

THE STEWARDSHIP PAPERS

One day, many years ago, my husband came home from a church meeting and informed me that not only was he now the Senior Warden of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, he had also been given the job of Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, because no one else was willing to do it. He looked very tired and his voice touched something in my heart...so, without even thinking, I heard myself offering to take the job of Stewardship Chairman off his hands. What really amazed me--other than the volunteering--was the sense of calm that surrounded me as I did so. This first paper, written on April 6, 1979, may not seem to reflect that inner peace, but it's the only one of The Stewardship Papers that seems to shout at you. All the rest of the Stewardship Papers are very peaceful in comparison. Perhaps this is appropriate because it reminds me, a bit, of John the Baptist's voice crying out in the wilderness before the peace of Jesus arrived. December 2002.

The Word

I looked up *stewardship* in the dictionary yesterday and discovered (!?)...that it comes immediately after the word *stew*! Which only goes to show how easy it is for my mind to wander...especially when looking up words in the dictionary...

But, did you know that the meaning of the word *stew* is "to boil slowly, or with a simmering heat; to seethe"?

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And that (even though the word *stewardship* sometimes brings a response of "Oh no!...Not that topic, again!) the word *stewardship* doesn't come from the word *stew*?

It comes from the words *house* and *warden* (in French, *sti* and *weard*).

A warden is a watchman.

And the key to understanding *stewardship* is in the understanding of the word *house*...and this is found in the Bible, not the dictionary.

If a person is a watchman over a house, does he watch so that only the house is safe? Does he let the thief take what is in the house, as long as the shell remains? NO! It is what is inside that is important.

"Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." [Matt. 24:42-44]

Was Jesus talking about money? Or material possessions? A "physical" house? Of course not!

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"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." [Matt. 6:19-21]

He was talking about us...and that which is "inside" of us...our faith.

Therefore, to be good stewards, we must keep watch over our faith...constantly...until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again in glory. We must not let our minds "wander"...especially when "looking up" God's Word.

(Written, April 6, 1979. Edited October 14, 2012.)