

Contemplating Stewardship¹ for NL

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Source: EaND Stewardship Team

Put "Contemplating Stewardship" in your Sunday bulletin every week! A brief reflection on stewardship following the Narrative Lectionary readings will keep the stewardship conversation vibrant. Just cut and paste! This month's reflections are offered by Rev. Erika Buller, Associate Pastor at Bethel Lutheran, Wahpeton, ND.

Contemplating Stewardship: Need for a Generous God

November 4th, 2018 (P26: Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost, "Elisha Heals Naaman")
"Now I know that there is no God in all of the earth except in Israel." 2 Kings 5:15a

Naaman is an important man. In our story, he had a rather high opinion of himself and nearly left when he was snubbed by the prophet, Elisha, who would not speak to him face to face. How dare he? Did Elisha not know Naaman was a very important man? Naaman almost missed his cure for thinking of how he had been slighted. I wonder, do we get in our own way when it comes to the great gifts God is lavishly providing for us? God, the Gracious Giver, showers grace and abundance on us each and every day—do we miss seeing these gifts for our own independence, our self-reliance, or our high opinions of ourselves? At the end of Naaman's story, he has recognized the graciousness of the gift of healing along with recognizing his need of a generous God.

Contemplating Stewardship: What is required?

November 11th, 2018 (P27: Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, "Micah")
"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?" Micah 6:6

What is it that we can offer to our God? What kind of offering would please our God? What would show just how thankful we are for God's continued faithfulness? Maybe it's not what we think—we receive the grace and mercy of God as pure gift. There is nothing we could offer to save ourselves. But there are offerings which will benefit our neighbors in need. What does God require of us; but to be about the work of loving mercy, doing acts of justice, showing loving kindness to a hurting world. Our offering to our gracious God is to walk, act, love, and work with generosity and love for the sake of our neighbor and for the world God loves.

¹Inspired by the "Stewardship Snippet" written by Rev. Rob Blezard, Assistant to the Bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod. Further resources available at <http://www.lss-elca.org/resources/stewardship/>

Contemplating Stewardship: Peace on Earth

November 18th, 2018 (P28: Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, “Swords into Plowshares”)

“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” Isaiah 2:4

Advent is just around the corner and I don't know about you, but I am waiting for the Prince of Peace to come and to reign. Our world seems full of discord, violence, and division. Could the angels singing in Christmas skies really be telling the truth when they proclaim “Peace on earth, goodwill to men”? Peace is a gift God gives to the world. And boy, do we need it. Isaiah's story for today is about war and for what might seem like an impossible peace. We serve a God who does impossible things—who makes wars to cease, who makes peace out of discord, who takes that which would destroy and trades them for new life instead. Our God makes all things new. There is nothing beyond the scope of God's redemption. And today, I ache, I pray, for peace.

Contemplating Stewardship: True Potential

November 25th, 2018 (Christ the King Sunday, “Jeremiah's Temple Sermon”)

“Before I formed in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah 1:5

Jeremiah is not too keen to be charged to be a prophet to the most high God. Upon being called to this station, Jeremiah is quick with his “but I can't...” kind of statement. He claims he does not know how to speak, and is just a boy. God works with raw materials, forming them, forming us, to do good works, equipping and sending them to serve in many ways. For Jeremiah, he was called to speak words of truth to centers of power. God reaches beyond the limits we place on ourselves. Where we see our faults, God sees our true potential. Where we see weakness, God forms into places of strength. Jeremiah heard God's call and responded in faith. May we have ears to hear God's call and the openness to be transformed as we use our gifts, our energies, and even our weakness to love and serve the neighbor.