

David N. Mosser. *The Stewardship Companion: Lectionary Resources for Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. 249 pages. \$24.

Companion: a friend or someone who accompanies us. Preachers charged with the stewardship of preaching the gospel in seasons of feast or famine need faithful companions for the task. *The Stewardship Companion: Lectionary Resources for Preaching* is well-suited for the task through its careful attention to the intensive and extensive implications of scripture for a lifetime of stewardship. This is evidenced in the genesis story of this text; a small inheritance becomes a major investment of ministry as an old book on stewardship, handed on from one pastor to another, grows into Mosser's constant companion. Stewardship themes become the core of ministry. With the guidance of a perceptive editor (Jon Berquist), the author shaped his meditations on the common lectionary. It promises to be a steward of the task of searching God's word for the practical and spiritual implications of stewardship. Although this text can certainly be used in this way, it is not designed to be a quick fix for a yearly pledge campaign. Mosser notes, "those who have mastered Christian stewardship principles know far too much than to confuse a congregation's annual budget drive with a genuine biblical understanding of stewardship. Our stewardship reaches into every corner of our life of faith..." (xii). This text is a study of discipleship in the word of God for the world of God. But how does this work when the first congregational commandment is "Thou shall not preach about our money"?

The preacher who does not take stewardship in the fullness of its implications cannot hide the grinding of gears caused by a rough transition from free grace to the cost of discipleship. The spirituality of stewardship presented here is not an occasional topic but a careful exposition of the theology of giftedness, prepared over time in the context of preaching an economy of grace in a world of layoffs and foreclosures. Fortunately this is exactly what *The Stewardship Companion* provides. What we need and have received in this publication is a companion that helps us recover the resources of faith, the practical and prophetic, discipleship through a scripture shaped Christian year. This merits a close and careful reading, an invitation to *tolle lege*, take up and read.

What would convince a preacher to elect this companion as a guide? Reviewing the interpretation of two major festival texts might appeal to those who look for fresh insights on well-worn texts. How might we preach stewardship on Easter, the one day when the readings are solidly set and hope blooms for the miraculous conversion of the Christmas and Easter crowd? How might the Spirit fire our hearts if we preach stewardship on Pentecost? When denominational and theological expectations seem fixed in stone, how might the preaching of stewardship stir the church's pillars to song? What might transform the business as usual approach to our work and worship? Can a theology of giftedness transform our appropriation of scripture and the Christian year? Here are some of the resourceful answers from the *Companion*.

Easter: In a society that is addicted to security, Easter is the assurance that the risk we take in faith becomes the life we make in Christ. We can bet our lives on this future: we have been made shareholders, stakeholders in God's beloved community. Our lives now have meaning in the way that God extends Godself to us. Our integrity, our wholeness is intimately and ultimately found in the God who restores our life in an extraordinary economy of grace for a bankrupt world.

Pentecost: The outpouring of the Spirit is not primarily a possession of individuals but a gift designed to empower us to work together. The true spiritual power in any congregation is in the way it works together in the stewardship of creation. True stewardship is exercised when we

recognize what is not our own. Part of this care for creation is in our call to praise and prayer and the ways we work together to work with those outside our community and context.

These brief examples can only suggest the imaginative development and pastoral sensitivity as well as the subtlety of Moser's exegesis. With care and attention to the way the lectionary can shape stewardship preaching and congregational study, this book will provide and encourage the development of preaching resources. Buy this book. It's good to have this companion on hand.

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