

***“The Life of the Steward” 1 Peter 4:7-11 (11/16/25)***

Last week, we learned together about who a steward is. God’s steward is like God’s bride. They are not people who do God’s work mechanically, but people who share and empathize with God’s joy and God’s pain and God’s heart, and do God’s work as if it were their own. And God’s steward is a person who wisely manages and uses what God has entrusted. God’s steward does not do God’s work with their own thoughts or their own experiences, but they discern God’s will well and manage and use what God has given according to that will. Lastly, God’s steward is a person who fulfills God’s purpose. They are people who wait for Jesus Christ’s return and do their best to fulfill God’s purpose and God’s will.

Today, continuing from last week, I would like to keep talking about stewardship. Last week, we learned who a steward is; today, I want to talk about how a steward should live. We often think that a steward is a person who manages something. God’s steward is a person who manages what God has entrusted and lives accordingly.

When I was doing military training as an officer candidate, four candidates shared one room. At that time, one of my roommates was someone whose father was a pastor. This roommate was a person with very strong and good faith. But he had a very conservative view of faith. He believed that everything written in the Bible must be read and believed literally. Sometimes, we need to read the Bible literally, but this roommate interpreted the Bible truly literally. So based on the book of Genesis, he believed that humans had the authority to rule over nature and animals, given by God. Because humans can rule nature as they wish according to the authority given by God, he thought that destroying and consuming nature was also within human authority, and he said that there was no need for environmental

protection. He did not understand why people even raised pets like dogs or cats.

This roommate faithfully followed and lived by God's Word. But is what my roommate said stewardship? Is what he said the same as wisely and properly managing and using what God has given to us? Of course not. Using what God has given us well does not mean that we can do whatever we want. Making what belongs to God flourish, making what belongs to God align with God's will—this is the purpose of the life of God's steward.

When we hear a very clear story like my roommate's, we can clearly understand what the life of God's steward is. My roommate's opinion sounds weird to us. The reason is that we clearly know why God gave humans the authority to rule God's creation. However, many Christians still misunderstand one thing when they talk about stewardship. When we talk about what God has given to us, we usually think only of the physical things we received. But what we must clearly know is that we received everything from God. We often think, "I must use my money or property according to God's will," but we rarely think, "I must use my life according to God's will, I must use my breath according to God's will, I must use my soul according to God's will, I must use and manage my body well according to God's will." The life of a steward is a life that manages and uses everything we have according to God's will.

Then, what is God's will? Only by knowing God's will can we live the life of a steward according to God's will. The reason God gave us life and everything—even giving His only Son to us—is to give us the opportunity to love God and love our neighbor. In other words, God's will is that we live for loving God and loving our neighbor.

In today's Scripture, Peter gives several teachings to the readers of that time.

To understand the content, we need to understand Peter. If Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter was the apostle to the Jews. Peter proclaimed Jesus Christ from the Jewish point of view. Although he denied Jesus, he was still the leader of the disciples and the one who experienced Jesus most closely. The letters that Peter wrote to the churches at that time are the epistles of Peter. The early church at that time believed that Jesus would return very soon. But even after 10 or 20 years had passed, Jesus did not come, and the persecution from Rome was getting stronger. Contrary to their expectations, Jesus was not returning, false teachers were spreading wrong gospels, and Roman persecution was increasing, causing Christians' hope to fade. In this historical background, Peter began today's Scripture by saying, "The end of all things is near." If Peter was the apostle to the Jews, he could have taught them to keep the commandments and keep the Law better since Jesus was coming soon. But in today's Scripture, Peter said to live as good stewards. When we look closely at Peter's teaching, he talks about the life of a steward and tells them to practice love for God and love for neighbor.

Before Peter talks about loving God and loving neighbor, he teaches in today's passage to pray. "Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray." Prayer is the foundation of the steward's life. Prayer has many functions, but the most important function of prayer is that it is the means of communication between God and us. Through prayer, we can feel God's heart and know God's will. To communicate with God and to clearly know God's will, we must always stay alert and sober-minded and pray.

Peter then clearly speaks about loving our neighbor. "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." Sin was a very sensitive issue for Jews at that time. Jews knew clearly that if there was sin between God and

humans, they could not enter the kingdom of God. So they kept the Law faithfully and tried to become righteous, sinless people. Peter, in this matter, emphasizes love that covers all sins and encourages people to love one another.

And Peter teaches, “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” When we love others, if we do not have God’s heart, that love can also become a law. When I was young, the reason I did not like Christians was that I always felt an intention behind their kindness and hospitality. I could feel that they were nice to me and kind to me because they wanted me to come to church. If I said even a little negative thing about Christianity or rejected Christianity, the people who had been kind suddenly changed their attitude and argued with me. Then I became convinced that their kindness had another purpose. Peter says, “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling,” meaning do not love your neighbor in a way of keeping the law. If you love each other by law without sincerity, grumbling will arise. Through prayer, we should hold God’s heart and love and serve our neighbor with God’s heart.

Peter continues, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” He told them to use the gifts they had received to serve one another. Then we must know clearly what gift we have received so that we can serve according to that gift. Do you clearly know what gift you have received? When people ask me what gift I received, I say that I have the gift of “substitute.” I know how to do many things, but there is nothing that I do exceptionally well compared to others. So whenever people look for me, it is when there is no true expert in that field and when they need someone to replace them. When I was young, it was not easy to accept that I was always second. But after knowing that my gift was given by God and realizing that I can work for God in any field, I came to feel proud of this gift of being a substitute.

Using the gifts we received to serve one another begins with knowing that we received everything from God. It is not doing the work I want to do or the work I like, but using what has been given to me to serve—that is what makes a person a faithful steward.

Lastly, Peter says that all of this is for God's glory. "So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." He teaches that even speaking or serving others must be done with the strength God provides, and all of this is so that God may be praised in everything. The ultimate goal of living as a steward is to lift up God and love God. Before Jesus Christ returns to this earth, making God glorified and exalted on this earth is the purpose of the steward's life.

We are all people who have received the grace of Christ. We were beings who could only die, but through the life of Jesus Christ, we have become those who live again. We have already died with Christ on the cross, and we live again through the resurrected life of Christ. Nothing belongs to us, and everything we have has been given by God. We are God's stewards who must manage and use everything given to us according to God's will. We must live to fulfill God's purpose. We must love our neighbors deeply, without grumbling, and live by serving with the gifts we have received. And we must live so that our God may be glorified and exalted on this earth. I pray that during this week, the grace of God's salvation will overflow within us and give us strength to live as God's faithful stewards. And through our lives, may God be glorified and lifted high. Amen.