

## Lesson 2

### The Generalities of Stewardship

1. **Objective:** To define generous stewardship through the lenses of creation and redemption. To examine how this definition should inform our lives as followers of Jesus, particularly as it relates to the use of our time, talents and treasures.
2. **Some Definitions of Stewardship**
  - a. **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes** – The Lutheran Church: Missouri Synod
  - b. **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP is grateful and responsible use of God's gifts in light of God's purposes revealed in Jesus Christ** – Episcopal Church USA
  - c. **GENEROUS CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP is joyfully giving away in abundance our time, talents and treasures for God's glory and his Kingdom purposes in the world. It is about living generous lives in response to God's overwhelming generosity to us in Jesus** – adapted from 'Stewardship: Planting a Church with a Generous Culture' BY Tom Wood
3. **God's Ownership of Creation**
  - a. **All that exists belongs to God...is owned by God**
    - 'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.' (Rom. 11.36)
    - 'For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.' (1 Cor. 8.6)
    - 'The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof [or and all that fills it]'...(Ps. 24.1)
    - 'Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, *for the world and its fullness are mine*...Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me...The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to the one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God.' (Ps. 50.7-12,14,23)

God doesn't need our money as if he needed an income. Instead, we need him every moment to sustain us. Our worship, and the dedication of our whole lives to him, is an acknowledgement of his control over everything. It's a thank offering, a giving back of what we have so abundantly received (Keller, Tim. *A 20-Day Study in Stewardship*)
4. **God Creates Humanity to be Servant-Kings of all that He Owns**
  - a. **Genesis 1.26-28**

'The God said, "Let us make humanity in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and *over all the earth* and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created humanity in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth.'

    - Humanity was created as a living breathing statue of God himself in order to reflect his glory, rule and purpose

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**Humanity**

Creation

- Humanity, the Servant-King

- A Quick Story from the Kings of Israel

'Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, 'How do you advise me to answer this people?' And they said to him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.'" (1 Kings 12.-7)

'Mutual servanthood was the ideal. Yes, it was the duty of the people to serve and obey the king, but his primary duty of kingship was to serve them, to care for their needs, provide justice and protection, and avoid oppression, violence and exploitation. A king exists for the benefit of his people, not vice versa' (Wright, Christopher, J.H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, p.122)

- Servant-Kingship gives depth to the concept of stewardship, we are not simply managers

- Fixing our eyes on THE Servant-King, Jesus

'For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10.45)

'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, *taking the form of a servant*, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father' (Phil. 2.5-11)

'Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...' (Eph. 5.2)

**5. God is redeeming (re-creating) his people to be generous stewards, servant-kings, of his world**

**a. This is the goal of our redemption**

- 'The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided we co-suffer with him in order to that we may be co-glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope, that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience' (Rom. 8.16-25)
- 'Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain' (I Cor. 15.58)

**b. Living generous in light of that Day**

- 'As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, *to be generous and ready to share*, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (I Tim. 6.17-18)

## 6. A Challenge to Hear, Questions for Reflection, a Prayer to Pray and a Benediction to Receive

### a. A Challenge to Hear

- 'Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But you belong to God, so you must run away from all this. Instead chase after justice, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Fight the noble fight of faith, get a firm grasp of the life of the coming age, the life you were called to when you made the noble public confession before God, *who gives life to all things* and King Jesus, who made the noble profession before Pontius Pilate' (1 Tim. 6.6-13)

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this famous passage is an indictment of modern Western culture. Never before in history has there been such a relentless pursuit of riches, by more and more highly developed means. Never before has the love of money been elevated to the highest and greatest good, so that if someone asks you, "Why did you do that?" and you responded, 'Because I could make more money that way,' that would be the end of the conversation. Never before have so many people tripped over one another in their eagerness to get rich and thereby impaled themselves on the consequence of their own greed (Wright, Tom. Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters, p.69-70).

### b. Questions for Reflection

- Do you live as if God owes you something?
- What causes you to forget God's ownership and loving control of his world and your life?
- Ponder some of your most intense desires. Does money play a role in these desires? If so, what role does it play?
- How are you exercising Jesus-shaped servant-kingship in your life, in your home, at work, with your time, talents, and treasures? Does your life reflect a lifestyle of being 'rich toward God' (Luke 12.21), i.e. pursues justice, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness, and is generous and eager to share with those in need?

### c. A Prayer to Pray

- 'Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, *for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours*. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. But who am I...that we should be able to thus offer willingly? *For all things come from you, and from your own have we given you*" (1 Chron. 29.10-14)

### d. A Benediction to Receive

- O Lord send out your truth and your light and help us to know and live according to the truth that all things come from you and for you.