

Good Morning. My name is Kari Albers. I am here this morning to share with you my personal journey of stewardship. Stewardship is the generous sharing of our time, talent and treasure. Stewardship of time includes the ways we worship God and develop our relationship with Him. Stewardship of talent focuses on sharing our gifts with others through service and sharing. Stewardship of treasure is the way we return to God from the fruits of our labor, by sharing both the money we have earned as well as our material possessions.

Today I'm sharing with you my stewardship journey of time and talent. This overall stewardship effort began a few weeks ago with the Ministry Fair and ends today with Commitment Sunday. In February, we will focus on Stewardship of Treasure. All three are important and one does not substitute for the other.

We've all experienced hardships in our lives. Some of us more than others. Hardship came to me as a result of many bad choices I made during my young adult life. I caused myself and my family a lot of pain by the choices I made. For many years I interpreted these hardships I endured as punishment for my bad choices – even my circumstance of single motherhood. 5 years ago I added heartache to hardship and moved 1100 miles away from my closest relative from Milwaukee to Tallahassee with just myself and my then 5 year old son, Dareon. God knew it was necessary to strip me from my comfort zone so he could prepare me and mold me into a good and faithful servant. Because of my complacency in life, God kidnapped me and began His work. Before I could learn to minister to others through various ministries, God needed to be able to minister to me. He wanted alone time and He got it. Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians how we are able to comfort and encourage others because of the encouragement and comfort that God gives us in our every affliction. It is through these afflictions that we experience union with Christ. His Glory is revealed when we can "comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." Through my afflictions I learned first hand the encouragement and comfort that God has asked me to pass on to other through my ministries at Good Shepherd. Whether it be when I bring meals to a healing parishioner, teach our faith to an inquisitive 5th grader, serve the Holy Eucharist, pray and discern with Pastoral Council, share in the joy of confirmation with my candidate, it's an overwhelming joy to know I'm serving God and fulfilling His will for me as being a good steward of my talents I've been blessed with.

Before I moved to Tallahassee, I lived in complacency. I had no reason to reach out and touch others lives or have others transform mine. Being a single mom – it was necessary to have a support system. In my case, it was my dependency on my support system that kept me from knowing the comforts and mercy that God provides and learning how to minister to others. It was here at Good Shepherd, I began to learn the purpose of ministry, God's purpose for ministry in my life and Jesus' ministry to us all. Turning over control of my life wasn't a common practice for me at that time. Being a single mom- I made it a habit of not depending on anyone for anything. It's now, during my faith journey that I realize our God is abundant in His grace and mercy. My pain and affliction then, now has allowed God's glory to shine through as I give back only a portion of what I've received. It's not a burden for me to serve, it's an honor – knowing when I serve the poor, hungry, naked, sick or lonely – I serve God. I'll be honest, ministry isn't always easy. But the benefits far outweigh the thought of leaving a perfectly wrapped gift – with golden ribbons and bows – just sitting there, never to be opened or shared. The parable of Talents in Matthew 25 are just those gifts God gives us. Whether it be that you can cook, teacher, carry a tune, read, comfort, smile, or just pray – we are encouraged to share our talents and multiply them. 'Well done, good and faithful servant! The master tells his servant who multiplied his talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance.

When Jesus speaks to Peter in John chapter 13 – he’s speaking to all of the hardships I’ve made it through. Jesus says “You don’t realize now what I’m doing, but later you’ll understand.” The first time I had my feet washed it put into perspective for me the role of servant that God was calling me to. Mark’s gospel message in Chapter 10 we heard a few weeks ago helps me to focus what Jesus’ ultimate purpose for me is – to serve others. For many years, I thought I was owed for my suffering and hardship, but now I realize I’m here to serve – not to be served as Jesus explains to His apostles. I realized it was time to stop using my single motherhood as a excuse for why I didn’t have the time or why I didn’t fit in or why I wasn’t worthy and start to fulfill God’s plan for me and share my gifts – however minimal I viewed them as. Turns out – when you make a commitment to share – God’s grace fills your life with abundance overflowing. Not a concept I could comprehend as a young mother who started out on welfare.

God always finds a way to show me the reward he has in store for me through my ministries. There is such an awesome feeling in being a servant for God and I ask you today to prayerfully consider your talents and give time towards a ministry at Good Shepherd. My involvement in ministry at Good Shepherd has given me the insight to apply servant hood to other aspects of my life. My job is no longer just a day job. that pays the bills. I know see it as fulfilling the request that God needs for that day. I work as hard as I can and hope it pleases him. God blessed me with other talents that I use to teach at the YMCA and coach soccer. I struggle as most of us do to spend time with God and pray – however – if I didn’t involve myself in ministry – I would feel like the wicked and lazy servant whose talents were taken from him because he did not use them.

Today you have the opportunity to make a commitment of your time and talent. We ask all members of your family to consider your time as well as your talents and make a commitment today. Please place your commitment card in the collection basket today as a symbol of your giving to the Lord.

Thank you and God Bless.