

February 26

Who Are the “Stewards of the Mysteries of God”?

I Corinthians 4:1: ***“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”***

The Corinthian church was a dysfunctional congregation. Thanks be to God! This dysfunction inspired the Spirit to inspire St. Paul to write a letter dealing with many aspects of their dysfunction. (Actually, it seems that he wrote four different letters to the Corinthians, we have only two in Scripture.)

The Corinthians had many variations of dysfunction. If we were to examine only St. Paul’s words about Holy Communion in chapter 11 of the book, we might identify any of these problems regarding Holy Communion:

- a. Apparently there was not really a “*common – union*” – they instead had multiple divisions. (vs. 18)
- b. Holy Communion had actually become more of a detriment to them than a blessing! (v17)
- c. Their intent – and possibly even the reality of what they received – was not Communion! (v20)
- d. Some came for food more than for the sacrament. (It seems the Corinthian congregation also celebrated a meal in conjunction with Communion.) Some came to Communion drunk! (v21-22)
- e. And apparently they were misunderstanding the fundamental articles of faith associated with Holy Communion – what were they actually receiving? (vs. 23--34)

Who was responsible for this mess?! Everyone – including St. Paul! That fact is one reason he claimed to be a ***steward*** of the ***mystery*** of Holy Communion, among other things. This is also why St. Paul wrote chapter 11 – to address the abuses in this congregation from his position as their father in faith. (Along with Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, and others, St. Paul was one of the main mission workers at Corinth. He also served as an apostolic teacher there for some time).

Of course, St. Paul was not responsible for the drunkenness of people who came to Communion, those who came more for the bread of earth than for the Bread of Life.

Everyone is a “steward” – meaning we all have received gifts, and we are called to use them for the glory of God – the Owner and Giver of every good gift.

If I, as a member of Christ’s Church, were to decide not to come to church, I suspect people would notice. And they should because, as part of my stewardship, I lead worship and serve as the called pastor of Trinity.

But what about the members of a church who do not come to church? Worship is the pastor’s primary responsibility, yet that is also shared by members. I have the responsibility to call upon straying sheep. Furthermore, the sheep that have not fed on the good green pastures of God’s Word and the food of forgiveness in the sacrament, should worship because they are stewards of the faith God has given them.

Let us be good stewards – and grow strong in faith -- coming to our Good Shepherd, feeding on the mysterious elements of His body and blood “for the strengthening of our faith!” Why would we not want to be strong?! Possibly, we have forgotten that we are stewards. St. Paul reminds us, the pastor reminds you, the Lord reminds the pastor. *“Let there be no divisions among us.” (I Corinthians 12:25)*

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for the trust You have in us to name us Your “stewards.” May we each be faithful in the individual stewardship we have to grow in grace and knowledge of You. Amen.