**Here’s Your Stewardship ‘Toolbox’ for August 2017!**

Rev. Rob Blezard

Stewardship of Life Institute

rob@stewardshipoflife.org

Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action will help develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity in your congregation. This kit is designed to help get you there!

Here’s what you’ll find below:

[**-Stewardship Snippets**](#Snippets)**:** Put a “Stewardship Snippet” every week in your Sunday bulletin! It’s a quote from the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection. Just cut and paste!

[**-Newsletter Articles**](#Newsletter_Articles)**:** Publish something in your newsletter every month on money and faith, or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste! Two to choose from.

[**-Links to Resources**](#Links_to_Resources)**:** You’ll find links to resources on the Web:

**-The “think it” resource** – Something thoughtful, insightful, to get your mind turning and your soul fired up. Share it with your leadership, or use it for a temple talk.

**-The “teach it” resource** – Your youth and adult classes should be able to tackle a bible study on stewardship, or wrestle with some of the issues. The teach it resource will guide you.

**-The “do it” resource** – Talk, as they say, is cheap, so put your stewardship efforts into high gear. An action resource will give you some ideas.

**-The “preach it” resource** – Check out the weekly Lectionary Reflection written by Lower Susquehanna Synod pastor and synod staff person Sharron Blezard.

[**-General Resource Websites**](#Links_to_Resources): – these are places you can go for great ideas!

**Stewardship Snippets**

*Copy and paste into your bulletin!
Source: Rob Blezard*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**August 6, 2017** (9th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A; Proper 13)

*“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.“* **–Isaiah 55:2**

Isaiah gets to the heart of every stewardship issue – the value of all that we do, all that we have, and how we spend our lives. Many of us fritter away our time, money and energy on silly things that really don’t matter and don’t satisfy. Way too many of us eat junk food, feed ourselves on junk entertainment and work at jobs we hate. Being a good steward means choosing things that are physically, spiritually and mentally healthful to us.

***Stewardship Snippet***

**August 13, 2017** (10th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A; Proper 14)

*Jesus said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"* **–Matthew 14:29-31**

Good stewards strive to use all our gifts wisely and boldly for the good of God’s people. But if anyone tells you it’s easy to live without fear and doubt, remember Peter, who succumbed to both even as he walked on water in the Lord’s presence. Or Elijah, who clung to his fear even after the Almighty revealed himself to him. Since fear and doubt as much a part of discipleship as faith and trust, we do well to expect them, and pray to God for strength and endurance.

***Stewardship Snippet***

**August 20, 2017** (11th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A; Proper 15)

*Jesus said, “Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."* **–Matthew 15:17-20**

“Watch your mouth,” your parent might have told you growing up. Jesus would agree, because as he teaches above, words reveal the thoughts of your heart. What do your words say about you? If you find your words bitter, foul, insulting, complaining or cynical, what can you do? Pray to God for a renewed heart.

***Stewardship Snippet***

**August 27, 2017** (12th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 16)

*[Paul writes:] I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.***–Romans 12:1-8**

How healthy are you? Paul reminds us that we need to be stewards of our physical bodies and do our best to keep them holy and acceptable to God. Is your diet healthful? Do you consume alcohol only in moderation? Do you exercise? Get enough sleep? Do you smoke? What can you do to be a better steward of your health?

**Newsletter articles**

*Just copy and paste into your newsletter!*

***Article #1****: Source: Rob Blezard, Stewardship of Life Institute*

Stewardship 101

The problem (and power) of money

*[Jesus told the rich man] “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. … [Jesus taught the disciples,] “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”* ***–Mark 10:21b-22, 25***

During a study on this passage several years ago, a man of means asked, “Why does Jesus hate money?” This man’s family saw money as a good thing, and he couldn’t understand why Jesus seemingly speaks negatively of wealth again and again. For instance, there’s the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21), or Jesus’ insistence that we cannot love God and wealth (Matthew 6:24).

In fact, Jesus talks about money more than nearly anything else, and it’s often in terms that are hard for us comfortable Americans to hear. Jesus repeatedly warns about the corrupting influence of money on our lives, minds, and souls. He tells it plain in Matthew 6:21: where our treasure is, our hearts are also. (Most of us think it’s the other way around!)

Wealth poses deep spiritual risks for the people of God. From Jesus’ teachings we know that money has the power to curve us inward on ourselves, obsessed with what we own and how we can accumulate more. Jesus calls disciples to love God with all our being and to love our neighbor as ourselves, but money can get in the way.

That was the issue with the rich man in Mark 10:17-27. The “one thing” he lacks, Jesus tells him, can be satisfied by selling his possessions and giving away the proceeds. Generous giving would break the bond that money has over him and re-center him on loving God and loving neighbor.

Generosity is the spiritual prescription Jesus gives the rich man, and it’s the one for us, too.

When we talk about financial stewardship in the church, it’s often about how our giving benefits the congregation and helps “meet the budget.” Instead, we might teach how generous giving benefits us by breaking the chains that money has on our hearts and souls.

By giving generously we can help the church, our neighbor *and* ourselves. We can learn what it is to be free to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

*--Rob Blezard*

*Copyright © 2017, Rev. Robert Blezard. Used by permission. Pastor Blezard works as content editor for* [*www.stewardshipoflife.org*](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org)*. and serves as an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA.*

**Article #2** – Source: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
(http://blogs.lcms.org/tag/stewardship-resources)

As we give, so we live

Winston Churchill reportedly said that “we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” According to Churchill then, our lives are defined less by what we have gotten, and more by what we give away.

Our Lord’s life is defined in this way. He gave completely of Himself for us. He became man for us. He taught the truth of God’s Word. He healed those with many and various diseases. He died the death that we deserve because of sin. He gave of Himself in order to save us from sin, death, and hell. And so, it is that by giving completely of Himself, He got for Himself us, making us citizens of His eternal kingdom by grace.

As it was for Jesus, so it is also for us. We get more from giving than we do from simply getting. For giving softens our hearts and frees us from the grip which the worries of this world and making a living has on us. For when we are singularly focused on making a living, we are singularly focused on what we get. That mindset begins to bleed into all areas of our lives—our relationships with friends and family, with neighbors and coworkers, and with the Lord. It shifts our focus from asking the question—How can I be a friend, family member, neighbor, and servant to others—to asking the question—what have they done for me lately. We become more selfish instead of selfless.

But when we give, we do not have less, we have more because when we give we join in the bond of friendship and family, the bond of service to those around us out of love for them. And love is the fulfillment of the Law. It is the nature of God Himself, for God is Love. Thus, we are reflecting the divine nature. As Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

*From the Stewardship Ministry of the Lutheran Church –Missouri Synod. Used by permission.*

**Links to resources**

**The “think it” resource**

[**For the Love of Money: Confessions of a Wealth Addict**](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/opinion/sunday/for-the-love-of-money.html) -- Sam Polk had it all — a job on Wall Street, a job that paid millions, all the stuff he could buy — but still he wanted more. That was before he had a moment of insight and walked away from it all. His insight? He was addicted to money the way alcoholics are addicted to booze and drug addicts to narcotics. He describes his struggle in this *New York Times* article.

**The “teach it” resource**

[**‘Bible Bucks’ Can Teach Kids Stewardship**](http://www.umcom.org/learn/fun-ministry-ideas-to-teach-kids-stewardship) -- Many parents give their children an allowance for doing chores because it helps to build discipline. Allowance money can go numerous places, some spiritually rewarding and others detrimental. It is important for the church to help teach stewardship to children. One fun way to do this is to use “Bible Bucks.” This article from the United Methodist Church will explain how.

**The “do it” resource**

[**Invest in Stewardship Ministry with Retirees**](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/default.aspx?m=6667&post=4923) -- Membership in Mainline congregations is aging, and the trend shows no signs of stopping. That presents not only challenges but also opportunities when it comes to stewardship, says Charles R. Lane, a popular stewardship speaker, author and consultant. He offers great advice in these essays for Luther Seminary’s Center for Stewardship Leaders. [**Click here or above**](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/default.aspx?m=6667&post=4923) for Part 1. [**Click here**](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/default.aspx?m=6667&post=4924) for Part 2.

**The “preach it” resource**

[**Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org) – Sharron Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod pastor, takes a look at stewardship implications in the week’s Scripture lessons.

**General Stewardship Resource Websites**

[**Stewardship of Life Institute**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/)– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources on stewardship in areas of congregation al finance, individual finance, discipleship, education, preaching, creation care, and more.

[**Center for Steward Leadership**](https://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website with lots of resources.

[**The ELCA Foundation**](https://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation) has resources at its website, as well as consultants who can meet with your congregational leaders to develop ideas and plans for long-term financial stability.

[**Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship**](http://www.lss-elca.org/resources/stewardship/) – You’ll find a selected group of great resources.

-end-