

Today. Tomorrow. Together.
Stewardship Sunday
November 22, 2015
By John LeCompte

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

I learned that I would be giving this talk today at our Stewardship meeting in September when Darcey informed me that he had asked my wife if I would speak and that she had graciously said yes. After 22 years of marriage I have learned....to do as I am told...after all a happy Wife is a happy life.

From the Gospel of Luke

“He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Why would Jesus praise a woman for giving away everything she has to the church? Isn't such an act foolish, irresponsible? This gospel gets to the heart of stewardship. Christian stewardship is not just about money. Jesus looks at the heart, not the hand, the giver...not the gift.

Our theme this year is Today, Tomorrow, Together.

Today we must look after

Tomorrow we must plan for

All of this we must do **together**

Today....we must look after

And old minister friend of mine, said we are closest to god when we experience extreme joy or extreme pain. We have experienced the later this year at St. Simon's with the loss of our Stewardship Chairperson, Heather Osler. She was an inspiration and driving force here at St. Simon's, and while she lived a full life and now is in glory, we who are left will miss her terribly. Our prayers go out to Derek and the rest of her family.

In researching this talk I came across a parable similar to the widow's mite told in Hinduism. I think Heather would have liked this so I would like to share it with you all now:

One evening a Sannyasi (a kind of Hindu priest) was just getting ready to sleep under a tree when he was approached by a villager who came running up to him asking that he give him a precious stone. “What stone” the Sannyasi asked? “Lord Shiva appeared to me in a dream last night and told me that if I came to this place at dusk tonight a Sannyasi would give me a precious stone that would make me unbelievably rich. The Sannyasi rummaged in his pack for a moment and, smiling, said, Lord Shiva probably meant this one. I found it in the forest today and you certainly can have it. The villager gazed at the stone in wonder. It was as large as his fist and, even in the fading light, it was filled with luminosity. He took it and walked away. But, that night he couldn't sleep. He was deeply troubled. The next morning at dawn he rushed back to the Sannyasi, and thrust the diamond back into his hands. “I don't want it” he said. “What I want is whatever you have that makes it possible for you to give it away so easily.”

This story really spoke to me about stewardship, the kind of belief in god and caring for his own that is there in us all.

Stewardship is a spiritual principle based on the Word of God. It recognizes God as the Owner of all things, and man as responsible for his use of these things in keeping with God's divine purpose. Last year in our stewardship letter, Lynda asked "what will you do with the abundance god has given you." In the New Testament the words "steward" and "stewardship" signify "House management." As Heather would say "We need to get and Keep our HOUSE in Order" "as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10)

We as good stewards must continually strive to use our time, talents, and treasures for the glory of god, and be good stewards of the abundance that god has given us. God created all things and retains sovereignty over all.

2 Corinthians 9:7 "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. " Like the window and the Sannyasi, let us be joyful in our giving and be good stewards of the abundance of time, talent, and treasure that god has given us. Money is important and we Christians use it, for our own lives and for our programs and for the good works of St Simons. Let us not forget the words of Matthew 6:21 "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

Tomorrow we must plan for:

We have made some great strides in this regard with Heather's help. With her help we were able to launch the Sustainability Fund of St. Simon's. A fund whose sole purpose is to provide for the future of St. Simon's and ensure that this community of believers will be here for many generations to carry out the work of God.

God created us to be stewards of His creation. Stewards don't own what is entrusted into their care; they simply manage it on behalf of the owner.

*For it [the kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, **who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.** To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, '**Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.**' His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.**' Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, '**Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.**' His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.**' And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, '**Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.**' But his master answered and said to him, '**You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.**' For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.*

Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:14-30)

This parable emphasizes that the role of a steward is that of a slave who manages his owner's assets for his master's benefit. We must be good stewards of the abundance God has given us, and make sure that we continue to build on the work that Heather started. WE must continue to plan for the future, through building our sustainability fund and being good disciples and growing the membership of our community. We have several new members on our committee who are going to help us look at new ways to do this in the future.

We must do it together...

...Our vision is to be caring people committed to building community, growing with God and serving the world through Christ's example.

Hebrews 12:24-25 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”

1 Timothy 5:1-2 Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren

Dena and I have been so blessed to be a part of this community and share in the joys and the struggles. We were fortunate to have our son join the mission trip this year to Belize. He has grown into a very fine young man and being part of this church has played a large part in that. Our daughter Ava is participating in Sunday school and growing into a fine young person. We are so thankful to have the help of St. Simon's to provide a moral compass for our children.

We have, and will continue to face joy and hardships. Together we can achieve our goals of looking after today and planning for tomorrow. However, together is the key. Let us be **greedy** for stewardship and put his will above our own.

Like the Widow and the Sannyasi : Let us be cheerful givers...

2nd Corinthians 9:6-7

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Amen.