

Stewardship Campaign 2010

A Month of Thankfulness

Good morning. Last Week Teresa spoke on Zaccheus and how his thankfulness to Jesus, enabled him to open his hands and give back to the people he had cheated, and also enabled him to receive blessings from God. Thankfulness and generosity seem to go together. So we are calling this year's stewardship campaign A Month of Thankfulness.

Attitude of Gratitude

So what has St. John's got to be thankful for?

- We have a mortgage-free building in a great location and neighborhood.
- We have construction beginning this month for classrooms, nursery, and a beautiful new entranceway.
- We are a vibrant community. People discover us, and join the congregation. In the past 7 years we have grown from a handful of people to nearly 80 people coming to services every Sunday.
- Our families are growing. We have a group of children at the age to begin Sunday School, and there are always new ones coming along.
- We are growing in faith as we have a revamped and well-attended adult Christian Education program.
- And we are growing in our desire to reach out and help others with the love of Jesus through the Peace Meal project, Birthday parties for incarcerated youth, providing space for AA and NA meetings, etc.

As a spiritual community, we are healthy and growing. Let's say thanks for that!

Gimme an AMEN

Our leadership has a vision for doing even more of God's ministry in our community. As we continue to grow, we have the potential to become a vital center of the Tower Grove Community: a place that everyone in the Tower Grove neighborhood recognizes

as a place of help and hope, and a spiritual home for lots of them. But ministry costs money. Good ministry costs more money.

To work toward this vision, we need to update the building in several ways, and the project will extend over several years. This year we are working on classrooms and bathrooms which have been funded by a White Fund loan of \$35,000. Once that loan is repaid, say in 2 or 3 years, we can apply for another one. In order to be a spiritual home and community center for everyone in neighborhood, the building needs to be accessible. We will be applying for grants to fund this project. We want to lower our energy costs so we need new storm windows and air conditioning to for the office building. Now that we have children at Sunday School age, we need the furnishings and classroom materials to make it possible. We need to hire two child care workers for the nursery during the service. We need rocking chairs for the nursery and the back of the church. We need sound equipment for the church. As mentioned above, we are applying for grants to finance as many of these costs as we can, but there will be a need for more pledges than last year. We've set a pledge goal for this year of \$95,000 - \$10,000 more than last year's goal.

So I've talked about being thankful for God's gifts, and I've said we're looking for \$10,000 more to do God's work. And now I want to talk a little bit about how money and us work in God's economy. Did you know that Jesus says more about money and its power over us than he does about any other topic?

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Mt 6:19)

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*” (Mt. 6:24)

“But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is* to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’”(Mk 10:24-25)

“He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper ~~coins~~. 3He said, ‘Truly I tell

you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.” (Luke 21:1-4)

Jesus knows how hard it is for us to give away what we think we need to live on. He doesn't say that money is bad. Money is necessary for trade and exchange and day to day living, especially in our urban setting. But he does say that if money is in control of us, we aren't serving God. If we always feel financially insecure, and think we need more money than we have, and can't let go of what we have, then money has control of us. It dictates our actions. One way that we can loosen money's grip on us is to trust that we can afford to give some of it away.

In man's economy we are taught to get as much money and keep as much money as we can. In God's economy, we are blessed by giving, not keeping. Giving of our treasure is the only thing God asks us to test him on.

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”(Malachi 3:10.)

Since John and I have tried to make our giving intentional and to increase our giving back to God, we have not lacked for anything. I'm not saying we can manipulate God and give just to get back. But I am saying that if we give out of a sense of thankfulness and excitement to see God's kingdom grow, we can trust him to look after you.

God doesn't need our money. God wants us to give because it is good for us. Giving is a spiritual discipline – it helps us grow spiritually. Like Teresa said last week, the more generous we can become, the more we can receive from God. I am challenging us all to trust God to provide for us by giving a little more than we are comfortable with. Just a little more - maybe an increase of 1%. Maybe more if you feel like it.

Now during the Month of Thanksgiving, we are giving you all TWO

opportunities to give: one for kids and one for grown-ups.

(hold up UTO box) See what this is, The **United Thank Offering** box. We have one for every family here. We know what the United Thank Offering is about don't we? Last year we received a grant from the UTO which paid for the hood in the kitchen. We are going to apply for another grant this year.

If there is a child in your household, please ask them to be in charge of filling the box. Empty the jars of coins, look in all the pockets, the back of kitchen drawers, all those places that coins gather. Let's fill those boxes. Boxes will be collected on Sunday, Nov. 28th. Children will bring them up to the front and put them in a big basket that we'll have here. And we hope it will be a silent collection. The boxes don't jingle if they are full. So that's opportunity number one.

(hold up pledge card) Opportunity number two. **Pledges** are how we give back to God and support our church's ministry. (Where?) Of the church there is a box with envelopes containing your pledge card and your statement of giving. Please pick yours up today and help us save postage.

Please consider how much you can pledge for this next year, remembering that God wants you to trust him. Fill the pledge card out and bring it back on December 5th. Please don't forget! We want to count them that day and announce that we've got \$95,000 in pledges by the end of the service!

Thank you.