

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**The Spirit of Stewardship (Part 1)**  
**Genesis 1:27-31: October 13, 2013**  
**Pastor Rick Fossum**

I'm going to start by saying a word that you might not like to hear? Are you ready? Brace yourself! The word is: *Stewardship*! There, I said it! Let's get all the bad vibes out of our system. Shake off those bad *stewardship* vibes. Come on, let's get it out of our systems. Repeat after me, "**Stewardship! Do we have to?**" Now, say, "**Stewardship! Oh, no!**" Finally, let's *boo and hiss Stewardship* a bit. Do you feel better?

Well, this might come as a shock to some of you, but *stewardship* is not a dirty word. It's not something we should avoid talking about. In fact, it's a good word. We are all stewards. Would you say that with me? "**We are all stewards.**"

Several times a week, a young Mexican boy crossed the U.S. border. He'd always cross the border riding a bicycle and he'd always have two bags of sand slung over his shoulder. The guards were suspicious. They thought he was smuggling some kind of contraband in those two sand bags. Again and again, they made him dump out the sand, but they couldn't find anything. Each time, they had to let him cross the border.

One day, one of the border guards ran into the young boy at a restaurant and started talking to him. He convinced the boy, with the help of a twenty-dollar bill, to tell him what he was smuggling into the country. He promised that he wouldn't press charges against him if he did.

The young boy said, "**Bicycles! I'm smuggling bicycles into your country!**"

This story reminds me of *stewardship*. It's easy to miss the main point of *Stewardship*. Money is often the first and only word that comes to mind whenever we hear that word. Just mention the word money and you can almost see people start squirming and moving around and looking for the nearest exit.

Contrary to what some of you might be thinking, *stewardship* is not just about money. Yes, money is a part of *stewardship*, but there's more. *Stewardship* is about the heart. It's about our relationship with God and God's created world.

Today, is the first message in a series of three that I'm calling *The Spirit of Stewardship*. During the next three weeks we'll talk about being stewards of God's creation, stewards of our time and talents, and finally, stewards of our resources.

Just to make sure we're on the same page, I'd like to re-read our passage from Genesis. Listen for the *stewardship* theme.

**“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”**

Did you hear it? The Bible is clear: We are stewards. We are in charge. We are responsible for the plants and animals, the birds and the bees, the air we breathe and the water we drink. If not us, who?

One day a man prayed, **"Lord, If I had some extra money, I'd give it to you, but I have just enough to support myself and my family and some other things I can't live without."** Later, the man prayed again, **"Lord, If I had some extra time, I'd give it to you. But, I'm pretty busy with my job, my family and I have to have some fun."** Later, he prayed some more, **"Lord, if I had a talent or two I'd give them to you. But, I'm not a talented person. I can't do much. Sorry."**

God heard the man's prayers and decided to give the man some extra money, some extra time and some talents.

And then God waited, and waited, and waited. The man did nothing with the extra money, time and talents. So, after a while, God took them all back.

Later, God heard the man pray, **"Lord, If I only had some extra money, I'd give it to you. Lord, If I only had some extra time, I'd give it to you. Lord, If I only I had some talent, I'd give it to you."**

And God said, **"Oh, be quiet!"**

We have all we need to be good stewards. The big question for us is this: **“Do we want to be good stewards? Are we willing to be good stewards?”** It's a choice we need to make.

In Psalms 24:1, the Psalmist writes, **“The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”**

In Psalms 104:10-13 we hear these words, **“You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.”**

The Bible is full of *stewardship* passages and they all say the same thing: God made it and put us in charge. We don't own this world, not even our own little corner of it. It all belongs to God. God isn't interested in our deeds and mortgages. When you and I leave this world, it will still belong to God.

In Leviticus, God put it this way, **“The land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners here.”**

Or, to put it another way, **“you and I are guests here, and not owners!”**

William Sloan Coffin, famous 20<sup>th</sup> century preacher, was right when he said, **“A new doctrine of stewardship is needed to replace our old doctrines of ownership.”**

From our back yards to the badlands of western North Dakota, from the air we breathe to the water we drink, from the energy we consume to the cars we drive, we are responsible to God. We are stewards. Whether we 're good stewards or not, is entirely up to us.

**“I have made you responsible,”** God said. **“My creation is in your hands. Use it. Enjoy it, but take care of it. Make it better and not worse. It will have to last a long, long time.”**

Tony and Harvey were good friends, but they hadn't seen each other for quite a few years. Tony lived in Seattle. Harvey lived on a farm in North Dakota.

One day, Harvey traveled to Seattle to see his old friend.

Tony showed Harvey all the sights of the big city. He took him to the top of the *Space Needle*. Harvey had never seen anything like that before. He'd been to the top of his silo once to fix a hole, but that's another story. They went to the *Pacific Science Center*. They went to a concert, a museum and a professional baseball game.

One day, Tony took Harvey to one of his favorite spots, The *Pike Street Market*. The *Pike Street Market* is a busy place. It's wall to wall people. People are playing music and reading poetry. People are buying things and selling things and kids are running around yelling and laughing and having fun. It's a very busy and noisy place.

Harvey was fascinated. He had never seen anything like it in North Dakota. All of a sudden Harvey stopped. **"Listen,"** he said to Tony.

**"Listen to what?"** Tony replied. **"I can't hear anything with all the noise."**

Again, Harvey said, **"Listen!"** And then he looked around and said, **"It's a cricket!"**

Tony laughed. **"How can you hear a cricket in all this noise?"** **"Besides,"** he said, **"I've never seen a cricket in Seattle."**

Harvey bent down toward a nearby planter and picked up a little cricket. **"See, it's a cricket."** He put the cricket back in the planter.

**"That's amazing,"** Tony said. **"How did you do that?"**

Harvey replied, **"People hear what they want to hear. Watch this."** He took three quarters out his pocket and dropped them in the middle of the *Pike Street Market*. In the middle of all the people buying and selling things. In the middle of all the yelling and screaming. Plink! Plink! Plink! The three quarters fell to the ground. Suddenly, the music stopped. The kids stopped yelling and screaming. The people stopped being noisy and busy and they all looked on the ground toward the quarters.

**"See,"** Harvey said, **"People hear what they want to hear. People hear what's important to them."**

*Stewardship! Stewardship! Stewardship!* It's our job. From the oldest of us to the youngest, from the richest of us to the poorest, its whom God wants us to be. In fact, you might say, it's why we're here. We're stewards. Whether we're good ones or not-so-good is up to us.