional and he takes the contemporary. We switch once a month.

With his understanding of Christian stewardship, how does he go about preparing to preach on Christian stewardship?

I am intensely textual. I do more Bible study sermons. Our messages are usually about 28 minutes long on the weekend. My main goal is to bring Jesus Christ and Him crucified into effect, from there I let the text speak out. What is the text of the day and the theme of the day? I then go from there.

Does the pastor specifically focus on Christian stewardship each time he prepares a sermon? Does he bring stewardship into the sermon when it seems that the text is a traditional stewardship text? Does he find stewardship in each text, thus working it into the sermon as he prepares the sermon?

I let the text speak as to what it says. I just preach the gospel and get out of the pulpit. That is meet, right and salutary so to do. The gospels speak about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Look at the epistles. They also speak about the Savior and what He has done. But how many times does Paul write, and I will hunker down on him since he wrote most of them, how often does Paul write about Christian living? I let the text speak. I don't ever go into a preaching task without considering how this speaks into their lives in the course of the week.

When I hear people say it needs to be relevant. I balk at it. What they mean is the psychobabble. I do not do that. What I mean as relevant I mean relevant to their lives as Christian people living in this world. How is this going to change them? I should admit, every time I go into the preaching task, I focus not only on the Gospel, but also how does this point them towards Christian living during the course of the week.

(When you preach on how this, how it points them to Christian living, do you see that as preaching the gospel or the third use of the law?) This is third use of the Law. It is driven by the gospel. I am not sure how else I can define it. I am in fact saying, "do something," or "don't do something." So, it is in fact the third use of the Law.

(Do you find stewardship in each text?) No. So often when I preach, I say ok this is how this changes your life in some form, that when I don't say that, they look at me like, "You are done? That's it?" You are only going to tell us about Jesus today? I am a product of St. Louis Seminary, of Rev. Rossow. I took every class that Rev. Rossow teaches. I remember Rev saying, "If you don't have gospel in the text, you bring it into the text, you make it happen." He really

pounded that into my brain. I am Biblical preacher. That is the heart, soul, and center of who we are. The second article is us.

There are some obvious ones. Good Friday I am not going to tell them to go do something. It is done. Praise the Lord. Easter is a done deal. That is the message of what we say. But what I am saying is that one out of every eight sermons are straight gospel, not hard and fast. But it is pretty close. Isn't God good sermon.

We do a fall stewardship emphasis every year. We used to do it in November. We went to a fiscal budget. We do use pledge cards. This congregation loves pledge cards. Because we use it for budgeting purposes, we do a four-week series, at some point during that series, we have them bring the pledge cards forward. The series is partly tied to the setting of the budget. One week is "the money talk."

It is never exactly the same each year. Sometimes we skip the money talk. We have the pledge cards come forward.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some of the most effective ways for him to bring stewardship into the sermon and why does he see that as effective?

I want it driven from the text. If it is just me telling them, I am just me telling them. Granted I am their pastor, their shepherd. But if it is the Lord speaking, this is the text and I step aside and let the text say it. This is what the Lord is saying to us in our Christian living today. We have a plethora of that in the New Testament, there are a lot of that in the epistles, there are a lot of Christian living texts for that very purpose.

(Do you preach mostly epistles? Gospels?) We preach sermon series. And we don't preach the pericopal system. But we do preach the church year. We write sermon series that fit into the church year. When I write a series, there is always a gospel reading and generally it is an epistle

reading, though it might be a Psalm. We usually have only two readings, not three, because we do preach longer.

(Do you find it harder to find the stewardship emphasis from the OT as opposed to the NT?) No. I am also very intentional about preaching the OT. Because I am concerned about Biblical illiteracy. Cherry-picking verses to make you feel good on Facebook. So, I am very intentional about preaching from the OT also. To me it is God's Word – either way because OT and NT are both God's Word.

Worship is the most important thing we do every week. It is where we touch more lives than any other time during the week. It doesn't matter pre or post COVID. I touch more lives during the time of worship. God draws us to worship. Then we find the preaching task.

As the pastor preaches on Christian stewardship, what are some ways of preaching on Christian stewardship that have not worked as he expected and why does he see them as not working?

Simple human nature. They are not listening. I think that the only way to answer that is when it came from a personal bent of mine rather than being God's Word. I am pounding the pulpit because I have a thing against gossip or whatever. I will say because I don't preach a lot of sermons on giving, I preach Christian stewardship, I don't get ignored that much. That is a hot button with people.

(Have you preached on giving that it did/did not work?) No. This is the way I preach. I think that because stewardship is regularly mentioned through the course of the year, this is what we do, this is how we give. I often will say it this way, if you can give 10% you should, if you can give more, you should do that too. I remind them that they don't have to give 10%, for they have been freed from the law, praise the Lord! But in any case, because I think it is a part of our DNA, we need to hear about it. Christian living is who we are.

Our congregation pre-COVID was running \$100,000 ahead of budget. And I am only preaching on giving once a year. They are hearing the good news and responding to it. Why? It is part of our DNA for Christian living.

What is the one driving thing that helps you to preach on Christian stewardship?

Matthew 16:24, “Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.” Of course, He calls us to faith. He also calls us to follow.

You should preach Christian stewardship. It should be a regular practice. If 2/3 of the New Testament has Christian living in it, why shouldn't we be preaching it?

Some think you should only preach about the Gospel and sit down. Let the Gospel work. Tell them about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and sit down.

I think you can make a case the New Testament also presents sanctification. If Paul gives directions, if Peter gave direction, if James gives direction, James certainly gave direction on Christian living, then so should we. We are just the followers, following in the paths of the apostles and should do the same thing.

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