

## Different Gifts, Same Grace

† Heads up... (vv.1,2)

† Sober service... (vv.3-5)

† Use your gifts ! (vv.6-8)

In the name of Jesus, dear fellow stewards of God's gifts, recipients of His grace:

This week the world lost one of its brightest minds. Even if you don't know computers, you've heard of Apple, iPhone, iPad, MacBook. With Disney and Pixar the deceased helped produce *Toy Story 1 & 2* (1995, 1999), *A Bug's Life* (1998); *Monsters, Inc.* (2001); *Finding Nemo* (2003). He held 338 US patents, revolutionized six industries, estimated wealth at \$8.3 billion (2010). Introducing iCloud June 6<sup>th</sup>, his attitude toward coworkers was positive. His 2005 Stanford University Commencement speech was not.

"When I was 17, I read a quote...something like: 'If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right.' ...Since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: 'If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?'" "Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new....Someday...you will...become the old and be cleared away."

Depressing evolution from Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple, a Buddhist, dead at age 56.<sup>1</sup> We can learn a lot from the best and brightest minds. But *Why we're here, Where we're from?* and *Where we're going?* – only God can answer. Better than Jobs is the job God did for us and the job God has for us.

† Heads up... (vv.1,2)

Eleven chapters of mind boggling revelation just wrapped up with Paul's inspired doxology: "*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?'*" *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*" (Romans 11:33–36 NIV84) God created us to love and serve Him. Serving self is what brought death into this world through Adam. But Christ came as the Second Adam to undo the death of the first. Christ's life is yours eternally beginning with the new life of faith in Baptism and conquering all troubles until you're happily home in heaven. No human mind and no computer could ever figure that out. But little children simply believe it because God says so.

Now, every day of your life is a mission, doing your job not for men but for God. **Heads up...** – Here's our mission: "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*" It was Jesus' job to get rid of our guilt. He did it well by the sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world. That includes all the rich and famous along with all the rest of us the world will never know. God acted. God cared. God could do like no one else by saving us from sin, death and hell. No need for more bloody sacrifices of innocent animals. I have a living sacrifice, this body, my liturgy of worship day by day.

Steve Jobs was a non-conformist. You and I much more so, in far higher things. God says through His apostle: "*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*" The world of Steve Jobs will never say, "Glory to God!" But you and I praise God's wisdom in creation where death is not good but a violent intrusion to be conquered in Christ

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve\\_Jobs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Jobs)

alone. The whole schematic of my life has changed from pursuing fame and fortune to a far different passion. Christ in His Passion for my soul won me a new life passion pleasing God. I'm in debt! Happy, wonderful, awesome debt of love to God who says, "Repay me by serving your neighbor." What a...

### ✠ Sober service... (vv.3-5)

*"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."* Soberly Steve Jobs' life began with abandonment by his biological parents, growing up poor, dropping out of college, then dropping in on calligraphy classes that turned computer type into artwork. Success brought conflict and firing from his own company at age 30. Rehired, Jobs ended charitable corporate gifts at Apple. Workers feared meeting him in the elevator lest they be fired before the doors opened. Pancreatic cancer finally killed him. No one is immune.

God teaches us *"to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* (Psalm 90:12 NIV84) *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom..."* (Proverbs 9:10 NIV84) for **Sober service...**

Enter a different Steve, footloose and fancy free the first five years I knew him. I showed him his sins in the mirror of God's law, but he never told me to, "Get lost." His live-in girlfriend came along to worship and a niece which finally led to two baptisms, two adult confirmations and years of Christian friendship. But not for Steve Williams. His days were numbered. On the phone, January 1992, his voice was hoarse. God had his attention. Inoperable lung cancer. Time to get real. Time for Bible study.

Spring saw Steve's body wasting away, but not in sadness. He came to Lenten worship in a bright purple athletic suit to worship the Prince of Glory who died for all. He followed to the empty tomb where Christ conquered death. He saw Christ ascended and cherished the Word-powered water that adopted him into God's family. He confirmed his faith to receive the blessed Sacrament of the Altar in the refreshing new covenant of life. His was **Sober service...** in life's harsh realities, but so invigorating in Christ! Even after all those years away, Steve knew he belonged. *"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."* Life is gift. Christ conquered death. Time to...

### ✠ Use your gifts ! (vv.6-8)

What if you knew like Steve Williams that before the year was out, God would call you home? Would you dress in bright purple while your body was wasting away? Would you be filled with joy to tell everyone who would listen how good God is to love us with such mercy and grace? He rode his motorcycle to California with friends that summer, then came to me in the fall with a job to do. God laid it on his heart to leave a legacy of thanks for this ministry. He pictured our worldwide ministry in WELS and local-global outreach here at New Life. On the day God called Steve Williams home, his round window was installed above our altar. Do not think, "I'm just a tiny toe. I don't matter."

Check these words on seven gifts of God: *"Let him..."*, *"Let him..."*, *"Let him..."* You can find your special gift by volunteering. God gives everyone at least one, whether preaching (prophesying), teaching, serving, encouraging, contributing, leading or showing mercy. The key in Christ is to **Use your gifts!** Discovering them can be so much fun. We learn by doing. Volunteer where you're needed; find your strengths and weaknesses. Don't ask me to crunch numbers; we have brighter minds for that. Don't worry and fret about the gifts you don't have. Every thumb needs five fingers to get a grip. An ear can't travel without the feet. **Different Gifts, Same Grace** – all good for God's mission to save souls.

The world won't remember Steve Williams and will soon forget Steve Jobs. But God says He will never forget you. God was there to hear your bawling cry, to adopt you into His family by Baptism. Our heavenly Father will not abandon you no matter what the world thinks, no matter what your conscience cries. "Mercy! Mercy!" cries the heart of God in Christ. Cheerful, hopeful, joyful – we serve. **Different Gifts, Same Grace** powered for joyful service today. Look in the mirror. Give thanks to God! Amen.

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