

Rev. Heather A. Riggs
Oak Grove UMC
October 8, 2017
The Mission: Good Stewards

1 Peter 4:1-11

⁴Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), ²so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God. ³You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry.

⁴They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme. ⁵But they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.

⁷The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.

⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

(Slide 1: The Mission)

Throughout this month we're focusing on the Mission of the Church. We do a lot of great ministry here at Oak Grove. So much that sometimes we can get so caught up in doing and doing and doing, that we kind of lose our focus on what really matters.

So at the beginning of the summer I called together a small group to take a look at all the things we do as a church and categorize them into Ministry Areas so that we could work together more effectively. To help us focus, We asked, "what are the BIG biblical ideas that describe the essential work of the church?"

Here's what we came up with:

(Slide 2: House Graphic)

Love God. Based on Deuteronomy 6: 5

Love One Another. Based on John 13:34

Meet Together. Based on Hebrews 10:24&25

Reach Out to care for the least of these. Based on Matthew 25:40

Good Stewards. Based on 1 Peter 4:10

Essentially, the mission of the Church is love.

Loving God,

loving one another,

meeting together to stay focused on love,

Reaching out to love our neighbors through service and

being good stewards of the resources God has provided us so that we can love all the more.

This week's focus is: Good Stewardship, based on 1 Peter 4:10

(Slide 3: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.")

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

Often when we talk about stewardship we're talking about money, and while how we use our money is an important part of stewardship, I appreciate how the author of 1 Peter brings us back to the broad definition of stewardship from Genesis 1 -- that God has given us everything:

Our lives, our abilities and skills

The earth and all of the things in our lives

And then God asks us to be good stewards of everything.

Stewardship is an old word -- it comes from the profession of being a steward -- Essentially person who has been put in charge of caring for and managing someone else's household business.

For example, while the king was busy ruling the country, the steward would take care of the castle.

The author of 1 Peter is using this idea of being a steward to tell the early Christians that now that they are choosing to be a part of the Kingdom of God, they have a job to do.

We each have a responsibility to be good managers of the gifts and grace of God that we have been entrusted with.

And what we should do with the “manifold grace” we have received is to use whatever abilities, whatever time, whatever resources we have available to serve one another.

So if you have an ability to teach,
or use social media effectively,
or are good with crafting budgets and balancing books,
or are good at figuring out policies
or fixing things
or actually enjoy recruiting people

Good Stewardship includes offering our gifts to serve one another in the church.

And if making money is one of your gifts then you can give that too.

The more time I spend as a part of the church, the more I come to believe that all the skills and abilities and resources and time to do the things that God actually wants us to do here and now, are either already here -- hidden among us, or are hidden out in the community inside of people who just don't know, yet, that God is calling them to be a part of this church.

Good stewardship isn't about asking for more and more and more, Good Stewardship is about making responsible use of what God has already given us.

(Slide 4: Good Stewards house segment)

Here at Oak Grove United Methodist Church, God has given us a lot. We have many people who give generously, offering their time, skills and resources. You really are Good Stewards of the gifts God has given you.

But I really want to focus on the administrative tasks of Stewardship for this mission area.

The work of finance -- the stewardship of our money, is about crafting a yearly budget that pays our bills and funds ministry and then making sure that our bills do get paid on time and we have proper accountability for our funds.

The work of Personnel -- the stewardship of being a good employer -- involves making sure we follow labor laws, pay fair wages, craft good personnel policy, and do the work of hiring and supporting our hard working and faithful staff who help us organize for ministry.

Managing our Building and Grounds -- the stewardship of our facilities -- which involves keeping the lights on and the building and grounds in good repair and cleanliness so that we can use our building as a tool for ministry.

The work of Nominations -- The stewardship of our abilities -- which involves recruiting people to share their gifts of leadership and service for ministry.

The work of Communications -- The stewardship of information and scheduling -- so that we are aware of our opportunities for ministry, fellowship and service.

And the work of special projects -- like the Rummage Sale and the Auction which provide opportunities for service, community outreach, fellowship, and fundraising.

And this Mission Area overlaps with everything. Because our Budget, our Facility, our Personnel, our Lay Leadership, our Communications, and our Special Projects affect and are affected by all the other ministry we do.

Good administration... Good Stewardship of the resources, skills, abilities, and facilities of the church, makes the church more effective at doing good ministry. Good administration is holy work!

Have you ever thought of cleaning and bookkeeping as holy before?

Our joint Charge Conference, that's our annual meeting, is coming up on Sunday, October 29 at 4pm. And it will be here, at Oak Grove with the good folks of St Paul's joining us.

We'll worship together, celebrate the year of ministry, and have a conversation with our District Superintendent (that's my boss), about planning for a vibrant future for our churches in the Portland area.

We'll be doing good stewardship together.

I would like to ask you to do 3 things.

(Slide 5: 3 things)

1. **Be a part of the conversation.** Come to the charge conference. Be a part of celebrating all of the good ministry we have done in this past year and be a part of dreaming of a vibrant future.
2. **Pray.** Continue to Pray for our church. And ask God what gifts you are being called to share with the church in this season in your life.
3. Then, respond to God's call and **serve**. We could use another person on Personnel and on finance. Or maybe God is whispering to your heart about something else... I'd love to help you discern what that something else is.

We can't do everything. Not in our personal lives or as a church. But I am convinced that we can do everything that God is calling us to do at this time and in this place.

If we're willing to be Good Stewards of the gifts and graces that God has given us.

Children's Message: Third Grade Bible Presentation

(props: Bibles and signed bookplates, 3rd grade kids)

When you were baptized the church made you a promise that we would nurture and teach you how to be a Christian. As part of keeping that promise we give each 3rd grader a bible of your very own, so that as you learn to read, you can read the stories yourself.

This is a pretty wild book!

There's stories of people doing things they shouldn't have done, like murder and theft. There's also stories of people doing good things, helping one another and sharing. But most of all the Bible is a collection of stories about God's relationship with people. And even though we do a lot of crazy stuff, God still loves us and helps us.

I have a challenge for you: Read the book of Luke -- that's a story of Jesus' life -- it starts with Christmas and ends with Easter -- it's a good story.

Come tell me what surprised you about the story and I will give you a cross necklace.

Let's pray a prayer of blessing for these bibles:

God Bless these bibles that those who read them that they may know you more. Amen.

