

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND PURPOSE DRIVEN STEWARDSHIP

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Some years ago, while walking the beaches of the Long Island Sound on a personal three day retreat with God and a pocket Bible, I was moved to write the following poem on the basis of Job 38:8-11.

God's Sovereignty over the Sea

The sea, thrice larger than the land,
Roaming with restless energy,
Twice daily lifts her tidal hand
To burst her boundary.
Tides retreat but to advance
With pounding surf and crashing wave.
Waters, white with foamy furor,
Rant and rave to make the land a grave.
Rainbows in the sky cry: "NO!"
Multicolored, they bend and bow to testify:
"By divine authority
Never again shall you flow beyond the sand
To cover all the land!"
Great is the sea; yet greater He
Who laid her form and fathom -
Contained, restrained each wat'ry atom.
"God almighty, we bow to avow
Your sovereignty over the sea
Given us to responsibly oversee."

Caretakers of the Sea

Not too many years later some of the same beaches were closed to swimmers and sunbathers because of garbage dumped off-shore. Some of the debris washed ashore contained dangerous medical waste, including syringes. How sad! The sea belongs to God. Mismanagement of it is offensive to Him and bad for us. If we take good care of God's things, they will take good care of us.

Stewardship Is All Inclusive

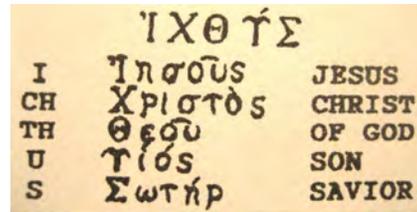
Church members sometimes limit their concept of stewardship to contributions of money, time and talent to the Church. Yet Christian stewardship involves managing all of life and life's resources to the glory of God in joyful obedience to His will. It includes deciding what and how much to eat, the way to work, a proper use of time, wise personal money management, helping others, caring about the the environment - the list goes on and on.

Definition of Christian Stewardship

Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the Church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes.

Stewardship Empowerment

It's one thing to know what to do - another to do it. The enabling force behind Christian stewardship flows from faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior. During the persecutions in the early Christian Church, it was tough to be a Christian steward. Being faithful often led to a torturous death. Christians identified and empowered each other with the symbol of a fish. Why a fish? Through an acrostic of "Ichthus", the Greek word for fish, the divine personhood and redemptive work of Christ was declared. Each letter in the word represented the first letter of another Greek word. The five word message, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior", empowered early Christians to face martyrdom.



The "Ichthus" fish symbol is seen frequently today on bumper stickers, lapel pins, necklaces, bookmarks, etc. The photo below shows a brass door handle shaped like a fish found on doors of a Lutheran Church in Hameln, Germany.



The Power of Purpose

Is your personal stewardship stuck in the mud of ineffectiveness? Embellish it with the power of Christian purpose. Focus on **Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior**. Seeing Him clearly with the eyes of faith will empower the fulfillment of the purpose for human existence - to glorify God by being an effective caretaker of His creations.