

SMLC Stewardship Minute - October 20th - 2019

We heard 'What Stewardship Is' from Tom. We heard that 'God Owns Everything' from Louise. We heard that 'God Delegates Responsibility' from John. Today, from me, you are going to hear 'We Steward Resources'.

The verb *to steward* means: to manage or look after *another's* property. God delegates to us the responsibility to steward or look after God's property, which is - everything: riches, time, talents, strengths, vocations, families, churches, communities, houses, leisure activities, in short, our lives.

In the Bible, God and the prophets, Jesus and the evangelists teach us:

...not to love money for itself and to be content with what we have, but also to work hard and take care of our families and communities financially.

...to provide for our families wisely and frugally and as well as we can, but not to hoard our wealth or covet our neighbors' belongings.

...to be accepting of help when we need it, but not to exploit the generosity of others.

We steward our many resources:

...to save for the future while trusting in God,

...to give cheerfully and bountifully from whatever resources we have,

...and to help others with our talents and time and gifts.

For, as Paul writes in the second letter to the Corinthians:

"whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

Books of all sorts have always been a source of guidance for living my life. St. Matthew's Evening Readers read *Jane Eyre* this fall, which I had read as a teenager and remembered only as a good story. Now, reading it as an adult, I found guidance in the main character's thoughts about her life.

Jane, an abused orphan, a neglected student, a governess in a mysterious house, bravely fled her post when she felt her principles might be compromised. Destitute, cold, and hungry, she was found by three siblings who nursed her and loved her. Jane had found a family she never thought she would have, and when she later inherited a fortune, shared it equally with her loved ones.

Now giving away three quarters of one's assets is over the top generous and might only happen in a rather gothic nineteenth century novel, but Jane's reasons show a sense of justice and a heart of gratitude.

-Jane lamented that she would now never meet her uncle, the inheritance-giver.

-Jane thought the money was "a grand boon" and "independence would be glorious" but knew also that finding her family was a "Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch! This was wealth indeed!"

-Jane found that sharing the inheritance with those who had saved her life fulfilled her sense of justice and stated: "Now the wealth did not weigh on me: now it was not a mere bequest of coin,-it was a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment."

-And echoing Apostle Paul's exhortation, Jane says: "Good fortune opens the hand as well as the heart wonderfully; and to give somewhat when we have largely received, is but to afford a vent to the unusual ebullition of the sensations."

Or in 21st century English and going back to our definition of *to steward*: BEING GENEROUS WITH WHAT GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN US, WILL BRING US GREAT AND EXTRAORDINARY JOY.