

Sermon 102917 Stewardship
Scripture 1 Peter 4: 8-11
Sermon Title Why Give?

Our New Testament lesson today is found in Peter's first letter. "Above all keep your love for one another at full strength, because love cancels innumerable sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Whatever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing God's grace in its various forms. Are you a speaker? Speak as if you utter oracles of God. Do you give service? Give it as in the strength which God supplies. In all things act so that the glory may be God's through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and power for ever and ever. Amen

I have a confession to make. Today, if I were to join you in the pews and one of you were to replace me in this pulpit, and I would hear this new preacher preach on the subject of stewardship, my heart would not race and my breath with not become shallow from anticipation. Quite to the contrary. I would say, 'Here we go again, getting hammered to give more money.'

I would have visions of church properties and budgets. Would wonder testily why we have to have another perfectly nice Sunday morning ruined with harping on the need for more money. I'm a New Englander. I get it that we don't like to talk about money. When I do

pre-marital counseling, I try to get couples talking about money and it's not unusual that that is the first time the topic has come up between them.

I would feel a little guilty about not wanting to hear about money in church, but not guilty enough to not pray for brevity in the sermon. If I'm accurate in any of this, you need not confirm it, just know that I have some empathy for you. But, you are there and I am here, so let's get through this together.

It would be interesting to hear from an ecologist if one were to preach a stewardship sermon. He or she would speak of being good stewards of the earth, air, and water. In Genesis, we read of the Creator saying to Adam, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Gen 1: 28) We have certainly done that, but have we done it in a God like way? I think an ecologist would say, 'No.'

If a government representative were to preach, I would think that he or she might say that we should be good stewards of the constitution, good stewards of keeping the peace, and to serve, protect, and defend the citizens. I'll let you decide for yourself how we have done on that front.

If a doctor or a nurse were to preach a stewardship sermon, he or she might speak of being good stewards of our bodies. We should eat right, exercise, and practice good hygiene. I'll let you decide how you are doing on that front.

I could go on with this line of thinking, but you get my point. Stewardship is really an all the time, in all ways, endeavor. So now, let us look at the church. The church is the steward for the community. Our food pantry is exhibit A on that. But only A, there is so much more that Union Church does for its members and beyond these walls. I think of our youth and their mission activity. I think of our other missions and support of other charities. What would those people that we serve lives be like without this church?

Now let us consider ourselves. How can we be good stewards of ourselves? How do we maintain healthy attitudes, some inner peace, a moral and ethical compass? We come to church. We spend time with good people who are trying to get this life right. We sing songs of praise to the Lord. We listen to good words of healing, hope, peace, and love. Where else can we get the things that we get here? The TV? Movies? Popular music? Not even close.

This church is vital to each of us for our well well-being as people. We need this church more today than ever. So, I ask you to give. Not so that we can meet the budget, which is of course important. But to

give as an expression of your appreciation of having this church in your life and your God in your life as God is brought to you in so many ways here at Union Church. AMEN