

**Building Blocks of Christian Life**  
**Stewardship**  
**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2019**

1Corinthians 6:20

*You are not your own, you were bought at a price, therefore*

...

When I typed building blocks into Google, I got Lego, of course. But we are not playing Lego today, nor are we building a building. We have been exploring the basic elements of the Christian Life. Bible reading, prayer, Stewardship, Worship, and Evangelism.

The starting point for this morning's thinking is two fundamental principles of life. The first is the **God created you.**

You are not an accident of evolution, you are a deliberate creation of God. And as Oli profoundly said on prayer, what you think of God and what you think God thinks of you will colour your response to that. You were created for a purpose. Understanding that purpose realises the thrill of knowing that you have a destiny and a job to do. Can I turn your attention to a verse in Ephesians 2 which is Paul full of how great this salvation by faith that we have in Christ Jesus. He says in Ephesians 2:10 ***For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

You were created to do good works. Not just any works but specific works that God has planned for you. When sin entered our world, our agenda changed. We were no longer keen to do God's will, but our own thing. That is why we

can never be content without Christ. We were not designed to sin, we were designed to follow Jesus. So when we come to Christ and receive our salvation, we begin a new life and the peace and joy continues as we do what we were created to do.

The question becomes what are the good works ?

One answer to that comes from the fact that God created you.

In Genesis 1 we read:

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>[a]</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

*<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

*<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

Humans are meant to rule the creation. But we must understand that word ‘rule’ in God speak. Jesus spelt it out in John 13 when he washed his disciples feet. To ‘rule’ means to care and serve. We are stewards of creation, not to wreck it but to nurture it. Our Gospel is one of caring for the environment, making a sustainable world, with care for all species.

I want to move on to the second fundamental principle of life which is **Jesus died for you.**

Just lets pause and think again about what that means. The creator God chooses to give all he has of himself to bring you back to himself. Jesus died for you. As John 3:16 puts it. <sup>16</sup> *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* <sup>17</sup> *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

And so Paul reflecting on this salvation and how it affects our lives as Christians says this in 1Corinthians 6:19 *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.*

In fact he repeats the key expression in the next chapter (although Paul did not divide his letter into chapters.) In 1 Corinthians 7:23 *You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24 Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.*

***You were bought at a price.***

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for your sin. He paid for price of your freedom. It was costly, beyond imagination as the holy one, God's son, bore the full weight of your sin and mine. SO you can go free. But your freedom enables you to reach out to God in a different way. Instead of trying to buy God's favour you have it by grace.

That results in an overwhelming gratitude. I am no longer my own – that was the very foundation of sin. I belong to Jesus. I am his. I can only live to please him because of what he has done for me.

Before exploring some aspects of stewardship, I want to put down two other markers to guide your thinking.

### **The first is the marker of First Fruits.**

In The Book of Exodus we read about the rituals of worship under the Old Covenant. One was that the first born and the first of all the crops belongs to God. The people of Israel had to exercise faith that there would be a further harvest, more lambs and so on. They also were giving the best of their crop. In our evaluating this morning we need to keep this in view. Are we giving the best or just what is left over when we have had our share?

### **The second is the question of percentages?**

Which conveniently leads me to the second marker which is how much is God's share and my share.

Going back to the Old testament, the people of Israel were to give 10% or a tithe. But that fails to meet the principle that 'you are not your own, you were bought at a price'. You may well give 10% or your time, your money, your effort to God but what you do with the other 90% matters just as much.

I am going to suggest five different aspects of our stewardship we need to evaluate.

The first we have already looked at.

## **You are a steward of God's creation**

### **You are a steward in your workplace**

Becoming a Christian rarely requires you to change your job. For a few the missionary call is for overseas but for most you are called to remain in the situation you are in and serve your God there. Paul tells us, in Colossians 3:22-4:1

*<sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.*

*<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism*

This is complete change of mindset. You were bought with a price so you are serving Jesus at work. Christians are not necessary the most brilliant workers but they should be marked by their integrity in the work place.

### **You are a steward of your personal life**

In Galatians 5:13-20 we read:

*<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

*<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever<sup>[c]</sup> you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

That blows away any idea that being a Christian is just about going to church. It is about how you live this life. You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit so what you do with your body and mind matters a great deal. So we believe that sex is only OK in the context of marriage. We believe that any form of addiction smoking, drinking, drugs that damage the body and/ or destroy the mind are evil and need healing. We also believe idolatry whether it is bowing to an object or a person or an ideal or a football team, or sport or particular style of music is wrong. Not that total abstinence is somehow holy. Food is good but in excess is can be an addiction and needs the normal disciplines of diet and exercise. The same applies to most of the above. For example drugs, used for health reasons can be good for you, but used to gratify some escapist dream they become bad for you.

## **You are a steward of God's money**

1Chronicles 29:14 David speaking about giving for the temple prays this

<sup>4</sup> *“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.*

This phrase is part of the Prayer book service. It underlines the concept of the stewardship of creation and that you are bought at a price. You are not your own and neither is your money. It is not only the tithes or 10% or whatever God lays on your heart to give that is God's but every pound you possess. So what you do with that money requires stewardship. Your food bills, utility bills, are all right and proper but sanctified by the knowledge that you are spending the God's money to care for yourself and your family and friends. It matters whether you buy on credit or not. It matters what you spend your money on. Drugs, gambling, drink in excess, inappropriate entertainment, pornography and the like are not what God gave you the money to spend on. Neither is just hoarding it. In the Old Testament the harvest gift was the first fruit, the firstborn sheep, goat or cattle. This is a high risk strategy. You have to trust God that there will be a full harvest. But dependence on God is what we are and it is good to practice it with our money. Set aside what you believe God wants you to give, spend the rest as stewards spending God's money on his behalf. Now how you do that will depend on what you think God is like. Can I remind you that Jesus was not miserly but when he fed 5000 there were 12 baskets left over, 4000 there were 7 extra. At the wedding in Cana there was a lot of

wine. Because God , we know, is outstandingly generous. So be generous, hospitable, keep good accounts but live well with the 90% If you have difficulty in making ends meet, work at it but can I remind you God put you in this fellowship to be your family. So if necessary ask for help from your brothers and sisters in Christ as they will not be seeking interest as the loan sharks.

### **You are a steward of the time God gives you**

All of the time not just the hour or two on a Sunday. There are 24 hours in a day, 7days in a week. That makes 168 hours a week. So 10% of that is around 17 hours. We need to be careful here. We sleep around 8 hours a night, so you are awake 16 hours a day, 112 hours a week. 10% of that is about 2 hours a day. Sobering isn't it? How long is your 'quiet time'? What do we spend our time on? It is worth challenging ourselves. And then there is the matter of quality time. Who gets that? God's priorities are himself and your family. What you do with your time matters. Here I believe the first fruits marker matters. Do you give God quality time or just what's left over after the TV, the family, and so on?

### **Summary**

So where does this lead us? You have to choose whether you fit yourself up with a set of rules for being a good steward of the person God created and Jesus died for or you can concentrate on God and develop a servant mindset that is eager to love and good works. God loves the cheerful giver, he loves to see you stumbling to live out the Jesus life day by day, hour by hour. Maybe you need to do some

accounting of time, money, morality, work ethic and so on. But beware of thinking that applying some discipline in your life, which is good, is the whole story. You are in a relationship with the creator God. You are in a relationship with the Saviour Jesus. Developing that relationship means disciplining all aspect of your life. But the heart of the matter is us responding to the love of God by our love for him, our love for each other, our love for our neighbours and family and friends, our love for those who hate us.