

“ASPECTS OF DISCIPLESHIP: WORKING FOR TRUTH”

Proper 29B November 22, 2009

Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

Introduction:

Today is week three of our stewardship series, “Aspects of Stewardship”. The first week the aspect we examined has to do with the dynamic of recognizing that, ultimately, everything we are and own comes from God the Creator. Therefore, as serious disciples, we honor and worship God when we consciously give everything – we think we own - to God. Then, we ask God to bless our gifts, return them to us, and guide us in the use of our resources so we can fulfill God’s will in our lives and help others. It ties in with the Great Commandment of “loving the Lord our God, with our entire heart, mind, soul, and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves.”

Living with this conscious awareness of God’s will for our lives and resources becomes an exciting lifestyle, and it doesn’t depend on possessing a lot or a little – whether we have been given 10 talents or one. It all belongs to God and He will direct its use.

Last week, we looked at the aspect that Good Stewards intentionally ask God’s blessing in everything we do, because we want our efforts and results to be blessed rather than hum-drum. If we are seriously trying to love

God with our strength then we wisely seek God's blessing on our efforts.

The truth is we will spend ourselves on something, or some things, during this life. To what are you giving your strength, and does that effort have God's blessing? I don't have an easy answer for you in this area. Some things are logical if you have a working knowledge of Scripture. For instance, spending yourself on a lifestyle that breaks the Ten Commandments will not have God's blessing. That's logical, isn't it? Spending yourself on a lifestyle that pursues Loving the Lord Your God with your entire being, and your neighbor as yourself: The Great Commandment – will have God's blessing, right?

It is easy to comprehend this on the macro level. It is on the micro level that we all struggle. It's the smaller decisions like, should I spend this much time and energy on exercising; or do we buy this house, or this car, or go on this vacation, or how often should we spend money on eating out, etc., etc., etc? These are the decisions that probably need the most intentional prayer time, yet probably receive little or none. Yet, it is in the smaller things that most of our lives are lived. This is where we spend ourselves without much time spent seeking God's

blessing. Am I right, or is only me who forgets to check in with God about the smaller stuff, just assuming that if I'm doing the 'big stuff' right then surely my smaller decisions will naturally have God's blessing? Failure to seek God's blessing in the smaller decisions is the result of either ignorance, laziness, or a presumptive arrogance. It's my money, and if I want to spend it on Little Debbie Cakes then why should God care?

Well, it goes back to the first aspect of stewardship – giving everything to God. OK, so I'm the only one who has a problem with Little Debbie Cakes – pray for me, OK?

Today, we're looking at a third aspect of Stewardship –

“Working For Truth”.

The truth is, it is difficult in our world today to know what the Truth is.

I remember when I was a child there was this consciousness I learned at home that was supported in the school system and at my friends' homes. The consciousness was this: there is truth; and that truth has been defined by God, and one example of that truth is the Ten Commandments. Can you believe that plaques and posters of the Ten Commandments were regularly hung

on classroom walls as a silent testimony to a societal value that ultimate truth exists and comes from God? How far we have come, or is fallen?

Knowing the truth and working for it must have been an issue during Jesus' lifetime also.

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus is appearing before Pilate – the only one who has the authority to condemn Jesus to death on a Cross. In their conversation, Jesus states to Pilate: *“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”* We don't have Pilate's response in this lesson but he asks Jesus,

“What is truth?”

That is the key question I think our culture is now asking – What is truth? We are currently a fractured, divided nation not because we are multi-racial and cultural, but because we don't agree on what is true. Is it better to be pure or promiscuous? Is it better to believe in multiple gods or to worship God Almighty? Is it better to better to love things and use people, or to love people and use things? Is it better to be committed to telling the truth, always, or only when it is convenient? Is it better to seek peace in life through alcohol, drugs, wealth, or sex; or to

receive the peace of soul that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Is it better to think the earth is a giant resource for our use and there is nothing we can do to harm it, or treat the earth as a living entity God has given us for our sustenance and to treat it with the same respect reserved for all the living? Is it better to treat all people with the respect with which we want to be treated, or respect only the people who can do something for us? Is it better to govern by power politics – the majority is right on all issues, always. Or, is it better to govern by achieving consensus?

What is the truth? Our society is destroying itself precisely because we don't agree on the answer to that question – on any issue.

To that question, Jesus not only said he came into the world to testify to the truth, but he also said: *“I am the Way, and the Life, and The Truth; and no one comes to the Father except through me.”* The truth is, without a unifying, centralized spiritual connection with God's truth, all other truth is up for grabs.

The truth is, God is requiring of each of us to live like Good Stewards of our resources, and the Truth of God is found in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to God Almighty. If we are good stewards of this key spiritual

truth, we are going to have God's essential blessing on our lives and efforts to serve God and others.

When you take your Stewardship Packet home, please set aside some time to review the materials and to pray about your responses of Time, Talent, and Treasure. Ask God how He wants you to spend yourself working for truth. Some of it will be through the church, and some of it may be completely outside the church where you interact with a lost world.

I know some of us don't like the idea of making a commitment of Time, Talent and Treasure through the church. I was like that – I thought it was no body's business what I do, only God. And, it is true, I want you to be a 'God-pleaser' instead of a 'Man-pleaser'. However, I also know that if you pray about it, and if you feel led or drawn into certain commitments, it is ultimately between you and God.

At Holy Cross we make Faith Commitments. These are not legal, binding contracts. They are expectations based upon our current circumstances and what we think we are hearing from God right now. If you make the commitment to tithe, and your income decreases, you will still tithe but you will give less total dollars than you expected. No one is going to come

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around trying to collect the difference. It is not us who are keeping score. It is God you are committing to, and to whom you owe an explanation, if one if needed. Commit only to what you think God is leading you to do. The rest is between you and God. This stewardship program is a tool to help you grow as a serious Christian and staff our ministries with committed Christians. If you commit to a ministry and you are miserable in it, let us know. You will be removed from that ministry and given a chance to commit to something else you think God is leading you to do. We are all in a growth process. God is not finished with any of us yet.

Please bring your commitments with you next Sunday. We want to lay them on the Communion Table and consecrate these faith commitments and ourselves to them, asking God's blessing on our efforts. If you are not going to be in church, try to get them by the office, or call for a pick-up, so your commitments can also be on the Table.

From our lesson in Revelation this morning
“Now to him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a Kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”