

“The Door of Transformation”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ October 27, 2024

Hebrews 9:11-14, Luke 14:15-24

Transformation is a powerful concept in the Christian life. We often think of it as something that happens when we first believe in Christ or when we experience a great spiritual moment. But transformation is a continual process, one that doesn't stop at conversion. It unfolds as we live out our faith, and one of the most profound ways this happens is through the stewardship of our resources—our time, talent, and treasure.

What we deal with the most during Stewardship time, is the struggle of “What is in it for me? What do I get out of it?” This internal debate is a strong one. Yes, we recognize that we need to do something to support the ministry of the church, but at the same time, we are being asked to give up what is most valuable to us, our time, our talents, and our treasures.

On one level, we get sermons to make us feel better about ourselves, we get a building with air conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter, we get bulletins, and music, and Christian Education for those who want it. We get all that the church offers. But if that is all we get, then we lose out on what is important in the transaction of giving our pledges and receiving what the church has to offer. What we really get is so much more.

Today, I want to talk about the "open door of transformation" that stewardship provides. When we embrace the call to be stewards, something remarkable happens—not just in the lives of those we help, but within us. Stewardship isn't just about charity; it's about spiritual growth, becoming more like Christ, and walking through a door that leads us deeper into the heart of God.

Let's begin by looking at our key passage, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Here, Paul speaks about the reconciliation that comes through Christ and how, in Him, we are new creations. He says in verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" This verse is a call to transformation. But how does stewardship fit into this? Stewardship is one of the ways we live out that new creation identity. It transforms us into the people God is calling us to be.

I once heard about a pastor who was trying to teach his congregation about tithing. He decided to use a children's sermon. He gathered the kids around the front of the church and handed one of them a dollar. Then, in front of everyone, he asked, "Now, what would you do if I gave you \$10?" The little boy, without missing a beat, said, "I'd buy a bigger piggy bank!"

The congregation erupted in laughter, but there's a bit of truth in the child's answer. It reveals how deeply ingrained the idea of accumulating wealth can be in us, even from a young age. We naturally lean toward holding on to what we have, rather than giving it away. However, stewardship calls us to look at our resources differently. It's not about hoarding; it's about using what we have for God's glory. And when we do that, it changes us.

In 2 Corinthians 5:16, Paul says, "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." Stewardship helps us shift from a worldly view of our resources—where we focus on accumulating and protecting—to a kingdom view, where we see our time, talents, and treasure as tools for God's purposes. And when we do, something profound happens inside of us. Stewardship becomes a Path to Transformation.

We often think that giving benefits others, and it does. But scripture also teaches us that giving transforms the giver. In the act of giving, something happens to our hearts. It's like exercising a muscle—each time we give, we are stretched a little further. Stewardship is a spiritual discipline that builds our faith.

When we talk about transformation, we usually think of it as internal changing how we think, feel, or act. But in the Bible, stewardship is often an outward expression of that inward change. It's an action that demonstrates our faith in God. It shows that we trust God more than we trust in our resources. And as we practice this discipline of stewardship, our hearts and minds are transformed.

Let me share another story. A few years ago, a man named John shared his testimony in a church. He had been a Christian for years but struggled with the idea of giving. He didn't mind volunteering his time here and there, but when it came to his finances, he kept a tight grip. "I worked hard for this money," he thought. "Why should I just give it away?"

But one Sunday, he felt convicted by a sermon on stewardship. So, reluctantly at first, he started giving—just a little. At first, he didn't notice much change. But over time, as he gave more, he realized that his attitude toward money was changing. It was no longer something he was anxious about. He realized that as he gave, he became more generous in other areas of his life too—he found it easier to forgive, easier to trust God, and easier to serve others. The more he gave, the more joy he experienced.

This is the power of stewardship: it unlocks something in us that leads to a greater transformation. It teaches us to rely on God, and in that reliance, we grow.

Stewardship is not just a matter of practicality; it is deeply spiritual. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Our use of resources reflects the condition of our hearts. When we cling tightly to what we have, it can indicate a lack of trust in God. But when we release our resources—we are saying to God, "I trust You with this. I trust that You will provide, and I want to use what You've given me for Your glory."

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Paul talks about how God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Stewardship is a part of that ministry. When we use our resources to further God's kingdom—whether by helping someone in need, supporting the church, or giving to missions—we are participating in God's work of reconciliation. And that participation changes us.

We begin to see the world through God's eyes. We start to notice the needs around us more clearly. We become less focused on ourselves and more focused on others. Stewardship, then, is not just about finances—it's about aligning our hearts with God's mission.

Let me close with this powerful thought. A woman named Sarah was deeply involved in her church. She attended every service, volunteered regularly, and was always willing to help. But she struggled with one thing: she felt stuck in her faith. No matter how much she did, she didn't feel like she was growing.

One day, her pastor preached a sermon on stewardship. Sarah realized that while she was giving her time, she wasn't giving her finances. She had been

holding back, afraid of losing control. But after that sermon, she decided to take a leap of faith and for the next year begin tithing to see if that made a difference in her spiritual life.

Over the next few months, something shifted in Sarah's life. As she gave financially, she found herself growing spiritually in ways she hadn't before. She experienced a new depth in her relationship with God, a sense of peace and trust that she had been missing. Sarah's giving opened a door to spiritual growth and transformation that she hadn't expected.

The door of transformation is open to all of us, but we have to walk through it. Stewardship is one of the keys that unlocks that door. When we choose to be stewards of the resources God has given us—whether it's our time, talent, or treasure—we are transformed. We become more like Christ, more generous, more trusting, and more aligned with God's heart.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that "the old has gone, the new is here!" This new life in Christ includes a new way of thinking about our resources. It's an invitation to trust God more deeply and to experience the transformation that comes through giving.

Let's embrace stewardship not just as a duty but as a spiritual discipline that opens the door to a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God. In doing so, we will not only bless others but also experience the profound transformation that God desires for each of us. Amen.