

If you had been born in 1917 your life expectancy would have been much lower than it is today. The average length of life for a man was 48 years in 1917. For a woman it was better, but still only 54 years old. The life expectancy of someone born this year, 2017, is 75 for men and 80 for women. This is in the United States. In many countries of the world the life expectancy is much lower.

Even in the United States, family income and access to medical care plays a big part of the life expectancy age. In poorer counties of the United States the difference can be 20 years lower than in the richest counties.

YOU are fortunate to be alive today. You are fortunate to be alive today. You are fortunate to live in America. In America, you have many educational opportunities. You have freedom to choose what kind of career to pursue. In this part of Maryland you have access to lots of hospitals, clinics, doctors, and specialists.

You are fortunate to have the income you do. There are differing income levels in our church. Some families have two adults working. Some families have only one person working. And some are living on fixed retirement incomes. Some have no trouble paying their bills. Others have occasional trouble paying bills. But even these are better off than many people out in our community who regularly have to choose between paying for rent, food, medicine, or electricity. You may not be as well off as you would like to be, but you are much better off than many other local people.

If you are a Christian, you are blessed in spiritual things as well. You are blessed to have been born after the death and resurrection of Jesus. You are blessed to have been born in a time and place where there are many Christians who have the freedom to share the good news and are doing so. That is how you heard the Gospel and became a Christian.

You have a lot to be thankful for. You should stop... regularly... and give God thanks for these things. But there should be more to your gratitude than simply giving thanks.

A Christian response to all of your blessings must include that you:

1. Recognize the source of your blessings.

You are more than fortunate to have the life you have. You are more than fortunate to have the resources available to you. It was not luck that provided these things. You are alive because of God. God has provided you with the resources you enjoy. God deserves the credit for all of the benefits of being you.

Moses taught the Israelites that...

Deut 8:18a "God gives you the power to gain wealth."

This is true for all of us. The particular here is wealth. But the principle is that God gives you the power to live and build a life. God gives you the power to do everything you do. It is God who enables you to live the life you are living. God is responsible for all the

blessings you enjoy. It is God who provides you the power to live this life. That power is your health, your education, your skills and talents, the time and place of your birth, and much more.

Yes, you can work hard, apply yourself, and discipline yourself, and you SHOULD. But God deserves the credit for the power you have to work hard at something. God has provided the resources you have that enable you to gain wealth, to seek an education, to play sports, or to do anything else. God is the ultimate source of all the good resources of your life. God is the source of your blessings.

A Christian response to these resources recognizes God as their source. The second part of a Christian response to all of your blessings is that you...

2. Recognize yourself as a steward of what God has entrusted you with.

A steward is a caretaker, someone who takes care of someone else's stuff. You are a caretaker of the blessings God has entrusted you with. These are not gifts for you to use any old way you want. Instead they are God's stuff, entrusted to you to use for His purposes. For example, your body is not yours as the following verses show.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

You were bought at a price. Jesus paid the price of your salvation. Your salvation cost someone a lot. It cost Jesus His life. That is a high price to pay for anything. Jesus gave this willingly. He did so to provide the means for our salvation.

This is the doctrine of redemption. God redeemed us, that is, He bought us back to Himself. That is the price this passage speaks of.

Consequently Jesus purchased us with His blood. The other Bible picture of this is that Jesus paid the ransom for our souls. We had been kidnapped by sin. Jesus paid the ransom to free us from sin. As such our lives now belong to Jesus.

Christian, you do not belong to you. If you think of your life as belonging to you, you are sinning. And that sin leads you to commit many others.

Instead of owning ourselves, we are stewards of our bodies. We are stewards of our lives. Article 13 of the Baptist Faith and Message is about this stewardship. In this article you will see the word temporal. The word temporal refers to physical things or things of earth.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Gen. 14:20; Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 8:18; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 6:1-4,19-21; Matt. 19:21; Matt. 23:23; Matt. 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; Luke 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 5:1-11; Acts 17:24-25; Acts 20:35; Rom. 6:6-22; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; 2 Cor. 12:15; Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19

As the creator of the heavens and the earth, everything belongs to God. God created everything by His own power and for His own purposes. He created us for Himself. He did not create us for us. Therefore, He does not owe us anything. He does not owe us health, or food, or family, or protection, or education, or a job, or long life, or heaven when we die. Every part of creation belongs to God. He created all things for His own purposes.

He can do whatever He wants with it. God can do whatever He wants to with us. He could torture us and make us suffer. I have a relative who grew up in a farm house. There were mice often in the house. They had a cat to catch the mice. The cat would chase down a mouse and put a paw on top of the mouse, but not kill it. Then the cat would release the mouse, which would take off running. The cat would chase after it and catch it again. The cat would do this over and over, just toying with the mouse, until eventually the cat would kill it.

God could do that with us. He could use us as play things, disregarding our fears and hurts. The reason God does not treat us this way is because He is good and righteous and just and loving and kind and full of grace towards us.

The point is that everything belongs to God. We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to God. And those of us who are Christians doubly belong to God because Jesus bought us back from sin with His life.

God owns us. God owns our lives, our bodies, our health, our education, our money, and all of our possessions. We are not really owners of these things. Instead, we are caretakers of them. We are stewards.

The third part of a Christian response to all of your blessings is that you...

3. Use them for God's purposes.

Let me illustrate this with an item from the current news. One of the issues in the news lately has been the law that went into effect June 9th about financial advisers. The law says that people advising you on investing your retirement savings are now "**fiduciaries**". This term means they are to always give you advice that is in YOUR best interest, even if it means less money for them.

The way many retirement plans have been working is the financial advisers get money every time you make changes to your account. If you sell or buy stock, they get a cut, a percentage, a fee. So they make money even if you lose money. That is a conflict of interest. The new law was to change this and tilt things in your favor. Now, as fiduciaries, if they fail to serve your best interests they will be in violation of the law and can face penalties.

Of course, the financial advisers have objected strongly to such a law, which shows how much it is needed. They want what is in their best interest, not in ours. Personally, I

want fiduciaries advising me. I want them working for my best financial interests, not their own.

God wants the same thing. God expects us to act as fiduciaries and use the resources He has entrusted to us for His benefit. He wants us to use them to bring Him glory. He expects us to use them for His best interests. They are not ours to do with whatever we want.

Anyone who is entrusted with someone else's stuff will answer for it. **Christian, as a steward you will give an accounting for God's stuff.** One day, God will expect an accounting from us for how we used His stuff.

1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV) Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

God will hold you accountable for the use of His resources. Your reward in heaven is not just based on obeying the commands of Jesus, but also on your stewardship. You will have to give an accounting for how you spent your life, your health, your money, your time, etc.

So for whose purposes are you living the life God has entrusted to you? What is the focus of your life? Are you the focus or is God the focus? Are you living for a purpose you have created or for God's purposes? Are you serving Jesus or self? Asking about life goals can help you determine the answer.

When I counsel those who want to get married I ask them about their long term goals. One young man told me his goal in life was to make as much money as possible. And he wanted this money because of what he wanted to buy for himself. He wanted the money for the kind of lifestyle it would enable him to live. He wanted the money because that was the status symbol in his family. His dad made lots of money. His older siblings were making good money. His self concept, his self worth, were tied to how much money he could make. His goal was not a Christian goal, not surprising since he was not a Christian.

But there are Christians who are living for the same kind of goals. They live for self instead of living for Jesus. They are poor stewards of the life God has entrusted to them. Are you one of them?

Jesus did not die on a cross so you could spend His blessings on yourself, your family, even your church. He has a world full of people out there who need to hear the gospel. He has entrusted you with resources to help accomplish that.

The Christian life is one of stewardship. Are you proving to be a faithful steward?

Today, recognize Him as the source of your blessings. Recognize your stewardship to live these blessings for His purposes. There is a prayer pledge at the end of the sermon insert in your bulletin. You can make use of that this week.

Christians, I encourage you to pray your stewardship. If all you do is listen to sermons and not change the way you are living, you are likely resisting what Jesus is saying to

you. I don't expect He speaks to every person every week. But I expect that He is speaking through me to every person regularly. If you think all He wants of you is to listen to a sermon and walk out of here unchanged, then you have missed the point of coming in the first place.

Every week you should respond to the sermon in prayer. Every week you should consider that there is an action of obedience for you in the sermon.

Invitation:

Each of us is an individual creation of God. There is biology involved. But biology does not create a soul. God is involved with the creation of each individual. He created us each, individually, to know Him and know His love for us. He desires our love in return. He wants this so much that He sent Jesus to die for our sins. Trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and give your life to Jesus as Lord and you will be forgiven.

There is a sample prayer at the end of the sermon outline.

I AM A STEWARD, ENTRUSTED WITH GOD'S STUFF

1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV) *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

“Lord Jesus, I recognize that all I am and have is Yours. I belong to You. You are the owner and I am the steward of what you entrust to me. My life is yours. My body is yours. My health is yours. My money is yours. My possessions are yours. My future is yours. Fill me with the Holy Spirit to guide me in using all I am and have for Your purposes.

Date: _____

Signature: _____