

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.2.2025

STEWARDS OF GRACE

I. OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS STEWARDS OF GRACE

1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Romans 12:11 “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”
- *“To serve the Lord is surely the natural element of godliness. Heavenly spirits enjoy unbroken rest, but they find their rest in serving God day and night. If you could restrict the Christian from the service of God, you would debar him from his highest joy. Surely it is as much the element of a Christian to do good as for a fish to swim, or a bird to fly, or a tree to yield her fruits. Oh, then, if you would let the new born nature fully develop itself, you must be serving the Lord.”* - Charles Spurgeon
- Christians are in their element, as natural as a fish to swim or as a bird to fly when doing good for others. For our new nature in Christ to mature, we must be serving the Lord.
- As Spurgeon has pointed out, if we desire to find the highest joy, if we desire to grow mature in our faith, and to live with the natural outpouring of godliness, then we must be serving the Lord.
- Peter writes to the saints in 1 Peter 4:7 that the end of all things is at hand. This is the setting, the context for what he’s about to exhort them to do more and more.
- And then, most importantly, keep loving one another earnestly. Be fervent in your mutual love for one another. Keep on doing that, since love covers a multitude of sins.
- As you live at the end of all things, and as you love one another earnestly, shown through your hospitality, also show your love by using your gifts to serve one another.
- The members of the body of Christ are uniquely gifted so that the whole body may be edified and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- These gifts are graces given to you and I to perform ministry, or another word for that is service, to one another for the good of the body of Christ.

- *1 Corinthians 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
- How do we biblically use our spiritual gifts as good stewards of them for the common good ?
- Biblical stewardship implies there is accountability in how we steward. That we will give an account to the Lord for how we manage that which he's blessed us with.
- Our God is full of grace! He is the source of all grace. He is gracious in his being, and he has shown us grace beyond measure!
- His grace is that divine unmerited favor that he shows us which translates into many wonderful and diverse gifts.
- It was from his grace and mercy that he gave us the gift of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We deserved judgement and the wrath of a holy and righteous God for our sins which were many.
- But by his grace and love He sent Jesus Christ to come to earth, having no sins of his own to die for our sins! That's grace!
- And it's a free gift offered to all which we can never earn on our own, but is freely offered to us!
- That is the greatest gift of his grace! But he has also blessed us beyond measure in other ways. Other gifts of grace. He gives us other blessings, other spiritual gifts that we might reflect them to one another, and use them for the good and edification of his church.
- These are gifts of his grace! And it's varied, multi-faceted grace! Other translations call this the manifold grace of God! It's a way of describing the vast variety and measure of his gifts of grace to us.
- You and I haven't been shown his grace in exactly the same way. You and I have experienced his grace differently. To different measures. In different ways and with many varying gifts.
- And he gives us the faith and confidence to use these gifts to reflect his grace towards others.
- *1 Corinthians 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills*
- There is one source of these spiritual gifts, they are divinely given by the Holy Spirit, but they aren't one size fits all. He gives to each person individually, uniquely, as he wills.
- You can't earn them, you can pay for them, they are graciously bestowed by the Spirit as gifts.
- We are good stewards of the gifts of grace given to us when we use them for one another.
- Just like in verse 8, this passage is one of the "one anothers". Love one another. Pray for one another. Be kind to one another.
- So these gifts of grace aren't for you. They are entrusted to you as stewards, who will give an account of the gifts you have been entrusted with, for how you utilized them during your time on earth.
- Did you use them for yourself, for selfish purposes, or for one another?
- If you have been shown grace, then you have been given gifts of grace; so are you using them or yourself, for selfish purposes, or for one another? For the body of Christ.
- Don't use them selfishly for personal gain. But, do use them. That's the imperative here.
- And use them alot! *2 Corinthians 9:8 - 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*
- This isn't something we're to do periodically. Or in limited quantities. Abound, overflow, in good works, in ministry, in service, because God is abounding in grace to you!
- "As each has received a gift, go use it"! Be intentional to serve one another. It doesn't say "If someone asks you to serve, then serve one another, does it? Don't wait for the need to linger, the moment to pass.

- A steward is accountable for what they are entrusted with. And a good steward is accountable to his master for stewarding well that which his master has entrusted to him.
- But just like a good steward puts to work that which his master has entrusted him with, we need to remember that the steward himself is in service to his master.
- He isn't the master, he's the servant. He enacts his master's plans and priorities, not his own, and his stewardship is to align with the directions of his master.
- The apostles and writers in the new testament identified themselves in their letters by starting with "Paul, or James, or Simon Peter, a servant of God, or a servant of Jesus Christ".
- Their primary identity, before their apostleship or anything else, was as a servant of God. A servant of Jesus Christ.
- This was who they were. This was their main purpose to exist and act and move: to be a servant of Christ.
- We all have this identity: we are all servants of Christ!
- *Colossians 4:12 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God"*
- He wasn't an apostle. He was in the church. And he was a servant of Christ Jesus.
- *And Titus 2:14 tells us that our great God and Savior Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*
- We have been redeemed, church, and he's purifying us, a people for his own possession. We are to be people who are zealous, full of zeal for doing good works.
- Our lives belong to him. He is our Lord and Master and so we are his servants.
- We can be zealous in our service to him because God owns me and all my stuff. His owning me is my whole life. It's all under his authority and direction. We are his servants. He is our master. Our lives are to be poured out in service to him.
- So then when we serve one another, when we serve in our church, or our families, our neighbors or strangers...ultimately we are serving Christ.
- In Colossians 3 we see Paul giving instructions to wives, husbands, children, and bondservants for how to love, serve, and treat one another. And then he ends that section by saying this:
 - *Colossians 3:23-24 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*
 - There is proper motivation for our service, which is doing it as for the Lord, and there is a proper attitude we should have as we do which is enthusiasm because we are serving him!
 - When I serve my family, when I serve my church family, when I serve the needy, the homeless, my boss at work, do I do it enthusiastically and zealously because ultimately whatever I do is to serve my master the Lord?
 - When we view everything we do as for Christ, then that overflows into serving others in a totally different way than if we were just doing it for them. It becomes serving Christ through serving those around us.
 - *Galatians 5:13-14 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*
 - We are now no longer under the law but under grace! And there is great freedom in that! But brothers and sisters, use that freedom not for yourselves, but as an opportunity to show love to one another by your service to others.

- So through love we are to serve one another. Serve the broken and the needy. Serve your brothers and sisters in Christ in love because how can we not! We have been shown the love of God in vast endless measure, how can we keep that to ourselves!
- Paul says that sums up the entire law right there: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- And as a servant of Christ, there is no need too lowly, too dirty, too beneath us, no task too menial, no person too grungy to show compassion too.
- The call of a servant of Christ is to serve in the dirtiness, the messiness, the filth, the grime of this world. It’s ministering to the poor, the needy, the filthy, the sick, the dangerous, the homeless, the lost.
- Because we were poor, lost and needy while dead in our sins and trespasses, but Christ served us in love by his work on the cross. He didn’t wait for us to get clean, to make ourselves worthy, he lovingly served us in our dire condition.
- While on earth, he lovingly served others in word and deed and now he calls us to follow his example and do the same.
- As you are being good stewards of the gifts of grace God has given you, verse 11, *“whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies”*
- When the gift you are using for others is with your words, whether that’s encouraging your brother or sister who is discouraged or struggling, or whether that’s praying for a need, whether it’s teaching a bible study, or simply sharing with someone the grace God has shown to you this week, then speak the oracles of God.
- The oracles of God are simply the word of God or the messages of God. We are to speak the word to one another. Pass along the messages which he’s encouraged you with or has taught you from his word.
- *1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”*
- We are to use our words to serve one another through encouragement and building one another up. Speaking the word of God to one another, sharing of the grace shown to us, ministering to one another.
- Good stewardship is using our words not in a self centered or self serving way, but for the purpose of building up the body of Christ.
- We also build up the body when we take action and serve one another. This isn’t something to be done in our own strength.
- When we’re serving to bless our church and while we do, we’re encouraging and edifying the fellow members of the body, then we’re being good stewards of God’s grace.
- And this is what he intends for us to be doing! Receiving his grace, which is shown in numerous inexhaustible ways in all these moments of our lives so that when we interact with the saints, we’re reflecting the grace of God to them in so many different ways.
- “In order that in EVERYTHING God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”
- However you serve, it’s for the express purpose that God may be glorified! He gets all the glory for our service when we are good stewards of his grace!
- The glory and dominion belong to him! Our lives belong to him. All glory belongs to him, is right for him, is due to him. He is the sovereign God of the universe. The maker of all things, the sustainer of all things.
- And he has shown us, his creatures, grace upon grace upon grace, and he calls us to be good stewards of that grace, by reflecting small, momentary gifts of grace to one another by serving one another through our words and our actions.
- And when we do, he gets the glory. And the church is edified and encouraged and built up.

II. OUR EXAMPLE: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Mark 10:35-45

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- "What a nerve to ask such a thing!" That was the very response of the other disciples when they heard this request, it says they were indignant! Wouldn't you be?
- But let's look at Jesus' response. He calls them over and says "In the kingdoms of this world, the great ones have authority and rule over others. But in my kingdom, he says, it's the opposite. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all."
- That is how it should be among you. In my kingdom Jesus says, the greatest is the lowest servant. The one that comes in first, is the slave of all.
- We love when we're called to praise the Lord! We're even willing to heed the calls of praying for one another! Hopefully after this series we're being generous to one another.
- But we can come up with a million reasons why we can't serve one another.
- Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.
- Do you think there are tasks beneath you? Do you think there are people in our community too dirty? Or do you think that serving the broken, the lost, the needy isn't "safe"?
- That's exactly what Jesus's mission was when he came! Vs 45: For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many!
- He came to serve church! He went to where the needs were! He went to the sick and contagious! He went to the poor, the homeless, the outcasts of society! He spent all day meeting the needs of the people!
- He was among the clean religious and the rough and dangerous zealots ministering to both!
- The bible reminds us that no servant is greater than his master. If our Lord visited the sick, the poor, if he encouraged and prayed for people, if he wore himself out for the needs of the people around him, then that's our example to follow.
- And if we devoted every minute of our life, every ounce of our strength in serving one another, it still wouldn't compare to the extent that he served us!
- He came to serve, and served us in the greatest way by giving his own life as a ransom for many.

- His servant leadership wasn't like how the disciples had thought of leadership, ruling over others.
- He was humble. He wasn't selfish with his time or his energy. He acted with love and compassion, viewing the lost people around him as poor sheep without a shepherd.
- He was gentle and lowly as he served those around him. The ultimate, humble, self sacrificing servant.
- Do you see that example we have of him? Do we set him as our own example to follow?
- *Romans 12:1-2 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- Our lives, our bodies, are to be presented to the Lord as living sacrifices, spent and put to use in service for him.
- So hear Paul's appeal to you: present your bodies as living sacrifices! Be poured out for others! Be useful as his servants, which is your spiritual worship!
- We need our minds transformed on this topic! To go from viewing service and ministry towards others from a gentile view of being great in God's kingdom to Jesus' call to be the slave of all! That is not a default mindset!
- Our default is not a kingdom mindset! Spending our lives guarding our time, our talent, and our treasure, hoarding them for ourselves is our default.
- So instead, present your bodies as living sacrifices for God. It's good stewardship. It's costly. It's sacrificial. It's a proper mindset we're to have.
- Have the mindset that Philippians 2:5 exhorts us to have, where Paul says "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,*"
- And he goes on to describe the humility Christ put on display as he left heaven's throne and came as a servant, the ultimate servant.
- We too as we are called to be like Christ and are called to lower ourselves into humility before God, and before others.
- Can we ever humble ourselves too much? Look at Christ. Can you possibly humble yourself more than He did? So then in our service towards others, is there any task too low, any sacrifice too great, any job too dirty, any time too costly to spend, any person too filthy to serve?
- Examine your hearts in your service towards others. Consider how you serve your spouse, your family, your church, and your community.
- Look for ways you can share gifts of grace with one another for the building up of the body of Christ, being good stewards of the grace shown to you.
- And in humility, look to Christ, see his own example of service, in love and in humbleness, in word and deed, and then go and do likewise.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?