

“The Steward’s Lifestyle—Jesus Others Yourself”—Philippians 2:3-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Steward’s Lifestyle—Jesus Others Yourself”, is Philippians 2:3-8 → *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 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 emptied Himself, by 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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How would you describe your lifestyle? Some may immediately think in terms of a “class” system when considering such a question—lower, middle or upper class. Some may immediately think of living patterns, habits or traditions which make up their daily lives. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “lifestyle” as “the typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture.” Such a definition, though, leads me to ask another question: What is “typical” in the lifestyle of the Christian steward?

Living in a culture where it seems anything goes with no boundaries in the ways of functioning in relationship with others, “typical” may not be a crystal clear concept in many peoples’ brains. However, the Christian steward should really have no problem with such a vague concept because Christians are not supposed to be “typical” people. In fact, you are described in 1 Peter 2:9 as *a peculiar people*. (KJV) Peculiar? In what way? In your lifestyle. In other words, what is typical in your lifestyle is actually strange to the world’s ways. This is the essence of Paul’s exhortation in our text.

Some people have encountered these words displayed in various ways: “**J**esus **O**thers **Y**ourself”—JOY. This phrase is intended to show you the way to experience true joy in your lifestyle. You place Jesus first in your life, place others as second important and your own needs and desires last. While this may sound commendable in light of Jesus’ statements about total commitment to Him, love for your neighbor and denying yourself, true joy for Christians is experienced in a way that is literally “out of this world,” as displayed in other-worldly ways by your lifestyle in this world.

The steward’s lifestyle is bound up in what our text says in verse 5 *is yours in Christ Jesus*. What is *yours in Christ Jesus*? A “mind set”—a fixed state of mind—a mind which is set on the Person & Work of Jesus. Our text describes the humiliation of Jesus. Even though He was true

God, instead of clinging to His rights as God He let go of them, emptying *Himself, by taking the form of a servant, humbling Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* (Verses 7-9) When Jesus put His Father's desire for you and others first, it involved giving up His rights even to the point of suffering the sting of death and hell while being crucified. It was not what the world would consider an experience that brought Him "joy."

Exactly! It wasn't suppose to bring Him some kind of personal joy and fulfillment as the world so often defines service to others. The world says, "When you serve others it makes you feel good to know you're doing something good for someone else." Or they say "When you're helping someone else it helps you forget about your own problems." These notions may stroke your ego if the person you're serving allows you to help him and accepts your help. But what happens if you're striving to help someone and he refuses the help or takes advantage of your service or abuses you the whole time you're serving him? Satan uses such frustrated stewardship in the midst of unfulfilled personal expectations as a foothold to produce sins such as resentments, anger, self-righteousness or even giving up completely.

This is why verse 3 of our text says: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.* The steward's lifestyle is different from the world's in that giving seeks not "What's in it for me?"—that is, personal fulfillment.

When you *look . . . to the interests of others* as you deal with your own interests each day (Verse 4), counting *others more significant than yourself . . . in humility*, you realize that the joy belongs to the LORD, not to you. Your desire is to simply be faithful to Yahweh in your giving. Giving and acts of service for the Christian steward are not like “special events” or sporadic acts of service but rather a lifestyle. They flow naturally into the lives of other as you deal with your *own interests* each day.

Later in this letter to the Christians in Philippi Paul tells them: *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* (cf. Philippians 4:4) Only a lifestyle *in the Lord* can produce joy *always*, both when your giving is received graciously **and** when you continue giving while being abused, persecuted, rejected and so forth. This is why the example of Jesus is placed before us in Hebrews 12:2-3 → We are instructed to look to *Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, **Who for the joy that was set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him Who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, **so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.***

Thus, as stewards of God’s grace—that is, the Gospel of the forgiveness of our sins through faith in Jesus—as God’s *peculiar people* in Christ—we have been called and chosen to a lifestyle of witnessing.

With the Holy Spirit working in and through us, we can faithfully and boldly proclaim the Gospel to those around us. Philemon 6 tells us we should witness to our faith so that *the sharing of our faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us **for the sake of Christ***. We witness for the joy of Christ displayed by His suffering and death so that others may rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins for eternal life!

As stewards of God's grace—as His *peculiar people* in Christ—we have been called and chosen to a lifestyle of serving others in humility. Jesus contrasted the lifestyle of the world's "service" to that of His servants in Mark 10:42-45. Instead of "lording it over" others while exercising *authority over them*, Jesus says: *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*. The Christian stewards' lifestyle strives to be faithful to Jesus as we submit *to one another **out of reverence for Christ***. (cf. Ephesians 5:21)

As stewards of God's grace—as His *peculiar people* in Christ—we have been called and chosen to a lifestyle of giving. Speaking about the collection taken up in the churches for those in Judea affected by a famine (cf. Acts 11:27-30), Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7 → *Each one must*

*give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly* (i.e. “I really don’t want to give but I guess I will anyway.”) *or under compulsion* (i.e. “I better give or else!”), *for God loves a cheerful giver*. The reason for giving? To make you feel good? He goes on to say in verses 11-12 → *You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us **will produce thanksgiving to God***. *For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints* (i.e. those affected by the famine) *but is also **overflowing in many thanksgivings to God***.

We **live each day as stewards** because we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In faith, we want to give and serve generously and cheerfully, witnessing to friends and neighbors as God gives us opportunity. It will be challenging. It may be personally rewarding. It will drain energy and emotion and may even involve suffering for Jesus. But it will always involve joy—the joy of the Lord for sinners who need that for which Jesus *humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*—the forgiveness of sin and eternal life! It is the anti-typical way of life for the Christian with a joy realized, experienced and fulfilled in the world without end! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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