



Stewardship Reflection on Lectionary Readings

September 27, 2020 — Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

EZ 18:25-28; PS 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; PHIL 2:1-11 or 2:1-5; MT 21:28-32

Today's readings challenge the modern-day disciple to imitate more fully both the actions and attitudes of Christ. This is, after all, the point of our stewardship way of life.

St. Paul encapsulates the actions and attitudes we must strive for in the Second Reading, from the Letter to the Philippians. "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others." In other words, Paul continues, "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus." Whether we are at work or school or within our own homes, our actions should be focused on others first in imitation of Christ, who is always perfectly focused on others.



But there is another reason for seeing others as more important than ourselves, a reason that will help us to become better stewards. It is the recognition that the "others" in my life — whether my spouse and children, my next-door neighbor, or even the co-worker that gets on my last nerve — all these others are gifts from God, to be treasured and nurtured for God's glory.

And just in case this seems like a bit too much to ask of us, St. Paul gives us another reminder about the Savior we are imitating as we embrace this attitude towards others. "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave... he humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Unimaginable humility.

We should not be overwhelmed by this high bar, however. Our God is a loving and patient Father. He embraces every faltering step we take in imitation of His Son. Jesus demonstrates this comforting truth through the parable He tells in today's Gospel from Matthew. It is the story of two sons whose father instructs them to go out and work in his vineyard that day. The second son gives the right answer, right away: "Yes, sir." But he does not follow through. Despite the lip service, he has failed to follow his father's will.

The first son just can't seem to get on board with his father's command. He responds, "I will not." At least he is honest! And this honest, less-than-perfect response should be consoling to us Christian

stewards. Haven't we all felt this way at times when God's will for us seems to be just too hard? We can be honest with God at these times. He knows already, after all. But when we stayed engaged in a real relationship with Him, even if it's just to say, "I don't think I can, Lord," He will supply us with just the grace we need to change our minds and do what He is asking us to do.

We are called to a high and holy standard — living as Christ's disciples every day and with every person the Lord places in our path. But we can move towards this goal in "baby steps." We can even take a step backward from time to time because our Father is merciful and kind. What matters is that we keep baby-stepping along, assured of the grace we need to more closely imitate the actions and attitudes of Christ. This is the beauty of the stewardship way of life. Today's readings challenge the modern-day disciple to imitate more fully both the actions and attitudes of Christ. This is, after all, the point of our stewardship way of life.

— **Stewardship Reflections** by [Catholic Stewardship Consultants](#)