

WHY GIVE?

Genesis 28:18-22
Matthew 25: 31-46

Faith Community
November 6, 2005

Introduction

This is the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth stewardship sermon I have given in this congregation. I remember when we first started in 1976 we faced an awkward situation. Our first service was on November 21, so we needed to know very quickly what kind of support we could count on for 1977. So we had to have stewardship Sunday on the third Sunday we ever met, which was early in December.

Most of those original pioneers gave to this new venture, but some brave, trusting souls pledged generously. I mean, they didn't know if this new mission church was going to get off the ground – was it worth giving money to or not? But they trusted that God was doing a good thing here and it would thrive. Their courage helped us to survive.

This morning I'm going to summarize about stewardship. I want to offer the three best reasons for pledging generously to Faith Community.

I

First, you are able to support vital Christian mission in this place. Your help allows us to teach children about the love of God. You make available a Sunday school that helps children grow up knowing how much God cares for them. It is a foundation that will serve them all of their lives.

Those of you who were raised in the church know what a benefit it is to grow up knowing that the Creator of the universe cares about you. It gives you security and a set of values that will last a lifetime.

Your support allows us to have the greatest youth groups. Sheila and I spent last weekend with 18 of the best seventh and eighth graders God ever made. These kids have faith, they enjoy being together, and they live out their faith together. Haeley does a marvelous job inspiring these kids in the mid-high youth group.

Where else could you ever get that kind of personal care and Christian experience? The same thing is true of Kevin Pastoor and the senior high group. Our youth leaders are real gifts to this congregation. They give far more than we are able to pay them for.

Your gifts help Faith Community thrive with LOGOS, our mid-week youth program, youth and adult choirs, fellowship activities, and adult classes. Look in this bulletin at the number of opportunities available to grow in faith.

When you give to Faith Community, you get the most efficient use of your money possible. We have to carefully use every dollar we get. There is no room for waste. You won't find any pork barrel spending around here. When you give a dollar, you get a dollar's worth of results and a great deal more.

II

Second, when you give to Faith Community Presbyterian Church, you provide the good news to people who have never heard it, and life-saving aid to people in need. Your giving in this place affects people around the world. Our mission giving means that missionaries in remote corners of world are able to tell people about the love God has for them, and the way God came into the world to save them.

For example, most people in Pakistan are Hindus, who believe in a strict cast system that is based on the idea of reincarnation. Those in the lowest caste believe they must have been evil in a former life. Those who are in the upper caste hold the same belief and therefore they don't feel that they need to care at all for the lower castes; they deserve what they are getting.

When Christian missionaries talk to members of the lower castes, they are amazed that anyone, let alone God, would care for them. They have been taught to despise themselves. How incredible it is for them to find that in the eyes of God they are important, and even worth dying for! Because you put a check in the offering plate, the Good News of Christianity continues to go out to people like that.

There are people all over the world who would like to thank you for what you have given. We don't know their names, and they don't know ours, but through our twenty percent mission giving, we have helped people who were in life and death situations. Whether it is the response to people hurt by hurricane Katrina or those suffering as a result of the Tsunami, your support has gone to help desperate people in need.

And it isn't just disasters. People are working in underdeveloped countries every day providing safe wells for clean drinking water. We take clean water for granted every day, but most of the world doesn't have that luxury. You provide food to people who are starving, clothing to people who have none, and medicine to people dying of curable diseases. This happens because you put a check in the offering plate.

Our New Testament scripture reading today tells us that when we do these things for the least of these our brothers and sisters, we do it for Christ himself. We have the chance to minister to Christ everyday. How can we miss that opportunity?

III

When you give to this congregation, you grow in your own faith. Maybe you are a person who takes faith seriously. It is so important, in fact, that your faith directs your life. You are at a point in your life where you wonder what the next step in your growth will be.

If you aren't tithing, that's the next step. Set aside one tenth of your income for God.

The tithe is as clearly biblical as anything there is. It is found in the Old Testament, and it's expected in the New Testament. From Moses to Jesus, the Bible talks about people of faith setting aside ten percent to return to God. From what you have been given return one tenth to God.

For some people suddenly moving to ten percent is a large step. If you find it too daunting, take a step forward. Increase your giving by one percent of your income. For example, if you

make \$50,000 per year, raise your pledge by \$500, about \$10 per week). By stepping up by one percent a year, you will soon be tithing. Most of us won't even miss the money in our budgets, but we will be making a world of difference.

Conclusion

Tithing is a way to grow in your faith. For all of us, what we believe in is where we spend our money. We know that to be serious we have to put our money where our mouth is. People of faith will support the work of their faith generously. There is no better way you can spend your money.

Amen