

Devotion from the past ... 2009

Extended Reading: [Philippians 2:5–11](#)

Make Nothing of Yourself

“Who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant...”
(Philippians 2:6–7 ESV).

Perhaps you remember some old parental pushes:

- Do your homework. Do extra credit. And CHECK IT...
- Dress up...
- Don't hang around THAT crowd...

... You want to make something of yourself, don't you?!

Yes, the old—and not unworthy—exhortation was to make something of yourself. Strive for success. Climb the ladder of life. Run faster, and stay ahead of the crowd. Make something of yourself!

While life may subscribe to the mandates above, the Bible disagrees. Not that you can use Scripture as an excuse for sloth, mediocrity, or lack of ambition. Your vocation as an educator in a Lutheran school or congregation demands excellence, motivation, continuing education, and lofty goals. But not so you can make something of yourself. Your greatest achievement would be to make nothing of yourself. (If you haven't read the entire Bible reading for today, [do it now.](#))

What does a *nothing* do? Certainly, not nothing.

You serve. You serve in the name of Jesus Christ. You strive to follow His example of servant leadership. You don't consider yourself greater than you ought, but you put your blessings of talent, skills, attitudes, and education to work for those you serve.

Beware! Sin and Satan do not want you amounting to nothing. Not in the biblical sense. Sin and Satan want you to proudly proclaim your accomplishments, to exercise your superiority, and not to waste time and energy on those beneath you. They want you to be something—something like them.

Nothing doing! (Not the same as *doing nothing*.)

Make nothing of yourself, especially when that...

- ... student keeps missing the same word when reciting the meaning to the Tenth Commandment.
- ... insolent adolescent rolls her eyes like pinwheels every time you speak.
- ...softball team you coach can't hit over .127—on a good day!
- ...unskilled, undisciplined parent keeps asking for help but never follows through.
- ...influential congregation member refuses to acknowledge the importance of ministry to children.

None of this is to suggest that you lower your standards or just give in and give up. Making nothing of yourself means losing yourself to pride, defensiveness, bitterness, and hostility. Making nothing of yourself means losing yourself in gentle, merciful, gracious, and sacrificial service. It means making something good of those whom you serve, with whom you serve, and for whom you serve—making them the object not only of your labor but also of your love.

To be sure, some of you will rise in ranks or status, probably because the Holy Spirit has made you so skilled and focused in your ministry. That's likely a good thing for ministry. *Nothing* is more important.

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To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)