October 2, 2020 Devotional

Let us consider the following passages from Genesis 1 and Matthew 6:

“Then God said, *“Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Genesis 1:26*

“*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Matthew 6:19-21.

We hear in this passage from Genesis a theological perspective on stewardship. As Christians we first declare the truth that God exists. We start with God. God created everything. God is the author of existence. God is the source of life. Everything is owned by God and belongs to God.

Second, we declare this truth about humankind. God made human beings in his image. We are God’s property. We are owned by God. We belong to God. Third, God appointed human beings as stewards over creation. We are God’s stewards, God’s overseers, God’s managers, God’s representatives on earth.

This passage denotes the key difference between an atheist and a believer. An atheist says there is no God. An atheist doesn’t believe in the existence of God. A believer says God is real, God exists. An atheist says: *“My life is my own. I am not accountable to anyone. I can live any way I choose.”* A believer says: *“My life is not my own. I belong to God. I am accountable to God for the way I live my life.”*

God appointed us to be stewards over creation. This means a variety of things. We are to be good managers of our lives, the way we use our time, our resources, our work, our money, our family, our individual lives. It means we are to care for the earth, to manage the earth, but not to worship the earth. God has put us in charge. We are not to practice idolatry by making idols of earthly things. We are to reserve our worship for God alone. We are to responsibly care for the earth and its resources. We are also to care for one another in the way that God cares for us. Further, we are to care for ourselves in the way God cares for us.

We hear from the Gospel of Matthew the theological perspective on stewardship as represented in the New Testament. Jesus warns us about our values, our principles, and our attitude toward material things. Jesus cautions us not to center our lives around worldly things, wealth, material possessions. Why? The reason is that we can easily fall into the trap of idolatry. Jesus says because where your treasure is, you will also find your heart.

Jesus cautions us about the temptation to love the things of the world more than we love God. Materialism is always in conflict with faith. There is an inherent danger of things, possessions, becoming such an obsession, that they possess us. They can become our masters which enslave us. They can become our gods which we bow down to and serve. We are continually tempted to give possessions our ultimate loyalty. Jesus says: *“You cannot serve two masters; you cannot serve God and wealth.”* We are to instead, store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, by using our resources on earth for God’s purpose and glory.

*“They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed.”* 1 Timothy 6:18-19.

Jesus summons us to store up treasures in heaven. What does this mean? Jesus is speaking about investing in life and in people. Jesus is speaking about generously sharing our resources with others. Human beings are continually tempted to accumulate more and more and hoard resources rather than investing them. Steward is another word for investor. A steward is an investor in God’s work. A steward is an investor in the Kingdom of God. A steward believes the future belongs to God and desires to invest in God’s future. Investing means dedicating your time, talents and resources to something that outlasts you. It means investing in something greater than you. It means sharing your resources in God’s mission in the world. It means becoming rich in good deeds and doing good. It means sharing in the work of the church, the body of Christ, in terms of its message and mission. What do you hear God saying to you about being a steward for Jesus Christ?

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel.