

## Christian Stewards, Live as Children of Light

✦ **trained** (vv.11-13)

✦ **true** (vv.14-16)

In the Name of Christ our **Light**, dear fellow stewards, managing God's gift of time:

We all get the same – no more, no less. Twenty-four hours a day from God who invented time. He determines our number of days. *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV84) Wisdom sees the gift and manages time for God's glory and our neighbor's good.

The first rebellion against time was by our first parents when they determined to use their time of grace against God instead of for serving Him. Satan deceived Eve, and Adam followed her lead as if God were trying to hold them back from their true potential. Whenever you and I grow impatient as if we don't have time to help someone in need, we prove our part in that rebellion. And *“the wages of sin is death”* – the eternal loss of the enjoyment of God's blessings, endless torment with the enemy of all time.

Jesus promised, *“I will be with you all the days until the gathered goal of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20 TPA<sup>1</sup>) He was promising His focused blessing on our time. His verdict is mercy and forgiveness for every way we've wasted time. God's kindness in Christ empowers and emboldens us to use our time to give thanks to God and help our neighbor whenever a need arises. *“Redeem the time, because the days are evil.”* (Ephesians 5:16 EHV f.n.) **Christian Stewards, Live as Children of Light** well...

✦ **trained** (vv.11-13)

After all the trials and tribulations of this life we will be *“tried* and true.” But while managing God's gifts as His faithful stewards we need to be **trained** and **true**. Example: Christopher McCandless.

His movie: 2 ½ hours. Copy of his journal and pictures: EBay \$100. He renamed himself “Alexander Supertramp” trekking west after graduating Emory University. Gave his savings to charity. Cut himself off from parents and his only sister. By age 24 (1968 – 1992), he was living his dream in the wild of Alaska. Shocked hunters found his body decomposing in his sleeping bag on his “Magic Bus.”

Officially, Christopher McCandless starved to death. But his journal and book of plant life still have doctors and chemists debating. His unbalanced diet of game and plant life possibly made him more susceptible to toxins. The movie shows how hard he tried to survive and his despair at poisoning himself. He tried so hard, but stubbornly refused training and equipping by native Alaskans. Still, he's considered a folk hero. Tragedy keeps singing in the dark, “I did it my way.” But the ancient prophet still asks, *“What will you do in the end?”* (Jeremiah 5:31 NIV84) A little training can go a long way.

*“Christ himself gave some to be the apostles, the prophets, and the evangelists, as well as the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for training the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we are to keep growing into a mature man with a stature measuring up to the fullness of Christ.”* (TPA)

Crossing a little river to his new home in the Magic Bus, Chris did something smart. He hung his knitted hat on a high branch to mark the way back out. A few months later when he decided to leave, he found the little creek had swollen into a mighty river. He almost drowned when he slipped in. There on

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<sup>1</sup> TPA ~ *The Preacher's Apprentice* my translation. EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV): NT, Psalms*. NPH, 2017.

the far side he could still see his hat. Now he thought he was trapped in the wild where he'd always insisted on living his own way. A native Alaskan could have warned him about the rising river. A park ranger could have told him that less than a mile along the stream was a hand operated tram. "My way"?

Bible history is full of sincere souls who looked to God's servants to train them. The Twelve Apostles trained with the Master – God's Apostle, faithful Prophet, most powerful Evangelist, the Pastor of pastors and Teacher of teachers. Yet they still needed the Lord to send them His dear Holy Spirit on Pentecost after they ran away and stumbled in their faith. We need to remember the wisdom of the Ethiopian when Philip ran up to his chariot and asked, "***Do you understand what you are reading?***" "***How can I,***" he said, "***unless someone explains it to me?***" (Acts 8:30f NIV84)

As a child of the light managing God's gift of time, don't look to books about berries and big game. Chris took down a moose with a 22. But his books did not help him preserve the meat from flies, maggots and wolves. God's gift of His Holy Word is rich in wisdom, but we need help applying it. Example: Elders training at the annual Church Leaders Workshop in Belle Plaine, MN. We learned the importance of maintaining relationships with straying members. Their precious, blood-bought souls need God's Word and sacrament. So when members move away, we try to connect them with a church of our fellowship to continue in God's grace, not just write them off. We need to train the whole congregation to see souls in this beautiful unity of faith Christ creates. It's God's gift for **Stewards...trained** and...

#### ✦ true (vv.14-16)

Some of our America was already happening in Luther's day. Other Protestant churches were springing up with no trained clergy. They claimed God's written Word was not enough, that the Holy Spirit still spoke to them beyond the apostles and prophets. Many people have fallen for this lie. It's easy to get so full of ourselves that we leave no room for the Holy Spirit who chose to work through the sacred writings, the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. Anything beyond this comes from the father of lies.

***"Measuring up to the fullness of Christ...we will no longer be little children, tossed by waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow up every way into Christ who is the head. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined tightly and held together by every ligament, grows according to Christ's work. By measuring out each individual part he makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."*** (TPA) Notice it's not just "***speaking the truth,***" but "***...in love.***" Goal: Build each other up.

Do false teachers know what they're doing? The Holy Spirit here indicates at least some are inventing tricks to deceive. Jesus' warns: "***Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?***" (Matthew 7:15f NIV84) If you want grapes, go to vines not thorn bushes. Not everything religious is good. You don't need to read their materials to get confused. False teachers can loosen some screws in your head. Even the "theologically mature" are not invincible. "***So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!***" (1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV84) Sound theologians and laymen have made this cocky assumption and lost. Some Christians can't make it to Bible Class, but never miss bowling. Priorities? Pastors can schedule, but only you can come.

We can't help Hollywood with end of life issues. They're sure they know it all. So the death of their heroes will always be made to look good. And still God's Son says, "***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***" (Mark 16:16 NIV84) I'd like to think that "Alexander Supertramp" finally succumbed to fellow travelers teaching him God's Word. Journal messages of blessings might mean as much. But let there be no question how you will pass from grace to glory. **Christian Stewards, Live as Children of Light – trained and true.** Then the emptiness you may feel here, will find it's joyful release in love there. God planned it. Christ paid for it. The Holy Spirit gives it freely in Word and sacrament. Let your heart keep singing, "I did it Thy way!" Amen.

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