

# Faithful Stewardship in Uncertain Times

As we continue to navigate our way through these unusual pandemic days, we have been encouraging one another as a congregation to remain faithful stewards of God's good gifts to us.

We read in the first two chapters of Genesis that when God created humanity, you and me, God made us "stewards"—people who are in charge of caring for all of God's creation in loving ways that will help lead to its flourishing. As children of God, we are all called to the task of stewardship—not of being in charge of this world, but rather being responsible for taking care of what ultimately belongs to God.

I've been reflecting quite a bit on what it means for us to be good stewards in these strange days. I'd like to commend to you a fourfold concept of how we are called to stewardship:

First, we are called to be good stewards of our faith. As Lutherans, we have a faith firmly planted in the hope of the power of resurrection (even in a world that sees the reality of crucifixion). We trust that even when pain and suffering surround us, our God is with us—walking alongside us, hurting, living, breathing, and dying with us.

We trust that we have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, which means that we can cling to hope even in the darkest moments of our life. There are a multitude of ways for us to steward our faith—through daily prayer, through reading our Bibles, through talking about God with our family and friends. How might you nourish your relationship with God in these strange days?

Second, as stewards of God's created order, we are called to be good stewards of our own hearts, relationships, and lives. As we face anxiety, fear, isolation, depression, and disappointment these days, how might we take time to care for ourselves?

When Jesus was asked in Matthew 22 about the most important commandments, he answered: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." We learn from Jesus that our ability to care for others is rooted in our ability to care for ourselves. Each day as you rise, take a moment to ask yourself—how is my heart today? How might I find ways to nourish my body and my relationships with others?

Third, we are called to be good stewards of the life and health of our neighbor. The fifth commandment reminds us that "you shall not murder", but Martin Luther told us that this means that "we are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs."

If we take this commandment seriously, it means that we are called to think carefully about how we foster safety and health in these pandemic days. Wearing masks, social distancing, and

trusting the word of those whose vocation it is to advise us on these issues (the CDC, the WHO), is an act of faith and good stewardship. Though it might be uncomfortable for us, though we might not like the suggestions, following these orders is what it looks like to care for our neighbor and live in response to the fifth commandment.

And finally, we are called to be good stewards of the tangible stuff of this world—particularly our financial resources and the environment. In the book of Deuteronomy, God tells the people of Israel that they are to tithe—to give 10% of what they have for the sake of the ministries and feeding of their community. We, as people of God, give and live generously because we know that our resources ultimately belong to God for the good of the world.

We have been blessed by our congregation's faithfulness during these pandemic days. We have also received a grant through the provisions of the Cares Act that will help us to keep all of our employees paid as usual, whether or not they can work as usual due to the impact of COVID-19. In addition, we have created new opportunities for you to share what you have for the sake of the world—you can now give online, through our website, by clicking on the "Give" tab.

As the scope of our ministries increase during these unusual days, I ask you to continue to reflect on the gifts that God has given you, and how you might give and live generously for the sake of the world and the church. We are church together, and we all have a part to play in the flourishing of our community!

I pray that God would bless and keep you, dear ones, and I look forward to when we might see one another again. Take good care of God's good gifts.

In Christ's perfect love that casts out fear,

*Pastor Marissa*