

Defining Stewardship

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When Adam opened his eyes in Eden, he didn't have a fig leaf to his name. Yet God had given him a voice, fingers, toes, and a smile fashioned after God's own grin. The Lord invited Adam into a mission to take these gifts and use them to "work and keep" creation alongside God in the garden. We know Adam offered his voice, naming the beasts and birds. We can imagine he stooped to bury seeds in soil. Maybe he saw his reflection in a stream and recognized that he belonged to God — how could he not when their images were the same? — and so did everything around him.

If Adam, in some small moment before the fall, realized this and set out with enthusiasm to care for it alongside our God, then **Adam grasped the profound meaning of stewardship.**

Many of us have more than fig leaves to our name. Even after we fell into sin, God never stopped being generous — what does it mean to have a God who stitched Adam and Eve clothes as they were sent from the garden, and who likewise has blessed us? Every bit of our time, talent, treasure, and testimony is a gift from God to his people.

As stewards of his resources, we are those called to take stock, recognizing that God has given us all that we have and all that we are with love and with purpose. Our minds, bodies, voices, bank accounts, cars, homes, families — all are gifts from God to be folded into his story. Our voices may be lifted in praise, our homes and hearts opened to those in need, and our resources dedicated to the building up of his kingdom.

To even be included in this mission is a mark of God's grace. What Adam realized too late about stewardship is that its greatest barrier is greed. He and Eve wanted for themselves what was set aside for God alone. Sin entered into this world because in greed, our first parents wrapped their hands tightly around what belonged to God.

How often do we find ourselves wrapping our hands around what belongs to God and refusing to let go? That crafty old serpent still whispers that we should live for ourselves, keep what is in our possession, but God has always been more generous than that. In the waters of baptism, he quiets that old serpent and restores

the mission of stewardship. We are invited to work and to care for all that belongs to God, walking alongside him as he cares for his creation, his children, and his Church, just as Adam and Eve first walked alongside him in the garden. Just as they first dedicated everything they had to the task, we are invited to do the same.

God wants all of us to be part of the story of stewardship — from the infant whose baptism is a testimony to God's grace, to the widow whose two coins ensure that the church is able to buy Bibles for the next generation, to the man willing to shovel snow on Sunday morning.

We walk into this mission with bold faith in our Lord. Because he has been generous with us, he will be generous with what he will do with us too. Being a steward is being unafraid to dedicate all that we are and all that we have to working and taking care of God's world because we know how this ends: with mountains breaking into song, with the hungry filled with good things, with the dead being raised to new life.

It ends where it began — where we began — in the hands of our God.

