

Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship Conversations



Session Three – Number Five

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Talking about the Mission of the Congregation

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

St. Paul points out the relationship the Corinthians have to God. They belong to Him. “Servants of Christ,” Paul writes, and “stewards of God.”

A servant in Scripture is one who assists a higher master. His will is only that of his master.

A steward in Scripture is often a slave who is entrusted with property of the master which the steward is to administer. The steward must also give an account of his administration.

- *What is entrusted to the servants and stewards in the above text?*
- *How do the terms “servant” and “steward” apply to this congregation?*

Rolf Jacobson, assistant professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, writes “According to St. Paul, a congregation—its building and grounds, its finances and assets, its people and programs, its mission and ministry—do not belong to us. Rather, each Christian congregation belongs to God. God is the owner. We are merely the stewards; we are the servants or slaves who have responsibility for the Master’s household, for the Master’s mission, for the Master’s ministry...Paul’s point, in part, was that the ministry of the church belongs neither to the members of a specific Christian community nor does the church’s ministry belong to competing members or factions of the clergy (in Paul’s case, not to Apollos, Cephas or Paul).” From “Stewards of God’s Mysteries: Stewarding as a model of Congregational Ministry.” *Word and Word* (Summer 2006)

- *Why is it so important for members of the congregation (and the congregation as a whole) to see themselves as stewards and not owners when it comes to mission?*

Jacobson writes, “People—both clergy and the laity—often tend to think about a congregation as ‘theirs.’ Even the way we refer to

congregations betrays this ownership model. Pastors will casually refer to ‘my congregation’ or ‘my ministry.’ Likewise, the laity will speak of ‘our congregation’ or ‘my congregation,’ as if a congregation is either a possession that belongs to us or a business that we corporately own. It is true, of course, that the use of the pronouns ‘my’ and ‘our’ can signal a positive sense of commitment and belonging. Yet, in the experience of many pastors and committed Christians, the language can also provide the sense that the congregation belongs to us and exists first and foremost to meet our needs.”

- *How can a misunderstanding of this ownership issue be a detriment to God’s mission?*
- *How can all the members of the congregation be encouraged and helped to carry out their stewardship responsibilities when it comes to mission?*

It is God’s mission!

It is God’s mission as the LCMS document *The Theology of Mission* states, “Mission begins in the heart of God and expresses his great love for the world. It is the Lord’s gracious initiative and ongoing activity to save a world incapable of saving itself.” (Page 5)

We are responsible for being good stewards of what God has entrusted to us for His mission.

God calls us to be involved in His mission as stewards. “As members of the one body of Christ, the ‘one holy Christian and apostolic Church’ (Nicene Creed), we work together in God’s mission. We know that outside the church—that is, ‘where Christ is not preached’ (Large Catechism II, 45)—there is no salvation.” *The Theology of Mission* (Page 23)

Discussion Questions:

- *How is our congregation involved as steward in God’s mission in our community, in our nation, and in our world?*
- *What plans does our congregation have to increase that involvement?*
- *Why is this important and urgent?*

Prayer:

Close this stewardship conversation about mission with a prayer that the congregation would come to an even greater understanding of its identity as steward of God’s mission and that there would be even more involvement in His mission.

