

“Back to the Basics Part II: Get in the Game; “All In”

As we finish part two of our sermon series, Back to the Basics, Get in the Game, we are invited to ponder our commitment to Christ and to the local church to which we belong or attend. As members of the United Methodist Church, we commit to uphold our local church with our “prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.” Our stewardship emphasis is how we can live a life of faith and be part of the community that loves, witnesses, shares and gives. We have looked at training for godliness, at how we are challenged to be good stewards of the gifts we are given and this week we look at our relationship with money. Jesus had a great deal to say about money, but in the end, it is one of the gifts we are given to be stewards. Everything belongs to God first and foremost. This is the Sunday we are asked to commit our financial resources for 2018. We are called to support our community of faith with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. May this week we find new ways to share the grace and love of God. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“All In”**

Prayer for the Week

O most gracious God, we often spend much of our lives on that which does not satisfy. We do not always count our time and resources as precious gifts. Look kindly upon us, remind us that we are called to commit our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness to you. Enable us to be about changing lives and transforming communities. Remind us that we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 10/30/17 Luke 21: 1-4

This story of Jesus comes on the heels of Jesus' criticism of those who play the part of being religious, but then act very differently toward the most vulnerable. The "treasury" part of the temple was a very public place. The people had no options for "online giving" or by paper money or check. Every gift given was "heard" as it was deposited in the treasury. Those who had great resources were known by the sound of their financial gifts. The widow, had very little, her gift probably made little if any sound. She was probably ignored and overlooked by everyone but Jesus. He noted that this woman, who was poor was willing to give and not just give, but give generously. She gets in the game through her faith that her gift matters and that God will take care of her. *Have you ever been on the receiving end of that kind of generosity? Have you ever given that generously?*

Tuesday, 10/31/17 2 Corinthians 9: 6

"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Another way to say it is "What goes around comes around." Certainly it is not always true, some can sow sparingly and reap a huge harvest, while others sow and sow and sow and come up with very little. The concept for one's spiritual life is profound. What one shares, what one gives, does come back sooner or later. When human beings are stingy and refuse to share, then there is less that seems available for all. The more human beings share, the more generous God and the universe becomes. In the gospels, Jesus reminds the people over and over again that God will take care of all, because it is in God's nature to do so. The challenge is for disciples to believe in that generosity and grace. *Write down the ways you sow the gifts you have been given; time, talents, and resources.*

Wednesday, 11/1/17 2 Corinthians 9: 7

This is the key verse in this section. The following verse makes no sense, if this verse is not taken to heart. Giving in whatever form must be out of a sense of gratitude, faithfulness or love. One is not able to see the blessings if every gift of time, energy, talent or treasure is given out of obligation or compulsion. All gifts given "cheerfully" open the door to other blessings and opportunities. We get in the game through the cheerful giving of all that we have and all that we are. *How often do you give cheerfully? To whom and to what organizations do you offer your gifts easily and with great love?*

Thursday, 11/2/17 2 Corinthians 9: 8

In the book of Genesis, Abraham is "blessed to be a blessing." All that Abraham had and all that he was called to be, became a way to witness to God. Paul says, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." Our blessings are to be blessings for others: family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and the whole world. When we give, when we bless the world with what we have and what we are, we share in God's re-creating the world into that reign of peace, justice, righteousness and goodness. *Think of the ways you bless the world through what you have and what you are. List some ways you have shared in the good works of God in the world. Pray today, to find new ways to share in those good works in order to praise God and give glory to God.*

Friday, 11/3/17 2 Corinthians 9: 9-12

In this last portion, Paul talks about how God supplies and God multiplies and because of those gifts the Corinthians and all those who have followed will be gifted, enriched, and blessed. The needs of ministry are supplied and there is a great thanksgiving offered and shared because of those gifts. We live out our witness and our service through our stewardship campaign for 2018 and for First Church as a way of funding and blessing the present community of faith. Through the gifts given, the prayers raised, we work for the future to worship, and to praise and to go forth to serve as we change lives and transform communities. *Today, pray for the ministries of First United Methodist Church.*