



The Good Steward

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The Offering is for God – Recently I read a cute story about a little boy who followed the usher out of church every Sunday. The usher finally asked the little boy why he was following him. The little boy stated, “Father said the offering is for God and I want to see you give it to Him.”

Are we as aware of our offering as that little boy? When we give, do we remember that the ‘offering is for God’? What if we were actually able to put our offering directly into God’s hands? Would that make a difference in the amount we give or in our attitude toward giving?

Whatever percentage our giving is, always remember to give... and to give the first fruits to God. He has promised to take care of us...after all. God loves us so much that He even knows the number of hairs on our head. May your blessings be too numerous to count. Jean LaJesse, Stewardship Manager



Greed

The first weekend of August, the gospel reading was from Luke where we heard about the rich man who decided to tear down his over-flowing barns and build bigger ones. I happened to be at St. Michael’s in Mahanomen that weekend and Fr. Rick Lambert shared the following story:

Joe and Mike met on the street. Joe looked rather glum so Mike stopped him and asked what was wrong. Joe said, “Three weeks ago my uncle died and left me \$35,000.” “Wow, you should be happy about that,” said Mike. “Well, that’s not the half of it,” said Joe. “Two weeks ago, my cousin died and left me \$90,000.” “That’s great,” said Mike. “I’m not finished,” said Joe. “Last week, my grandfather died and left me a million dollars.” “Fantastic, then why do you look so glum?” Mike asked. Joe said, “This week...nothing.”

Unbelievable! Is that how we are? Are we so greedy that we are not ever happy with all the blessings we already have? What treasures are you and I storing up in heaven? JL

To Be a Christian Steward – a summary of the US Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Stewardship – “What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly is one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.”



Small Potatoes! I read a true story recently about potato farming in Northern China many centuries ago. I want to tell you about what happened when they planted their potato crop because the Bible speaks very clearly about their “planting principle.”

Apparently they had always planted their potatoes, not from seeds, but like my gramps used to do when I was just a little boy and we lived on a small farm. They cut up the previous year’s potato crop into small pieces and planted these in the soil instead of planting seeds, as they did for every other vegetable. They did this year after year, until at one point someone got the bright idea of sorting out all of the very smallest potatoes (my gramps called them “runts”) each year, and they used them to plant with. They would sort out all the large potatoes, save those to eat, and cut up and plant all of the “runts.” Of course, they didn’t know anything about genetics, but the problem as you might guess, is that after several years of doing this they found that all the potatoes they grew were very small. By keeping the biggest ones to eat and planting only the smallest, soon all they were able to grow was small potatoes!

As you look out on any congregation on a given Sunday, consider what kind of portion of their treasure some of the folks are returning to the Lord. Let’s face it! There are some mighty small potatoes being planted! Do you really think God will be fooled! Don’t bet on it. The only thing that grows from small potatoes is small potatoes! It does no good to scold, chastise, or belittle these folks. God loves them very much – as much as the large planters, be sure of that. But oh, how I wish I could just walk out of the pulpit on a given Sunday and go sit amongst the people. I would love to sit next to those who are planting small potatoes with their treasure, put my arm around their shoulders, and gently and lovingly tell them, “Say, now, why don’t you ‘cash in’ on God’s promise and plant bigger potatoes? You will be amazed at the crop you will harvest!”

In several places, the Bible suggests planting the tithe; ten percent of your income. Some folks simply don’t believe they can afford to do that. Frankly, that is their business. That is strictly between them and their Lord. And in case you dare to infringe on that private matter and “tell it to them like it is,” you have no right to do that. The very most you can do is hold God’s promise before them. Beyond that, it is a very private matter, because, you see, when we gather before the Lord, the giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas 1:17), He is not going to ask or inquire of you, “Tell me now, how much did the Smith’s or the Does return to me of their treasure?” No! He is only going to ask you to give account for yourself. Period!

So, when we talk about stewardship in terms of planting, the place to begin asking “Are you planting ‘small potatoes?’” is to begin by asking yourself. For you see, the principle is simple and the promise is clear and sure: “Remember that the person who plants small seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop.” Pastor JAS, Wisconsin