

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

This Sunday is Stewardship Sunday. The sermon series on John has been pushed back by one week, so the original post for this Sunday will appear next week. This Sunday's sermon text is [1 Peter 4:10](#), "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

This post will not have much to do with the order of worship this week, or the music for this week's service. Nonetheless, I hope that the content may still be a help as we prepare for worship this Sunday. This post is actually more of a confession, that is related to this Sunday's text. But before going there, I'll start with a joke, courtesy of my father-in-law:

"How many Presbyterians does it take to change a light bulb?"

Answer – "*CHANGE???*"

As many of you know, a lot of thought and planning goes into worship services. So when there's a schedule change, like there was this past Monday, it shakes things up a bit, and my knee jerk reaction is to get even more twisted out of shape than I already am, which is pretty twisted. But changes occur and the Lord is sovereign over all of them (if only *that* were my instinctive response.)

When I arrived home on Monday evening, there was a Ben Lippen t-shirt lying on my bed, a hand-me-up from my son, Nathanael. The shirt had a scripture verse printed on it: [1 Peter 4:10](#). God is righteous and holy, and other times, he's just flat out hilarious!

As I began thinking about what to write for this Sunday's service, I went to John Calvin's commentary on 1 Peter. Regarding this particular verse, Calvin writes:

He (Peter) reminds us that we ought to bear in mind when we do good to our neighbors; for nothing more is fitted to correct our murmurings than to remember that we do not give our own, but only dispense what God has committed to us.

In the adjacent and preceding verse, Peter writes "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." On this verse, Calvin comments:

Peter adds, "without murmurings(grumblings)" for it is a rare example that one spends himself and his own on his neighbor without any disparaging reflection.

There are many, many sins that characterize this age, but the most acceptable, and as Jerry Bridges coined, "respectable sin" of our day may be grumbling. It's everywhere, and it's constant. Turn on the news on your TV or radio. It is not information. It's *kvetching*.

Of course it is not so different in the church, though it ought to be utterly different. But the Apostle Peter offers us a corrective to our griping in these verses—stewardship. Calvin rightly applies the idea of stewardship to any and all gifts—finances, spiritual gifting, and other gifts and talents that we may have:

If we then excel others in ANY gift, let us remember that we are as to this the stewards of God, in order that we may kindly impart it to our neighbors as their necessity and benefit requires...no one is to be content with one thing and with his own gifts, but every one has need of the help and aid of his brother. This, I say, is a bond which God hath

appointed for retaining friendship among men, for they cannot live without mutual assistance. Thus it happens, that he who in many things seeks the aid of his brethren, ought to communicate to them more freely what he has received. This bond of unity has been observed and noticed by heathens. But Peter teaches us here that God had designedly done this, that he might bind men one to another.

When we give of our gifts, we are binding ourselves to one another, in love. When we are reminded that these gifts do not belong to us, or even find their origin in us, we are no longer bound to the gift (which is bondage and idolatry) but are free in Christ to love and assist one another *with* the gift.

As we worship the Lord this Sunday, may he help us to see that everything we have been given and blessed with comes from his hand, and that it is all meant to be used for his glory. And should the Lord Jesus come back, may he find us faithful, grateful, and content in the work of stewarding his gifts.