

Advent 3, 2018

## Servants and Stewards

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 / St. Matthew 11:2-10

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*"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"* That's Advent. That is Advent summed up so simply and at the same time with endless depth...*"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."* Advent, similar to Lent in its penitential nature, is a reminder that the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ into our humanity was the required payment for our sins. While the rest of the world celebrates Christmas through bulging credit card debt, we are acknowledging our blessed forgiveness of a debt we could never pay. And so, being faithful to the One to whom we owe everything it is our duty to prepare the way of the Lord...in our own hearts and in the world.

In today's Epistle St. Paul tells us to *"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.* In the New Jerusalem Bible the verbiage is even more straightforward; *"People should think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy"*. Isn't that how we want to be seen, and even remembered when we part this world?

If I were to approach one of your co-workers, a neighbor, the guy at the local coffee shop you frequent or even a family member, and I asked them to sum you up as briefly as possible would any of them describe you, in their own words, as a servant of Christ? How about a steward of the mysteries of God? How is your life being played out on the world scene? How do those who know you best see you? Life is more than just putting our best foot forward, more than trying to make an impression. Life is concerned with edifying Christ to the world through honest edification. Being a servant of Christ personifies a heart willing to sacrifice for love, to take up our crosses and follow Him. To be a steward of the mysteries of God is to plunge so deeply that you see this life as it truly is...a mere vapor, an interlude in our juxtaposition

between life with God and life without. And Origen would say that there is a big difference between being a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God. *“Anyone who has read the bible, says Origen, can be a servant of Christ, but to be a steward of the mysteries one must plumb their depths.”*

I have known many servants of Christ who are also stewards of the mysteries of God...very devout men and women who realize the serious nature of learning from the established body of Christ through the centuries. Truth in Christian understanding is not an individualistic passion and those who enter such a chasm are endangering themselves and potentially others. A couple of interesting conversations of sorts have me wondering where the modern Christian mind is headed. I recently had a conversation with a man who believes all of scripture is fallible except for the words of Christ. He even has a red-letter version of the scriptures so not to waste time with the insignificant parts. And then there was the woman who stressed to me that going to church was not required because Jesus never said that we must go to church. I wonder if either of them realizes that Jesus never personally wrote any of the bible.

Modernity seems to be giving way to a Christianity that is becoming so lukewarm that we are becoming lazy in our worship and unconcerned with the price our Lord paid to ensure our eternal lives. Altering the scriptures to justify our positions may satisfy our own lusts but it has nothing to do with being the servants of Christ nor stewards of God. Is it possible that we can become such uninspired servants that we have no evidence of being stewards, no desire for the depths of theological insight into the nature of God and our relationship to Him? We are sinners and it takes EFFORT to walk within the Will of God! We don't get to make it up and create our own versions of Christianity. Jesus set the Table and asked us to come! We don't get to change the menu!

To be a servant and a steward of God Almighty requires submission to His Holy Word...you don't get to pick and choose!

*“He (Jesus) went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom”* (Luke 14:16).  
He came to worship and prayed!

*“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”* (John 14:26). It is the third person of the Holy Trinity speaking directly to us!

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, that you, a man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Servants yes...but so much more are we called to be! Stewards that uphold and emulate the Christian calling, Stewards who are not ashamed to stand for the truth of Christ Jesus, Stewards willing to sacrifice the philosophies of the world to engage the truth of God’s word made flesh.

What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind? A man clothed in soft raiment? A prophet? Yes...a prophet, and so much more. A servant of Christ and a steward of God whose very life was lived pointing the way to salvation, whose very life was spent in sacrificial obedience for the truth of God, whose very life would bring the Gospel truth to sinners...What do we come to church to see, a quick pic-me-up, a social exercise...how about a new Advent? Yes, a new advent, a refocusing on our need for a relationship with the Almighty, a renewed understanding of why Christmas had to be.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord...how is it done? By trusting our Holy Scriptures and coming to church where your faith is strengthened and the foundation of your belief is held together. This is how we become the servants of Christ and the stewards of God. No one said it would be easy and don’t believe anyone who says it comes without sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed all that we may have all that the Father has to offer.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.