



Sunday, November 4, 2012

OFFICE of STEWARDSHIP

Blessed to Be a Blessing *Stewardship Reflection Series*

Proper 26B ♦ Mark 12:28-34

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind and with all your strength.*



My kids make fun of me for taking so long to get into a swimming pool. When I was their age, I too used to race toward the water with t-shirt, flip flops, and towel flying as I launched myself into the deep end. Let's just say I've gotten less exuberant in my old(er) age. Similarly, when it comes to stewardship, we sometimes dip a toe into the water rather than taking the plunge. It's safer that way, we tell ourselves, yet God wants all of us, not a portion or a percentage or a piece. That's the essence of the Shema, the Hebrew prayer that forms the basis of Jesus' Greatest Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength."

The word "all" binds together this ancient prayer. Jesus bids us to love God with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul and all our strength. This isn't easy, of course, as there are lots of distractions: kids get sick, things get crazy at work, we have needy friends, it's time to get to the grocery store, American Idol is on. Loving God with all your heart and mind and soul doesn't mean ignoring the practical realities of life. It means taking the time to be aware of God's presence not just on Sunday morning, not just when it's convenient, but in the very midst of life.

In the context of faithful stewardship, this doesn't mean God wants all our money. The annual stewardship campaign isn't a glorified back alley stick-up. Rather God wants all of us – heart, mind, and soul – and when we give our all to God, our financial resources naturally return to the God from whom all blessings flow.

Returning a portion of what we have is a recognition that we are merely temporary stewards of our resources. They were in the world long before we arrived and will be there long after we're gone. You may already be fully immersed in this concept or perhaps you've merely stuck a toe into the waters of stewardship or maybe you're up to your waist and contemplating whether to dive in. Most of us are somewhere in the middle as God beckons us into ever-deepening relationship.



Ido eventually get into the pool. When the boys complain I'm taking "forever" I remind them I have a lot more surface area than they do. Taking the slow route can be painful, but in time I find myself just as fully immersed as those who took the initial plunge. However we arrive at being fully immersed in stewardship, God rejoices.

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Reflection Questions

- How is giving a natural expression of loving God ?
- Is your giving an act of worship that takes you beyond duty to delight?
- How is proportional giving a means of immersing yourself in your baptism?