




FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Devotional

Being Good Stewards of God’s Wealth

Pastor Heiple 

His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” – Matthew 25:21

Today we conclude our study of Question 141 of the *Larger Catechism*, which asks, “What are the duties required in the Eighth Commandment?” The final part of the answer states, “The duties required in the Eighth Commandment are... avoiding unnecessary law-suits, and suretiship, or other like engagements; and an endeavour, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.” Last time we looked at our duty to work for a living. This morning, we consider our obligation to be good stewards of the wealth we have earned.

Of everything that you own, what possession do you prize the most? Is it something that you worked very hard to earn, or is it a precious family heirloom handed down to you through multiple generations? We all have our favorite “stuff” that we value and treasure for various reasons. This can be a good thing in our lives: when we are entrusted with an item that puts us in touch with our heritage so that we honor our fathers and mothers, or when we work very hard for something that enables us to appreciate and enjoy God’s good earth in some fashion. In the process of waiting and saving we learn patience and the value of hard work. And when we are finally able to purchase that item or are old enough to be entrusted with that inheritance, we receive it with thanksgiving to God and a real sense of accomplishment in our hearts. What I wanted, waited, or worked for is mine now. Yet, here we should remember that no thing in this world is ultimately ours. Whether it is currently “mine” or “yours,” it all belongs to God who has entrusted it to us for a very short while. Therefore, we are responsible to God to be good stewards of what is ultimately His “stuff.” That means we should do all that we can (lawfully) to procure, preserve, and further our own and others’ estates for the glory of God.

Today’s *Catechism* gives us very valuable instruction in how to be good stewards of God’s stuff. First, we are reminded of our duty to avoid unnecessary lawsuits. Some Christians wrongly interpret 1 Cor. 6:1-8 as forbidding Christians from initiating all lawsuits for any reason. That is not what this text is saying. Paul’s concern is the poor witness Christians are giving to unbelievers when they take one another to court for frivolous reasons, but we do have the right to seek justice and fair judgment when we believe we have been wronged. In fact, in this passage Paul advocates not that Christians cannot seek a fair judgment, but that for these lesser matters they should find a fellow believer to be the judge (v. 5). Thus, for the sake of our witness before the world and for the sake of being good stewards of what God has given to us and to others, we should try to avoid lawsuits where possible. But when it is a question of justice or when the glory of God and the good of His people are at stake, then it may be necessary to go to court.

A similar duty is to not unnecessarily become surety for another. To become surety means to be legally liable for another person’s debt. The book of Proverbs repeatedly warns against the unwise practice of taking on the debt of a “stranger.” Such a dubious act legally allows the stranger to steal from you with impunity which could bring you into bondage and put your hard earned wealth at risk. When we recall that this is actually putting God’s wealth at risk, we more easily see the reason for this prohibition. Even as people who say “It’s my body to do with as I want” are wrong, so also those who claim, “It’s my money to do with as I want.” As stated above, nothing we possess is ultimately ours. Every created thing belongs to God. He providentially gives to us what we call our possessions, and He has established an order whereby we work for what He gives so that in a sense we earn it. But our “earning” our pay from others creatures does not mean that it no longer belongs to our Creator God. God wants us to learn the value of hard work. He wants us to have dominion over the creation and make use of our gifts in order to produce more, for His glory and for our and others’ good. But we should always remember that what we have belongs to God, in order that we would be thankful, humble, generous, and that we would take care of and seek to glorify God with what He has entrusted to us of His own possessions. May God grant that we would be good stewards of His good gifts!



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THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

Sunday Morning • February 11, 2024



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The Celebration of Worship



Prelude & Welcome

Reflection & Preparation

Psalm 27:1, 13-14

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Call to Worship

Psalm 118

Leader

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

All

God is the LORD, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

Leader

You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You.

All

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Invocation

Hymn

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken · Trinity 345

Scripture Reading

Romans 4:1-5, 13; Gal. 3:5-9, 16-18; James 2:14-24

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness... For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham... Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe-- and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

Song

How High and How Wide · Insert

Worship in Giving

*Offertory**Why Do You Worry?* · Pepper Choplin

Based on Matthew 6:26-29 2023© Lorenz Publishing Co., a div. of The Lorenz Corp.

Hymn

Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right · Trinity 108

Pastoral Prayer

Children ages 5-8 may be dismissed for Kids’ Bible College

Sermon

The Binding of Isaac · Dr. Ray E. Heiple, Jr.*Genesis 22:1-24 NKJV*

- ¹ Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”
- ² Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”
- ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.
- ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.
- ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”
- ⁶ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.
- ⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

- ⁸ And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.
- ⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.
- ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
- ¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.”
- ¹² And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”
- ¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.
- ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.”
- ¹⁵ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,
- ¹⁶ and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son--
- ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.
- ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Notes

Hymn

O Rejoice in the Lord · Trinity 132

Benediction & Postlude

Following the service, the elders will be available to pray with you at the front of the sanctuary.