

Dear members and friends of St. John,

Life is a sacred trust. What do I mean by that? Well, when we realize that God has created us to accomplish the good works that He has prepared for us in advance (Eph. 2:10), then we have the perspective that God wants us to have: **He's given us this life for His purposes.**

Recognizing this, the struggle begins to lead **a God-pleasing life.** I say struggle, because our society pulls at us with all kinds of diversions which crowd our lives with things of no eternal value. And our own sinful nature will rebel against the thought that we must follow someone else's idea of what is truly important in life. On top of this, Satan and his minions are working to tempt us to turn our back on God – to walk away from God's promises to us. Now *that's* a struggle!

But we are not powerless in this battle. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and strengthens us, so that we can persevere. At the heart of perseverance is God's word and His Sacraments. He uses His means to provide us with all we need, and more – as we seek to live lives that honor Him. This leads us to understand that **God requires us to be good stewards of what He has given us.**

Good stewardship begins with the **time** we have been given. We are to honor God with faithful worship attendance. We are to set aside time for Bible study and daily devotions. If we have children (or grandchildren), we need to set aside time to help them grow in God's word. How can God continue to supply us in our struggle, if we don't do these simple things? Once equipped, we are to use our time to serve our neighbor. Examine your day. Do you spend time helping someone besides yourself or your family? God gives us vocations – relationships in the community where we can be a light to someone living in darkness. We can carry the love of Christ to others. Are we taking the time to do this?

Next, we need to be good stewards of the **talents** that God has given us. As we look at our God-given talents, we may empathize with Moses, who told God many times that he was not qualified to do what God was asking (Ex. 4). God turned Moses' excuses ("I'm not qualified," "I'm too old," "I'm too young," "I could never do that!") into faithful service. Have you been using excuses to hide from the good works that God has for you? Ben Franklin had a habit of getting up in the morning and asking himself, "What good can I do today?" At the end of each day, he supposedly asked himself, "What good have I done today?" I would change Franklin's approach slightly. Get up in the morning and ask God to help you accomplish good in the world. Make that your daily prayer. And stop coming up with excuses for not doing that good that God has planned for you!

Finally, we are to be good stewards of the **monies** that God has given us. God has blessed us with financial resources, but the decision is ours whether or not to use them for the work of the Lord. The struggle is always evident in our love of money. We're reminded that we cannot serve two masters – you cannot serve both God and money. Are you open to how God wants you to use the monies He's given you for His kingdom? The Holy Spirit will empower us to faithfully use what we have to make a difference in our church, community, and the world.

Of course, **our failure to be good stewards led Jesus to the cross, where He suffered and died for our transgressions.** Giving up everything for us, He demonstrates the love that we often lack. But we don't need to live in our past failures. God has wiped the slate clean – our past sins have been forgiven and forgotten! Empowered by this love, we can be salt and light, fruitful stewards using God's gifts to further His kingdom. Jesus said, *"If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). **Life is a sacred trust.** God has provided us with everything we need to be good and faithful stewards. May God lead us to accomplish His will. Amen.

Pastor Travis