

Time, Talent, and Treasure

Genesis 2:18-24
Psalm 128
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-12

A few weeks ago, I preached on the importance of us not going to extremes regarding our belief in various forms of demonic manifestations. I quoted C.S. Lewis, who encouraged us to remain in the middle ground. Today, as we continue our celebration of Stewardship Month, I want to apply that same encouragement to our life of stewardship. There are two popular extremes in stewardship that we should avoid. They can be best summarized by the old statistic—10% of the people do 90% of the work.

One of my seminary professors once told me, “The Church eats her own.” At the time, I didn’t understand him, but now I do. There are numerous animals that eat their own offspring. After bringing new life into the world, these animals consume their children. All too often, the Church, the Bride of Christ does something similar—she brings new spiritual life into the world only to snuff it out through exhausting her children. So many of those 10% (who do 90% of the stewardship in the Church) get burned out and exhausted while carrying the weight of the other 90%. These are the two extremes we must avoid in our stewardship—offering too much and not offering enough.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus made it very clear that discipleship means offering ourselves for others. He stated—

Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

-Mark 10:43-45

Our discipleship requires that we be people of service and we call the fullness of this service, “stewardship.” It is generally defined in terms of time, talent, and treasure. And, it is in these three areas that we must avoid the two extremes of offering nothing or offering too much. What does the middle ground, the proper balance, look like in practical terms regarding the gifts of our time, talent, and treasure?

The word “time,” when used in the context of stewardship, usually refers to the amount of time we spend in prayer. This is where our stewardship begins—in prayerful relationship with Christ. What is the appropriate amount of time for us to spend in prayer each day or week? Well, that is going to differ for each person and each vocation.

The expectation that the seminary had for all of us candidates for priesthood was that we would spend a non-negotiable hour a day in prayer. After ten years of priesthood, I can confidently say that it is impossible to be a priest without spending an hour a day in prayer! However, an hour a day in prayer might not be possible for a married person or someone with children. The most important thing is that we have a definitive commitment to the Lord about how much time we will spend in prayer with Him each day. Married couples can then add an additional 10-15 minutes a day in prayer with one another. We can all add at least an hour a week in communal prayer each weekend. Such habits of prayer are wonderful ways for us to be good stewards of our time and help us to avoid the extremes of avoiding prayer or extreme binges of inconsistent prayer.

When we talk about “talent” in stewardship, we are referring to the time, energy, and expertise that we bring to serving other people. In the document, “The Model Parish,”¹ it is suggested that every parishioner give an average of one hour of his or her time every week to serving the parish. Once again, it is important that we avoid the extremes of never serving in any capacity within the parish and the community and becoming burned out from doing the same service year after year. One of the blessings of an annual stewardship month is that we will have an opportunity each year to renew or change our commitment to the time, talent, and treasure we offer to God. I will say more about that in just a little while.



Lastly, stewardship includes our financial contribution. You do not hear me talk about money very often. However, I would be ignoring an important component of stewardship if I didn’t say something about it today. As with time and talent, we are each invited to the middle ground when offering of our treasure, our financial resources. This middle ground is defined by Sacred Scripture as 10% of our income. Our bishop recently helped us better understand that 10% by describing tithing as a person giving 5% of one’s income to the parish, 1% to the Diocese, and 4% to other charities. In this way, it is not a matter of how much we give, but rather, that our giving is sacrificial and reflects the reality that our resources are not our own, they are God’s and we are His stewards.

In the last five years, many people at Christ the King have been very generous in tithing. However, we are currently in a position that we might not be able to make budget this year. Donations have been noticeably down this year. While it would be easy to contribute this to the economic downturn, the reality is that giving generally increases during times of economic struggle. My hope is that our stewardship month gives all of us an opportunity to reevaluate our tithing and renew our commitment to giving to God the first fruits of what we’ve received. I would like to particularly challenge those families who do not regularly give to make a commitment to supporting the ministries and services we offer at CTK by tithing.

After Mass today, we are going to walk together in procession over to the parish center, where we will all have an opportunity to casually browse through the ministry booths that are set up and learn more about the service opportunities that we offer at Christ the King and throughout the broader River Valley community. There will also be great food there and an opportunity for fellowship. I want to thank all of the people who helped put the ministry fair together. I know that it will help all of us to better discern this week how God is inviting us to be good stewards of our talent this coming year. Also, I invite us this week to discern how God is calling us to be good stewards of our time and treasure, as well.

Next week, at all the Masses, we will take time after the Scripture readings to renew our commitment to the stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure by filling out a commitment form. You will notice that there will not be opportunities to sign up for various ministries during the Ministry Fair. This was done purposefully so that we can all make our commitment to God during the Mass next week.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:

-  Spending some time in prayer, begin discerning what specific level of commitment God is inviting you to make this year regarding your time (prayer), talent (service), and treasure (finances to the parish, Diocese, and other organizations).
-  Read Matthew 20:1-15 and reflect on the *amazing* generosity of God!

¹ This document can be found on our Diocesan website at www.dolr.org/images/ppp_modelparish.pdf