

Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
November 22, 2015
Sermon (Stewardship)

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

In this month as we address stewardship, we have heard good sermons reminding us that stewardship concerns not just our money but our time and our talent as well. I would like to suggest that the very concept of stewardship should make us focus on ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ.

We know that each of us is a unique creation of God. Psalm 139 reveals that God formed us while we were still in our mother's womb. All that we are as human beings is a gift of God and nothing for which we can take credit. The prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul both use the metaphor of a potter and clay to describe human beings as God's workmanship. God is the potter and makes of us the earthen or clay vessels that He chooses to make.

If I accept the fact that God has created me, I then should ask, "What does God expect of me?" What God expects of any of us may be summed up in the simple answer: He expects us to be good stewards. In giving Adam charge of the Garden of Eden, God expected him to be a good steward. Jesus repeatedly emphasized stewardship throughout his teachings and parables. In Luke 12 he defines a good steward as one who is seeking the kingdom of God and as one whose heart is treasuring the things in life that are truly important. In Matthew 25 God pronounces the words "Well done" to the servant who has exercised good stewardship over that which he was given. A good steward then is a follower of Christ who endeavors each day to serve God, to walk with God, and to please and glorify God. All of us here this morning, by the way, are practicing good stewardship. Each of us was given the gift of a Sunday morning and chose to use this time by coming to church and participating in the liturgy.

I would like to share an interesting piece of history. In 1937 an incredible discovery was made in the basement of Yale University Library when a manuscript of several thousand pages of poetry was uncovered. The poet was a resident of 17th century colonial Massachusetts. Edward Taylor, a Harvard graduate, served the frontier town of Westfield, Massachusetts, as a minister and a physician for more than fifty years. He also privately wrote beautiful poetry. I will read you one short poem from this collection. In the poem Mr. Taylor is asking God to examine him to see if he is worth anything. He compares himself to an early American coin called an "angel" because it was stamped with the image of an angel. Here is the poem:

"Meditation Six"

Am I thy gold? Or purse, Lord, for thy wealth;
Whether in mine or mint refined for thee?
I'm counted so, but count me o'er thyself,
Lest gold washt face, and brass in heart I be.
I fear my touchstone touches when I try
Me, and my counted gold too overly.

Am I new minted by thy stamp indeed?
Mine eyes are dim, I cannot clearly see.
Be thou my spectacles that I may read
Thine image and inscription stamp on me.
If thy bright image do upon me stand,
I am a golden angel in thy hand.

Lord, make my soul thy plate: thine image bright
Within the circle of the same enfoil.
And on its brims in golden letters write
Thy superscription in an holy style.
Then I shall be thy money, thou my hoard:
Let me thy Angel be, be thou my Lord.

In comparing himself to a coin, Mr. Taylor is asking God, “Am I of value to you?” As a coin reflects the image engraved on it, he is asking, “Does your image shine forth in me?” In other words, Mr. Taylor is asking God, “Am I being a good steward?”

When we are good stewards, God’s presence is apparent in our lives. When we are good stewards, we happily embrace opportunities to be of service to God, beginning in our church. A few weeks ago, Salma recited for us a list of ways in which we can become involved in our church. The good news is that in that list there are opportunities for everyone – cooks, teachers, repairmen, cleaners, decorators, and on and on the list extended.

Beyond the walls of this church, good stewards cannot be deaf to the cries for help around the world. CNN news recently projected that in less than a decade, in less than the next ten years, there may be no Christians whatsoever in the Middle East. Good stewards should be involved in the ministries of their church and should also look for other ways to promote the work of Christ. His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph has posted a letter on the Archdiocese website regarding the Syrian Relief Program and ways in which Christians can help. I encourage you to read it.

To conclude, good stewards are people engaged in the ministry efforts of their church in obedience to the commands of Christ. I believe that deep within our hearts all of us want to hear those most blessed words of Christ when we stand before Him: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Those are the words that Christ addresses to His good stewards.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Larry Cameron
Stewardship Committee Member