

“Your Word—My Home” based on Colossians 3:16, 17

Many years ago my parents built a home in Detroit. It was finished before my sister and I were born, and was the first and only home I lived in up until the end of high school. After that, began a journey of lots of moves and lots of homes. I spent my junior college days at a college near Ann Arbor, MI. Then on to a Chicago suburb to finish my third and fourth years. Then onto four different apartments in Chicago, a brief time in San Francisco, then back to Chicago. And then off to western Wisconsin and a 120-acre hobby farm. And from there to four different homes or parsonages as Don I followed the itinerant system that all elders in the United Methodist Church follow—a total of 16 different places that I’ve called home for various periods of time.

One of the things I found in experiencing this many moves is that I generally didn’t have a lot of time to get real attached to any one place, except for maybe one or two. But those, I also learned to let go of, realizing later on, as I entered into the pastoral ministry, that life was less about staying in or being attached to any particular place with its accompanying comforts, but rather it was about the journey—the journey of being open to God’s call on Don’s life and my life, and being centered in a spiritual process that God was directing. And this spiritual process was about being sensitive to hearing God’s voice speaking to our hearts and then following the words of his voice with our lives.

Today is the second Sunday in our Stewardship Campaign for 2011. Last Sunday our message was about “where it all begins.” We recognized that the reason we are here today is because of the love of God. God is the one who loved the whole world, and gave his only Son to save the whole world. And we, too, are called to love the creation God has made and to give of our time, talent and treasure so that others may be saved by having the opportunity to know the love of God through Jesus Christ. As children of our God, God being the giver of all we have, we are called to be good stewards not only of the material possessions we’ve received from God, but also to be good stewards of the spiritual blessings and Good News he’s so lavishly showered on us.

So today we will take a next step to consider what identifies us as God’s stewards and helps us fulfill the stewardship to which God is calling us. Looking at today’s Scripture from Colossians we are encouraged to: “**Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.**” That’s one of our identifying characteristics as stewards of God’s gifts—each of us... has created... a generous space for God’s Word to live in our hearts—because stewards of any kind, whether they are caring for people or property, are taught how to do what they do. And we, as God’s stewards, are no different.

But how do we create a generous space for God’s Word to live in our hearts? We do it by taking time. Learning anything takes time, and learning to be God’s stewards takes time. And God’s Word is a wonderful teacher. It, first of all, *teaches us* how to see all of creation and our own individual lives as gifts from him. In Ps. 8, the writer honors God and his creation with these words: “**O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world...when I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places, what is man, that you think of him; mere man that you care for him? Yet you made him inferior only to yourself; you crown him with glory and honor.**”

And God’s Word *teaches us how to* live in a world that is always and ultimately God’s. First of all, the Scriptures teach us to Worship God. As the Psalmist writes in chap. 96: “**Sing to the Lord a new song... bless his name...Declare his glory...and his wonders among all people...O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness...**” And worship

is not only what happens on Sunday morning, but everything we do can be an act of worship to God. Secondly, the Scriptures teach us to be in Christian Fellowship with each other. Acts 2 describes the character of early Christian church this way: **“They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the sharing of the common meal, and the prayers.** Later, James 3:18 tells us that **“we can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoys its results (when) we do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.”**

Thirdly, the Scriptures teach us to let Jesus Christ be formed in us more and more and to follow him--to be his Disciples--every day. In Ephesians 4, from the Message translation, we hear these words: **“God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love--(to be) like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flows through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, (and) robust in love.”** Fourthly, the Scriptures teach us to live a life of Service. In I Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul writes: **“...there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord...The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.”** And in Galatians, Paul says to the Christians there: **“through love, be servants of one another.”**

And finally, the Scriptures teach us to be faithful caretakers of the material goods and the Good News of the Gospel that we’ve been given. The parable of The Last Judgment in Matt. 25 reminds us that sharing our goods--our food, clothing, and other things--with those who have less--it’s as if we are sharing those things with Jesus himself. And in The Message translation of Matt. 10:8, Jesus sends his disciples out on a preaching and healing mission and says to them: **“You have been treated generously, so live generously.”**

When we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, when we make God’s Word our home, creating a generous space in time for God’s Word to live in our hearts and lives, then we are identifying ourselves as God’s stewards, and receiving his power to fulfill his calling on our lives. For the Scriptures that God has given us teach all that we need to know to be faithful caretakers of God’s gifts.

May God bless and empower us all as we practice a stewardship that gives life to the bodies and souls of those around us and beyond us--as our Lord commissioned us to do. Amen.