

## **STEWARDSHIP OF TIME AND TALENT POLISHED ARROWS**

It is our tradition that the worship emphasis at the beginning of each new year is stewardship. Thank you for your strong, generous ongoing support of this congregation.

During the stewardship campaign the only money question I ask of you is what percentage of your income do you feel God is calling you to give to support God's work through our church? But stewardship is more than giving money to our church.

There is also the stewardship of our abilities and of our time. Time is the new currency. So, again, I ask a version of that one financial question: In what area is God calling you to serve, to support God's work through our congregation and in other places? What is God asking you to do? How will you utilize your abilities and your time to advance the kingdom of God?

Today, instead of financial stewardship, we focus on the stewardship of time and talent, our abilities. Today's worship services conclude with you voluntarily completing a time and talent inventory so you can get plugged into the ministries of Faith Lutheran Church. We also recognize and support the many ways you are already serving in our church and community.

The stewardship of time and talent affirms that God has given us certain abilities. God has gifted us with unique abilities. The prophet Isaiah refers to them as "polished arrows hidden within God's quiver." (Isaiah 49:2)

Polished arrows in the quiver of God. One of God's polished arrows was the nation of Israel. Israel, God's chosen people. One of God's way of winning the world and glorifying God is through a nation that has been battered and captured and throughout history, from Egyptian slavery to Babylonian captivity and Roman occupation to horrors of the Holocaust to the geo-political uncertainty and war of current times. Yet, they are God's chosen people, God's way, God's polished arrows.

And there was a certain Pharisee named Paul, a persecutor of the followers of Christ; Paul, who carried around with him a thorn in his flesh and who was not much of a speaker. But he was a polished arrow, the win the world for God and glorify God.

And another arrow at God's disposal was a frightening man, a prophet named John. He wore the skin of a camel and ate wild honey and locusts. He spent his time baptizing people for their sins in the muddy waters of the Jordan River. Not a model citizen, much less a prophet, yet he was doing God's work.

With such unlikely people as the Israelites, Paul and John, God wins God's way in the world. God is glorified.

And then there were the Corinthians. Even though Paul called them God's saints, they were anything but. Always getting into trouble; arguing among themselves, hauling one another into court, disrupting worship services, even getting drunk at Holy Communion.

Let's admit that God's polished arrows to win the world and establish glory are weapons we would not deem sufficient for any battle, much less a battle with the force of evil and darkness that overwhelms our world.

But God will win the world and be glorified. Even with the Israelites, Paul, John, those fighting Corinthians. Weapons they are, God's polished arrows.

Weapons we are. Chosen from the time of our birth, baptized, empowered by the Holy Spirit. None of our lives have any meaning apart from our service to God. (Repeat.) We know we are weak and ill-fitted for the work of God. So, we must understand that God equips us.

This is the point of understanding that we have no power of our own, but only God's power at work through us. Even in our hesitancy and weakness, God's power in us is made evident.

This month we have been remembering Martin Luther King, Jr. In his preaching and writing, King frequently spoke of the weapon of love. As a young pastor, working to establish the Montgomery Bus Boycott, becoming a leader in the American Civil Right Movement, with his followers beaten and thrown in jail, King said, "We will counter your force with soul force, we will match your ability to hate with our ability to love." That was King's weapon of love.

Followers of our king, King Jesus, every day we encounter the sin of the world just as Martin Luther King, Jr. encountered it. And like Dr. King, we must wage war against evil with God's weapons. For we are polished arrows in the quiver of God.

At stewardship time, we ask what are your special gifts and talents? For what areas of service has God led you? Pushed you even? How do you serve God in your life? At home, at work, at school, in retirement, at church? What sort of arrow are you in God's quiver?

We have all been gifted. You have some mighty strong gifts. And once you realize and admit your gifts, the goal is to utilize them. To match your strength with particular areas of need and service, especially within this congregation and community.

Your gifts, your abilities, are God's weapons. God's polished arrows.

There are no quick fixes to the long-term problems of our society. But it does our hearts good to know that there are people sitting in these very pews and watching online...people who care and who will put their time and talents to love God, love others, serve.

We are God's weapons, polished arrows in the quiver of God. The way God wins the world and brings glory. This is what we are about. Use us, Lord. We have so many abilities. Together, let's work to win the world and glorify God.

Let your light so shine...