

Title: "The Gift of Giving"

Dialog sermon for Pr. Lisa Telomen and John Kemble

3/27/22

Description: Our online checking statements may say more about our priorities in life than our google calendar. Jesus had a lot to say about how we order our living and giving, to be in line with God's goals for our lives and world. We'll take a look at Matthew 6: 19-21, among others of Jesus' comments about money and wealth. How do you prioritize care for your money and possessions? Are they to do good, for the Lord's sake? Pastor Adam Hamilton talks about gratitude, living purposefully, and generosity, as key drivers for our happiness and faithfulness in our lifetimes. Come explore these ideas with Pastor Lisa Telomen, and former Lay Leader John Kemble, as they share in a dialogue sermon about Giving as one of the essential practices in the Christian life.

Suggestions for Talking points:

John to Lisa: Who were your mentors who modeled for you/taught you what to give to God's work and the church? What made sense to you about what they taught/modeled?

My parents told us to give from allowances, then in junior high or high school explained their tithing (10% as per Bible).

Both my grandfathers were pastors, Presbyterian and EUB; I'm sure they tithed and taught it to my parents.

It makes sense to me that this small portion of my income would be given back to help the community that blesses me with love and care. I am who I am because of people at churches who have nurtured and mentored, helped and blessed me.

And I want to be part of paying it forward to help others in need.

For me, the church is a wholistic community of people seeking to:

- 1) teach and nurture children in character, self-esteem, and leadership skills;
- 2) they offer support and encouragement throughout our lives in studies and support groups,

3) they build community through outreach like creation care, missions, church in society volunteering and support, and

4) they support crisis outreach like food pantries, homeless shelters, home building and repair, meals and prayer shawls.

All this work is done here **and** around the world! This is where we want the bulk of our giving to go.

We give 10 % to the church, and have then selected some environmental organizations to give to in addition to church, to do more work repairing God's creation, as well as giving to a few other specialty organizations.

Lisa to John: Rev. Hamilton talks about 3 keys to a good life: gratitude, Living purposefully, and generosity. How have you experienced the impact of these in your life? Who are people who helped you experience their importance in your life, or modeled them for you?

John met a medical missionary returned from the Congo, who opened a clinic for the poor in California with a pastor friend, to offer medical and spiritual help to the poor. This inspired John, then in his 40s, to increase his commitment to church and faith. He began tithing his income and reading his Bible. A Lay Witness Mission further inspired John to consider his answer to God's call upon his life for leadership and service through the church, as well as in community. John's growth in faith also spurred his wife's faith and commitment, so that soon they were tithing on both of their incomes, and became more active in their church.

John to Lisa: Have you found it to be true that we cannot serve two masters, God and money, at the same time? In the book "The Walk", Rev. Adam Hamilton tells some of his struggles with hedonism, or the satisfying of personal greed. What have been some of your struggles to resist the temptations of our materialistic/hedonistic culture? What helps you to break free?

Rodney and I are tempted just like everyone by the material world...cars, a motorcycle, books and movies, TV/internet and phone plans, as well as vacations each year... But our budget is set with our church tithe as a given; that does not

change, and discretionary expenditures are possible only after church and other recurring basic bills are paid.

First, we make sure we are helping neighbors, and honoring God's blessings entrusted to us through church. Then we pay bills. We try to keep money as a means to serve God and community first through our church giving, family and fun second. Money is a means to help everyone live well, not just us, and money has never been an end in itself, a goal to enrich us.

I think it would be very difficult to try to prioritize both personal enrichment and community outreach that honors God at the same time. One would constantly be conflicted about whether one's income should be given away, or saved or spent for oneself. We have never found that we didn't have enough money for us, even as we prioritize our tithe to God's work, and put that first. And we have been able to increase our giving to other organizations beyond church each year as well.

Lisa to John: What suggestions would you give to people to grow in their gratitude, generosity, and in living purposefully?

- 1) Serve! Learn how other people live in different settings in the US, as well as abroad. Experience God's goodness, and faith, as others share with you. Learn how our church giving helps other communities and be blessed by them as you visit and share.
- 2) Give a percentage of your income and increase it by a percent each year as you are able and see how your satisfaction and joy grows as you give more to help share God's love and care with others. Make your church giving one of your priorities with other monthly payments.