

**Sunday, May 24th**  
May, 2009 Sermon Series: “Stewardship: I Believe”  
“Service”  
John 17:15-19

**8:00 & 11:00 a.m.**

**Context:**

Week 1: Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” who laid down His life and cares for us. Our response is Worship. Week 2: Jesus describes Himself as the “True Vine.” Because Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” and the “True Vine” He remains (endures, dwells) in us and makes it possible for us to remain (to endure, dwell) in Him, to be His “branches.” One way we remain in Jesus is to study His word, the Bible. Last week Jesus said that He chose us before we chose Him and because He loves us we can, and must, love others; this is Christian “fellowship.” Today, Jesus prays for us! Specifically, Jesus prays that we will be protected and sanctified as Jesus sends us into the world to serve both Jesus and others.

**Relevant Scriptures:**

*John 17:15-16 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.*

*κοσμου (kosmou) = “orderly arrangement,” by implication the world*

In the Gospel of John, *kosmou* (world) is used to describe human systems and lifestyles in estrangement from God.

*John 15:19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

*John 17:17-19 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

*αγιαζω (hagiazō) = “consecrate” or “to set apart” for a specific purpose*

*αποστελλω (apostello) = “set apart [for the purpose of] sending out” (delegate)*

*1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

### **Implications:**

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**Prayer:** Thank and praise Jesus that He prays for you and the challenges you face in this life as you serve Him. Jesus has called you out of the world only to send you back into the world to serve others in Jesus' name and to Jesus' glory.

### **□ Day #1--Monday, May, 25th Read: 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 9:11.**

Our stewardship theme for week four is "Service." The Bible teaches us that we were created to be servants. Jesus was a servant. He came into this world as a servant of the Father and achieved for us what we could not achieve for ourselves—righteousness before God. Christians serve. We serve because Jesus served. If there is one defining characteristic of a Christian it is love expressed in giving of ourselves to others. In our *Lutheran Book of Worship* the prayer that is recited by the congregation after the offering is:

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Notice, we serve with joy because God has given us everything! A non-thankful Christian is characterized by an entitlement mentality. A discipleship oriented Christian is characterized by generosity rooted in the generosity of God. Today is Memorial Day. Today we honor those who have served our country through offering the ultimate sacrifice—their lives. This is true servanthood!

Going Forward: Try praying the above prayer from *The Lutheran Book of Worship* at the beginning of each day this week. Pray it as an offering of your life to God on that particular day.

Prayer: *Pray the above prayer.*

### **□ Day #2--Tuesday, May, 26th Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19; Romans 13:8.**

Martin Luther, in his treatise "The Freedom of a Christian", characterized Christian servanthood with this paradoxical statement: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Luther comments:

These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. Both are Paul's own statements, who says in 1 Cor 9 [19], "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all," and in Rom. 13 [8], "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved.

Going Forward: I am free to serve.

Prayer: *God, let me use my freedom in Christ to serve others and be used by you to lead others to the freedom and joy found in you. Amen.*

□ **Day #3--Wednesday, May, 27th Read:** *Romans 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 10:31.*

Be on your guard, therefore, and let nothing disturb your peace. Do good under all circumstances, but with no care for any profit, or any blessedness, or any damnation, or any salvation, or any martyrdom; but all you do or omit should be for the honor of Love.... Let people take you for a fool; there is much truth in that. Be docile and prompt toward all who have need of you, and satisfy everyone as far as you can manage it without debasing yourself...And even if you do the best you can in all things, your human nature must often fall short; so entrust yourself to God's goodness, for his goodness is greater than your failures. (Hadewijch of Antwerp)

Going Forward: Servanthood is my gift to God.

Prayer: *God, may I never forget that when I serve I am demonstrating my love for you as well as for others. May all I do glorify you today. Amen.*

□ **Day #4--Thursday, May, 28th Read:** *Mark 10:35-45; John 13:35.*

For no worldly thing, nor for the love of any man, is any evil to be done; but yet for the welfare of one that standeth in need, a good work is sometimes to be intermitted without any scruple, or even to be changed for a better...Without charity the outward work profiteth nothing; but whatsoever is done of charity, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it becomes wholly fruitful...He that hath true and perfect charity seeketh himself in nothing; but only desireth in all things that the glory of God should be exalted. (Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*)

Going Forward: Being a servant is the true path to peace.

Prayer: *My Savior, I do not always want to serve. Yet you call me to give of myself and love my neighbor. Help me to see opportunities to serve and serve joyfully. Amen.*

□ **Day #5--Friday, May 29th Read:** *Colossians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 8:7.*

For the next two days, we are going to look at some specific ways we can serve God in our lives.

**Giving Away My Time.** Giving Away My Time is the practice of using my time to fulfill God's purposes. It is said that in America, time is our most precious resource. We can't accumulate it and we can't get it back. Where you spend your time and money is a telltale sign of what's important to you.

**Giving Away My Money.** Giving Away My Money is the practice of giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes. The Bible speaks about tithing, literally meaning "a tenth". God has asked for our first fruits. Giving away our money is hard. It requires an understanding and belief in stewardship. Stewardship is the belief that everything is a gift from God and belongs to Him, we are just the stewards or managers of the things God has given. So is it really ours?

Going Forward: What keeps me from giving away my life?

Prayer: *Father, you gave everything you are—your love and mercy. You did not hold back. May I live with an open heart and open mind, giving and serving from what you have entrusted to me. Amen.*

□ **Day #6--Saturday, May 30th Read:** *Ephesians 6:19-20; Romans 12:1-6a.*

**Giving Away My Faith.** Giving Away My Faith is the practice of sharing my faith with others. Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. As disciples ourselves, Jesus is speaking to us. We are to share our faith with others, too. Believe it or not, you share the Gospel with other people every day of your life, whether you're aware of it or not.

**Giving Away My Life.** Giving Away My Life is the practice of using my life to fulfill God's purposes. Jesus said His disciples would have to lose everything to gain everything. Giving Away My Life is about taking up my cross and following Jesus all the way to His death and eventual resurrection. It is totally releasing myself to God and His will. This last practice is all about control. Who has control over your life?

In reality, God has control over each of our lives, whether we acknowledge that fact or not, it's still true. Our own control is an illusion. But God will not force His will on you; He's allowing you the opportunity to surrender. When you do, you will find that only now can you live in peace and communion with God and with others.

One of the ways we serve others is by using our Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual Gifts are unique talents or abilities, given to every Christian by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of glorifying God and for the building up of the Body of Christ. You use your spiritual gifts that God has given you to accomplish His purposes. How do I know what gifts I have? If you don't know your Spiritual Gifts, the first thing you need to do is discover them! Red Hill periodically conducts a class called "Discovering God's Vision for Your Life." In this class, we talk more about Spiritual Gifts and help you to "find your fit" into the body here at Red Hill. If you do know your gifts, you should be using them. Pick one gift and start using it to serve the church. Contact Joel Kelly at the church office to start using your gifts in ministry.

Going Forward: Who is in control of my life? Do you know your gifts and are you using them?

Prayer: *God, take control and change me everyday. Give me the courage to change and follow you wherever you may lead. Holy Spirit, You have given me gifts and abilities that You want me to use for others to Your glory. Lead me to use my gifts that Your body may be built up to the glory of Your Holy name. Amen.*