

“Back to the Basics Part II: Get in the Game; “How Much?”

In 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. May our relationship with what we have be a vehicle God can use to transform our world. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“How Much?”**

Prayer for the Week

God, you are the endless source of every good and perfect gift, with you is life and the joy of living. We forget and search everywhere for gifts that only you can give. We seek for riches, possessions, status and accomplishments, when all you ask is for us to love you and serve you and follow you. Help us keep our hearts and minds on Christ, that we might have new lives and spirits and we might offer you all that we have and all that we are. We ask in Jesus; name, Amen.

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

Study Guide

Monday, 10/23/2017 Luke 18: 18-22

This story is told in Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the eighteenth chapter, it is set up with two parables, one about praying and one about assumptions as to who is holy and who is not. Then we have disciples trying to keep children and babies away from Jesus, but Jesus says the kingdom of God belongs to them. A rich young ruler comes up and asks about eternal life and he is already doing what he is supposed to do: follow the commandments. Jesus either seeing something or hearing something sees that this young man wants more and encourages this young ruler to sell everything and follow him. This is never an easy encounter to read. *Do you identify with the rich young man? Do you also do what is right, but are hungry for something more, something deeper in your spiritual life?*

Tuesday, 10/24/2017 Luke 18: 22-24

This “poor” rich young ruler, had a choice that seemed so impossible. Give up everything and follow Jesus, be part of the disciples or continue his life the way it has always been. His life has a certainty about it, but following Jesus had no road map, no real sense of a future. The rich young ruler chose what he knew, what was secure. All sorts of possibilities were laid before him, but he was not willing to risk it all. This young man was already “religious”, already “spiritual” he didn’t need to do anything else. This story points to a place deep within this rich young ruler that was ready and curious about a deeper relationship with God. *If the rich young ruler’s wealth was something between him and God, what keeps you from going deeper with God?*

Wednesday, 10/25/2017 Luke 18: 26-30

The words of Jesus that many love to hate, “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.” So many sermons and devotions have been written about how this is not literal, but figurative. In many senses that is true, Jesus did not hate or dislike people who were wealthy or rich. It was wealthy women that often kept his ministry going. I think for Jesus, the issue is always what people are willing to give up to follow him, or to love God with all their hearts, minds and spirits and to love their neighbor as they love themselves. It is always in the justification that Jesus challenges people....If they say they follow the Law, Jesus is fine with that, but when they want more, more praise, more validation, more faith, then Jesus challenges them. *What do you want more of? In following Jesus can you offer more of your love, your time, your treasure, your gifts, and your service? What are you willing to do in order to commit more of yourself to God?*

Thursday, 10/26/17 James 1: 22-25

James had no tolerance for people he considered “non –doers.” The Word, belief in Christ required action for James. The whole of this letter is about living the Word, not just “hearing” it or “reading” it. Some of his words are harsh and hard to swallow. James was driven by the understanding that Christ changed lives and those lives were called upon to change the world. Faith is not passive, it is active in word and deed. In the United Methodist Church, our membership vows say we will support the church with “our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.” There is nothing passive about any of those vows. Our talents, our time, our spiritual life, our money and our participation in a community of faith is expected, not an option. *How do you participate by your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness in the life of faith? How are you, in the words of James, “blessed by your doing?”*

Friday, 10/27/2017 James 1: 25-27

James is clear that actions speak louder than words and that words are often harmful (if you don’t pay attention to the “tongue” your religion is worthless! Vs. 26.) It is not enough to hear the Word of God (or to ask questions to justify one’s self) it is imperative to act on the Word. The actions include taking care of the vulnerable, the lonely, the lost, the poor, the outcast, and the homeless and to care for them. Sunday we will be bringing our pledge cards to church and part of that action is putting our money where our “mouth” is or putting our faith in action. The amount is not as important as the dedication to be a good steward and to live our faith with prayer, with our presence in worship, with our time and energy in mission, in a witness that speaks words of hope and faith and in our gifts. *Today, spend some time praying for God’s guidance in all you say and do.*