

23 September 2007
17th Sunday After Pentecost
2 Corinthians 9:6-8

- I. Last week we spent some time with the topic Jesus talked about more than any other – money.
 - a. Jesus talked about money more than he talked about heaven and hell.
 - b. There are about 500 verses in the Bible regarding prayer and another 500 on the topic of faith, but there are over 2,000 on the subjects of money and possessions.
 - c. That God talks about it so much and we give it so little attention is ironic.
 - i. I never received much teaching on this subject.
 - ii. It's one I continue to learn about and grow in.
 - iii. I learn a lot from other people's stories and testimonies.
- II. As I have been praying about this message over the last few weeks, God has really been working.
 - a. He has led me to some amazing resources.
 - b. And has opened my eyes about some things.
 - c. And it's left me wondering why people don't give – I'd like to propose two reasons.
 - i. Not the only two reasons,
 - ii. But two that are particularly important to us today.
- III. The first is this: People don't give because they don't have a proper understanding of money.
 - a. Luke 6:38 says, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
 - b. Give and it will be given ... for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
 - c. God is the giver of all riches.
 - i. Everything (every blessing) you have comes from God.
 - ii. Your gifts and talents and everything that enables you to earn the salary you earn and do the job you do has its origin in God.
 - d. The parable of the sower is found in Matthew 13:3-9. = Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear."
 - i. This parable is one of my favorites and illustrates another lesson.
 - ii. God supplies seed to the sower, not the keeper.
 - iii. It's when you give that it will be given you and it's with the measure you use that it will be measured to you.
 - e. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."
 - i. Sowing and reaping go together.
 1. You can't reap without sowing. [Would you try to harvest a field you haven't planted?]
 2. You don't sow without expecting to reap. [Would you sow seed and then fail to harvest it when the field was ripe?]
 3. Of course not, sowing and reaping go together.
 - ii. You reap after you sow.

1. If you want a harvest, you have to plant the field.
 2. Don't expect God to bring you a harvest you haven't tilled and planted for.
- f. That's the first reason we don't give – because we don't have a proper understanding of money.
- IV. The second reason people don't give is that they don't have a vision for their giving.
- a. Genesis 12:2 – God says to Abraham “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”
 - i. Part of that vision is understanding that God wants to bless you so that you can be a blessing to others.
 - ii. You are blessed to be a blessing.
 - b. And through your blessing God wants to do amazing things!
 - i. 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”
 - ii. You need to expect amazing things to happen as you are blessed and as you are a blessing.
 - c. But, great things won't happen until you catch a vision for what God wants to do.
 - i. We have encapsulated our vision into three statements: Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples.
 1. Those are based on Scripture – the great commandment and the great commission.
 2. We live out that vision through worship, fellowship, discipleship, service and mission.
 - ii. As clear as that is, I don't think that's enough.
 - d. If a clear vision motivates giving, then that's not specific enough.
 - i. What exactly do we want God to do? What will it look like?
 - ii. Let me share some of my dreams – parts of the vision God has given me.
 - e. Doesn't that sound exciting? Doesn't that sound awesome?
 - i. Won't that make me look good?
 - f. Lost you right there didn't I? That's okay ... that's good.
 - i. With me, without me, or in spite of me –
 - ii. This is the vision I believe God has given me for Christ Church.
 - g. It's a big vision.
 - i. “We might have to scale that down a bit.”
 - ii. No way. These are God dreams.
 - h. One of the things that holds back our giving is that our vision for the church isn't big enough – big enough to let God work.
 - i. Part of my “role” as the pastor of our church is to be the dreamer ...
 1. to be the vision-caster.
 2. To speak the vision aloud.
 - a. I'm afraid that I've done our church a disservice.
 - b. That I haven't spoken these dreams often enough
 - c. Or loud enough to make sure they are heard.
 - d. It's part of my pastoral responsibility to see the vision.
 3. But ... I am not [alone/by myself] the vision sower.
 - ii. God wants to do great things and He wants you to catch a vision for what He wants to do.

1. If one of the reasons you are reluctant to give is that you haven't caught a vision of what God wants to do through your giving – I hope you've seen that answered [at least] in part this morning.
2. Without a vision – the people perish.
3. With a vision – God's Kingdom flourishes.