

Stewardship Handbook

Redeemer Lutheran Church and School
Capital Campaign
Winter – 2013



Giving to God: Guilt or Joy?

An Authentically Lutheran
Approach to Stewardship

The Purpose of This Pamphlet

Redeemer Lutheran Church and School is embarking on a campaign to raise funds to pay down the mortgage, make some mission-related capital improvements, and grow our outreach to the community. We have already taken the effort to make sure this campaign is based on spiritual renewal. Now it is time to understand what the Bible teaches about how we give to God. Each member is asked to read this pamphlet and begin to pray and think about personal stewardship commitment.

Giving to God: Guilt or Joy?

Look at the crucifix in the picture on the right. Does it conjure up feelings of guilt or joy for you? It might do both. That is okay.



As Christians, we sometimes feel guilt for our many sins, but we also feel great joy in knowing that Christ has paid the price for them. The motivation for Biblical stewardship is a healthy combination of both guilt and joy. The challenge is understanding how to have the right mix of each.

Guilt Works, but God Wants Cheerful Givers

Guilt is a great motivator. We could raise a lot more money in offerings if the pastor used a lot more guilt in his preaching and teaching. Most religious people have a well-developed conscience, so telling them how much they need to sacrifice for God usually works.

The problem with this approach is that God does not want His children to be unhappy or feel guilty. God wants us to give cheerfully, joyfully. Consider this passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

A guilty giver is not a cheerful giver but instead is a begrudging giver.

Unfortunately, that is not the end of the story on guilt. There is a place for the preaching of guilt, sacrifice, and the Law as we shall see in the next section.

God's Word Is a Two-Edged Sword of Guilt and Joy

Here is what the author of Hebrews says about God's Word:

For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
Hebrews 4:12

One edge of the sword is the Law of God, and the other edge of the sword is the Gospel of God. You probably remember this teaching of Law and Gospel from your confirmation class.

God uses His Word of Law to show us our sin, and He uses His Word of Gospel to show us our Savior. They are both truly God's Word.

The First Edge of the Sword – The Law

God speaks His Word of Law to show us our sin. Notice what Paul says in Romans:

For by works of the Law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the Law comes knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20

If we did not know about our sin, we would never know that we needed to be forgiven.

Looking at Jesus hanging on the cross conjures up guilt. After all, He had to come to earth, be born of a woman, be beaten and lashed, and finally die on a cross all because of our sin. A religion without the proper guilt demanded of the Law is a religion that ignores a major emphasis of the Bible – God's accusing Word of Law. But that is not God's final word. The sword has a second edge, and it is the better edge. It is God's comforting Word of the Gospel.

The Second and Better Edge of the Sword – The Gospel

Once we recognize our sin, we are able to confess it. The confession of our sin is followed up by God's proper work - the work He loves to do - forgiving us so that we might be His children. This passage clearly demonstrates this two-fold work of God's Word culminating in Him taking away our sins.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

Through the sacrifice of His Son God totally forgets our sins. The Bible uses the metaphor of the sea to convince us that our sins are forever lost. The prophet Micah (7:9) says that God has cast our sins into the depths of the sea where they can never be retrieved.



Let's not forget our focus. We have reviewed God's two-fold Word so that we might sort out "giving from guilt" from "giving joyfully."

How the Sword of the Word Motivates Giving

God's Word of Gospel is what grows our faith. God has attached His Word of Gospel to the means of grace. (We talked about that in the "Means of Grace" booklet you received a few weeks ago.) So the more we get those means of grace into our lives (preaching, absolution, baptism, the Lord's Supper), the stronger our faith will be. In regards to

stewardship and giving offerings, this converts into cheerful givers. But just as we learned above, we do not start with the Gospel. We start with the Law, and it has some harsh things to say about the sin in our hearts and how it likes to selfishly hoard things for itself. Jesus says this:

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Matthew 6:24

Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. Luke 12:33

Solomon and Isaiah have this to say:

He who loves money will not be satisfied. Ecclesiastes 5:10

Why do you spend your money on that which does not satisfy? Isaiah 55:2

These words are spoken to us not to leave us in despair but to lead us to God's better Word of Gospel. God forgives us our sin of selfishness and even more, He promises to take care of us. Consider the infamous words of the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want... Psalm 23:1

God will take care of all our needs. If He would not spare His own Son but give him freely for us into death on the cross, then certainly He will give us all things that we need.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! Luke 12:24

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

So God has forgiven us, made us heirs to great blessings in heaven someday, and promised to care for all our needs. These promises of His Gospel free us up to be joyful givers.

Conclusion

Our members, school families, and visitors cross many bridges to come to Redeemer, whether year round or for a season. Bridges take us places. Bridges allow us to move past or over challenging terrain. Over time our bridges also need care and maintenance.

Redeemer Lutheran Church and School is facing some challenging terrain to cross. Christ and His cross are able to bridge any terrain, no matter how rough the waves or how much the tide surges.

God chooses each of us to be stewards of His resources at Redeemer. We have some mission-related capital improvements to address, a debt-repayment bridge to cross that will free up future offerings, and a wealth of mission opportunities to span. All these will help us increase support for our mission of “reaching out into the community to be the best for the community.”

Before we cross this stewardship bridge, God is challenging us and supporting us in greater commitment to His Word and Sacraments. With this increased faith, let's cross this bridge to the future...together.

