

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.



Sold Out!

Speaking to his disciples, Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26).

He tried explaining his task to them. He told them about the coming suffering he would endure, that he would be killed, but that he would rise again. "Never!" exclaimed Peter. How did Jesus reply? "Oh, thank you, Peter. That's so thoughtful and brave of you, Peter." No, that's not what Peter heard. *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"* (Matthew 16:21-23).

It's difficult for us to understand Jesus' command to leave our families, even to hate them, so that we can follow him. Our difficulty comes because we have in mind the things of men, not of God.

We know Jesus loved his family. On the cross, his request of John was to care for his mother. We know he loved his friends. He wept at Lazarus' tomb. We also know that Jesus never wavered in his love for us, and that's why he *"resolutely set out for Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:51). Because he had in mind the things of God, he

could accomplish the eternal good of all mankind.

What about you? Are you keeping in mind the things of God? Can you say, "Get behind me" to well-meaning family or friend who would deter you from the path on which you know God has set you? Be encouraged by your Savior who has fulfilled perfectly all that he asks you to do. Be inspired by him who set aside honor and glory to pay the price of your failures. Then pick up the cross he gives you and be his disciple (Luke 14:27).

Ashamed of Christ?

The streets were packed with people shouting, *"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"* (John 12:13). Although he rode down that street on a donkey, the crowds still saw him as the king who would deliver them from oppression.

The disciples, too, envisioned an earthly kingdom with Jesus ruling overall and themselves sitting at his right and left hands (Mark 10:37, 41).

As the events of the week unfolded, however, that hope had evaporated. Still, the disciples and the faithful few followed their Master and stood at the foot of the cross, watching and waiting, unashamed as the One they loved and trusted hung nearly naked, bruised, and bleeding in seeming defeat as he died a death reserved for the vilest criminal. Were they responding to Jesus' words that, if they were ashamed of him, he would be ashamed of them before his Father? *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels"* (Luke 9:26). Perhaps, but more likely their love surpassed any feeling of shame that their cause, along with their Lord, was lost.

1 Corinthians 13:13 tells us, *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”* At times faith is dim, and hope is distant. Love overcomes shame and fear and doubt. Love brought Jesus here the first time, and love will bring him back again.

On the Lighter Side

While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish carriage. The owner of the carriage obviously had a sense of humor, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand printed sign: “Energy efficient vehicle ... Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust.”



Is Your Light Shining?

One of God’s greatest blessings is sunlight.

Light is so basic, so necessary, and so wonderful. It is essential for life. Because of the light from the sun, we can see the beauty of God’s creation. We have light because God said, *“Let there be light, and there was light”* (Genesis 1:3). Until God made light, the world was dark.

What the Creator God did for the earth, the Redeemer God does for us humans. John, the apostle, tells us how this has come about.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us... (John 1:1, 14). In Jesus, John told us, “The true light that gives light was coming into the world” (John 1:9).

Jesus is that true light, and he told us, *“You are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:14). It is his light within us being reflected that allows us to carry out his command: *“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). We are called to keep the light that God gives us burning brightly and shining for the entire world to see. *“Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house”* (John 5:15). Nourished through Word and Sacrament, we can be faithful reflections of God’s light.

Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!