



“Jesus: My God, My Lord, My Savior”
Colossians 1:15-22

Idea: A biblical understanding of stewardship begins with a biblical understanding of Lordship.

Intro: When the average evangelical Christian hears the word *stewardship* coming from the pastor’s lips, he or she immediately reaches to lockdown their wallet. Your reaction is probably just like that. In fact the thought of taking the month of August off from church might have raced through your mind when you heard we were starting this new sermon series.

Why is stewardship such a frightful and unpleasant subject? May I suggest the reason is largely due to the fact that we have the wrong perspective of stewardship? I believe that to the average church member stewardship is a finance campaign to raise money for the next project. Stewardship, however, is so much more than that. Another reason this subject is unpleasant to so many involves the perceived stress it adds to one’s budget and calendar.

Think for a moment. What events have produced the greatest stress in your life today and this past week? Haven’t they

involved some feeling of being overloaded with responsibilities at home, work, church, or all the above? Paying bills? Running late for an appointment? Balancing your checkbook? Waiting in a traffic jam on the highway or stuck in an airport? Facing unexpected car repair or medical expenses? Going with too little rest? Running short of cash before payday?

Each of these anxiety-producers has to do with either time or money. Think of how many day-to-day issues involves the use of one of these two. The clock and the dollar are such substantial factors in so many parts of life that their role must be considered in any serious discussion of Godly living.

Therefore, it is imperative that we learn how to better steward our lives, families, time, money, ministries, and everything that God has entrusted to us. What is a steward? The biblical picture is that of a household or estate manager. In Genesis 39 we see that Joseph was the steward of Potiphar's house. The steward is not the owner; he simply manages and cares for what is owned by his master.

Stewardship, then, as defined by Chris Goulard, is “foundationally understanding that we are not owners of things, but managers.” So in order to be a good steward, we first need to better know who the owner is.

This morning we begin this series by looking at Jesus: My God, My Lord, My Savior. In order to live with palms up we first must know and understand who we're lifting them too.

Colossians 1:15-22.

Inquiry: Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae in order to combat a destructive heresy that threatened to undermine the gospel. The heresy being taught was a combination of Eastern philosophy and Jewish legalism, with elements of gnosticism. The gnostics were the people “in the know” when it came to the deep things of God. They were the “spiritual aristocracy” in the church. This heresy promised

people such a close union with God that they could achieve spiritual perfection. Spiritual fullness could be theirs only if they entered into the teachings and ceremonies prescribed. It taught that matter is evil; therefore, a holy God could not come into contact with matter. So there had to be a series of emanations from God to His creation. Added to these Eastern philosophies was a form of Jewish legalism. The teachers believed the right of circumcision and the keeping of Old Testament Law, especially dietary laws, were helpful in spiritual development.

In response to this destructive heresy that was disrupting the faith of the Colossian believers, the apostle Paul reminded the church that Jesus was in fact God, that His sacrifice was sufficient, and as such He was to have preeminence in their lives. As we seek to be good stewards of the life God has given to us, we need to be reminded of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

1. Jesus created it all; it all was created for Him. (vs. 15-16)

There is much debate within other religions as to the nature of Jesus Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the doctrine of the Trinity. They claim that Jesus was not divine and that the Holy Spirit is an active force rather than a Person. Jesus instead was God's only direct creation; therefore, He is rightly called "the son of God." Mormons believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods. A good way of grasping their understanding of God is the phrase, "as man is God once was." In other words, God the Father was once a human who lived on earth. He died, was resurrected, glorified, and grew into His deified status. The Son and Spirit are His divine offspring. Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and that He will return again at the end. They even refer to Jesus as a word from God, but Islam explicitly denies His deity as the Son of God.

With all these different ideas and more swirling around us, what are we to believe about Jesus? Paul clarifies things for us. Read verses 15-16.

*Jesus is the image of the invisible God.
He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact
imprint of his nature...– Hebrews 1:3a*

Jesus is the exact representation and revelation. Jesus was able to say, “*Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9). God the Father is in essence invisible, but Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us.

Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. This description of Jesus doesn’t refer to time but to place or status. Jesus was not the first being created, since Paul goes on to point out that by Jesus everything in heaven and on earth was created. Firstborn speaks of first importance or first rank. Jesus then is not a created being; He is eternal God who created all that there is.

Not only did He create it all, it all was created for Him. Jesus Christ is the Sphere in which everything exists, the Agent through which everything came into being, and the One for whom everything was made.

That means that just like everything else in creation, you were made by God and for God. Your life is not your own; it is God’s. You are a manager, a steward, of the life He has given you. The sooner you understand this truth and submit yourself to it the better your life will be.

“I fail or succeed in my stewardship of life in proportion to how convinced I am that life belongs to God.” – Pearl Bartel

2. Jesus rules over it all. (vs. 17-19)

Notice the descriptive words Paul used to speak of Jesus' rule. He is before all things. In Him all things hold together. He is the head of the church. He is the beginning. In Him the fullness of God dwells. In other words, Jesus rules over everything.

This means that you're your life is His life. Your time is His time. Your family is His family. Your job is His job. Your money is His money. Your skills are His skills. Your house is His house. Your church is His church. He owns it all; He rules over it all. Thus, Jesus is to be preeminent, to have first place, in all things.

3. Jesus reconciled it all. (vs. 20-22)

When the first man and woman sinned, they declared war on God; but God did not declare war on them. Instead, God sought Adam and Eve, and He provided a covering for their sins.

Adam's rebellion has been passed down through each generation. And so, today just as it was in Garden of Eden, the unredeemed sinner is at war with God (Rom 8:7). The sinner may be sincere, religious, and even moral; but he is still at war with God.

When Adam sinned all of creation including mankind was corrupted; it was subjected to futility (Rom 8:20). Paul declares here that Jesus has reconciled all things to Himself (vs. 20). How can a holy God be reconciled with sinful man? Can God lower His standards, close His eyes to sin, or ignore the rebellion? No, His justice won't allow it. If He did the universe would crumble because His consistent holy Law upholds it. God reconciled it all by taking the punishment for the rebellion upon Himself. It was the death of Jesus, God the Son, that has reconciled all things.

Being fully God, Jesus Christ was able to fully identify with the holiness of God. Being fully man, He was able to fully identify with weakness and temptations of humanity. Jesus' sinless life was given as a perfect sacrifice, a perfect substitute for the sins of man. It is God the Son who reconciles you to God the Father through the work of God the Spirit.

Conclusion: If you are in relationship with God today, it was Jesus who reconciled you. You were once dead in your sin and trespasses, but by grace He made you holy, blameless, and above reproach.

How does one respond to such grace? You respond like Paul did. You choose to give yourself to the Lord as a bond-servant. The term the apostle most often used to describe himself as Christ's servant was δοῦλος. The term carries the basic idea of subservience. It refers to one bound to another, whose will is swallowed up in the will of another. Paul's will was at one time swallowed up in the will of Satan. But when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his will was swallowed up in the sweet will of God. Paul served Satan to the detriment of his own interests, but when he met Jesus he served Him with reckless abandonment, not regarding his own interests. Paul realized that Jesus created it all, and it all was created for Him. He realized that Jesus rules over it all. And Paul realized that Jesus reconciled it all. Jesus is glorious and gracious.

When confronted with His glory and grace:

- It should change the way I live.
- It should change the way I serve.
- It should change the way I give.

Stewardship begins with a proper understanding of God. It begins with the acknowledgement that Jesus is God, and I am a man...that Jesus is Lord, and I am His servant...that Jesus is Savior, and I am a recipient of His grace.