

“Don’t Tell Me The Sky Is The Limit When There Are Footprints On The Moon.”

By: Bill Marianes¹

Will Rogers once concluded: *“Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.”* Voltaire reminded us: *“Common sense is not so common.”* Winston Churchill observed: *“There but for the grace of God - goes God.”* Comedian Bill Cosby opined: *“A word to the wise ain’t necessary because it’s the stupid ones that need the advice.”* Each of these four comments (and this article’s title courtesy of satirist Ashleigh Brilliant) is a paraprosookian. A paraprosookian is frequently used by philosophers, comics, politicians and lawyers.

The father in *“My Big Fat Greek Wedding”* would explain this word comes from the Greek word "παρά", meaning "against" and "προσδοκία", meaning "expectation". A paraprosookian is a phrase where the latter part is surprising or unexpected given the earlier part.

As a lawyer, I negotiated/argued for a living and posted near my telephone is the wise counsel: *“Never argue with an idiot or fool, because: (1) people listening may not be able to tell the difference, and (2) they will lower you to their level and then beat you with their experience.”* If you see me suddenly stop in the middle of a negotiation/argument, you’ll now know why.

So, what does this great Greek word paraprosookian have to do with my life’s calling of stewardship? I am reminded of the paraprosookian: *“If you have to tell someone you are a gentleman (or lady), then you are not.”* Let me ask you very directly, *“If you have to tell someone you are a steward (or see your name on a list of stewards) are you really a steward of God’s blessings?”* What is your motivation, and what does it really mean to be a steward?

Dictionaries define a steward as someone who manages the assets of another. But if a steward manages the resources of SOMEONE ELSE, am I am really managing MY time/talents/treasures? If not, then whose are they?

St. John Chrysostom offers us the answer in his homily *“On Living Simply.”* He asked if he owned his own mind, body, house or clothes? He concluded that he did not, and that they were only on loan to him from God during his life and would be taken back upon his passing. (You’ll never see a hearse driving down the road followed by a U-Haul trailer.) Thus, St. John Chrysostom clarified that what we really possess during our lives are the virtues that we allow to grow and flourish within our souls. He reminded us that these were immortal gifts that God would not take back because He wanted Heaven to be filled with virtue.

Hopefully by now we all realize that we are stewards of everything we have because they are really God’s and he has temporarily entrusted the management of them to us. What will you do with God’s gifts to you? The principal message of the Igniting The Flame Of True Christian Stewardship program of the Stewardship Calling Ministry training is to focus more on what you do with your most valuable asset, your time. Indeed, my personal paraprosookian is: *“Your actions speak so loudly, that I can’t hear what you’re saying.”* So, are we walking the stewardship walk, or just talking about it? Are we living the life our Lord called us to live by giving sacrificially of our time, talents, treasures and tithes to God’s work here on this earth?

The parable of the “Talents” from the Gospel of Matthew (25: 14-30) provides us the perfect roadmap. We are reminded that we each have received different talents, but it’s what we do with our talents that

determines our future. In those days, “talents” were a unit of economic measure. Today it means something different, but the message is still the same. We are not better because we have more, we are better because we do more with whatever we have.

Is there anything more you can do for your Parish/Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese and your salvation? Do you have any skills, abilities or things that others in your Parish and community can use? If so, what’s keeping you from giving of that talent” and your time to God’s Holy Orthodox Church and those who need you? The parable of the “Talents” assures us that the “payoff” for blessing others with the multiplication of your talents on this earth is to be told *“well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will put you over much.”*

Who wouldn’t want to improve their odds of the gift of “much” and an eternity of joy with our Lord? God already gave us all our gifts. All we need to do is “pay it forward” and serve our Church and the world. G.K. Chesterton’s offered the paraprodikian: *“Just going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car.”*

Please take a moment now to reflect on how good a job you are doing being a steward (caretaker) of the gifts God has given you. Examine your last week of 168 hours (10,080 minutes) and ask how many of those hours/minutes did you actually devote to God’s work? Which of God’s gifts did you cause to multiply in the world this past week? What will you do this coming week to share your extraordinary talents for God’s greater glory and your salvation?

I believe that your stewardship is what you do with the gifts God gave you. So, what does your salvation account ledger look like? I do not wish to make you as paranoid as author Tom Clancy, who once said: *“I know I’m paranoid, but am I paranoid enough?”* Instead, I ask you to reflect on Mother Teresa’s advice: *“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”* Or consider the advice of Pablo Picasso and President Franklin Roosevelt who respectively offered: *“Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone.”* *“There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still.”*

Do something today! And God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. SOTPAETJ (stay on The Path, and enjoy the journey)

ⁱ Bill Marianes is the Chief Evangelist Officer of the Stewardship Calling ministry focused on helping people and parishes discover and live their stewardship callings so that they may have a good account before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. The always free www.stewardshipcalling.com website contains many resources to help churches and parishioners with stewardship, strategic planning, engaged discipleship, discovering your WHY, servant leadership, effective communications and church operational excellence. Bill is also a member of the Orthodox Ministry Services Team: <https://orthodoxministry.org/>. Bill can be reached at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com.