

The Freedom of the Steward Leader

Jesus spoke more frequently about the kingdom of God than any other subject recorded in Scripture I wonder then why it was not more of a major theme in my own church upbringing. I only stumbled on the importance of the term in seminary when I read John Bright's *The Kingdom of God*. Perhaps for many of us the idea of a kingdom seems like something more familiar as we have seen in human kingdoms. Yet we cannot deny its central place in Scripture Simply put, we are stewards in God's kingdom.

This new kingdom that has come among us in the work of Christ is complete, yet also transitional. It is complete in that it is the kingdom of the Son, whose work to restore all things is complete. It is transitional in that it has come into this sinful world which does not know that restoration has been made for it at every level.

The kingdom of this world celebrates “the self” as king. In seeking to be its own god and thirsting for the control of Eden, just as Adam and Eve did, “the self”, reenacts the Fall and chooses evil over good again and again.

It rebels against grace and therefore chooses destruction over life. It still plays the owner and therefore chooses manipulation, exploitation and abuse over the work of the godly steward. The kingdom of God has come, and so we see it only in a brief and incomplete way in the lives of those who have been called into that kingdom, who have repented in the face of grace and who have embraced the role of steward with joy. In Hebrews 2, we see this twofold

nature of the kingdom of God in the work of Christ: ***You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:7-9)***

We see Jesus! That is the result of the work of the steward. In a world that sees everything apart from Christ's control, people still can see Jesus in the lives of the workers of his kingdom. The kingdom of God has come in the work of Christ. God left nothing that is not subject to him. There is nothing that needs to be added to complete the kingdom or to usher it in from some heavenly waiting room. Even in this provisional form, it is here in Christ, and we are the body of Christ!

The evidence of this new kingdom is found in the lives of the people of the kingdom who live as stewards in a world of owners. We proclaim the restoration of all things in Christ. That is the message of the gospel that calls men and women to repentance and wholeness as children in the kingdom of the triune God of grace. **We live as ones who have received an invaluable gift: restored relationships at all four levels in Christ.** And so we respond by entering into our call to be stewards of these relationships, rejecting the temptation to take control, or to add a legal requirement to a gracious gift, to

abuse and exploit, to own and put it into service for our own benefit or, as an act of a quest for self-actualization.

By accepting this vocation and by rejecting these temptations, we live as children of Christ's kingdom. And as we do, the world around us is given a glimpse of the fact that all things are indeed in subjection to Christ.

They are given a look of the true reality of their creaturely existence. They are given a glimpse of what will be revealed in its fullness at the second coming of the Son, when what is now only seen in part will be clearly evident in all creation. They are given a glimpse of Jesus.

I would call this being a one-kingdom steward One-kingdom stewards have submitted everything on all four levels to the full authority of the one Lord who reigns over the one kingdom of God. Everything they have has been laid at the feet of one Lord in every area of their life. Living as one kingdom stewards is their calling, their vocation and their joy.

A few days ago we were reminded of the story of Moses. God called him to a task that he was not qualified for. So God told him to throw his shepherd staff on the ground and it became a snake, God told him to catch its tail and it turned back into a staff. He told Moses then to put his hand into his cloak and it came out white with leprosy. He told him to put it in again and take it out and it came out clean. He also told him that when he returned to Egypt, to take water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground and it will turn to blood.

God was showing Moses that even though he was afraid that he was not capable of performing the task God was calling him to do, that he was not to depend on himself but on God who has power over all things. God may not

have us turn wooden staffs into snakes, but He has assured us that through His Spirit, we have the same power of the same God who is able to do all that He calls us to do for Him.

- Yet we cannot deny its central place in Scripture Simply put, we are stewards in God's kingdom. ***Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.***
- Jesus work on the cross is finished, but the Kingdom is still in transition. Life and restoration is available but some choose to reject it.
- The evidence of this new kingdom is found in the lives of the people of the kingdom who live as stewards in a world of owners. ***Ephesians 5:8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***
- We live as ones who have received an invaluable gift: restored relationships at all four levels in Christ. Whole Life Stewards.
- By accepting this vocation and by rejecting these temptations, we live as children of Christ's kingdom. And as we do, the world around us is given a glimpse of the fact that all things are indeed in subjection to Christ. ***2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ,***

God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- One-kingdom stewards have submitted everything on all four levels to the full authority of the one Lord who reigns over the one kingdom of God. Everything they have has been laid at the feet of one Lord in every area of their life. The Sacred/Secular Divide is gone.