

**“God Is Able to Do More Than We Imagine”**

Date: October 23, 2016

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Matthew 6:19-21; Exodus 35:4-22,29; Ephesians 3:20

Occasion: Kick-Off Capital Campaign

Themes: Stewardship; Legacy, Trust in God

The Old Testament lesson happens sometime after Moses has spoken prophetically to the Pharaoh and told him to “Let my people go.” The Israelites have fled Egypt. They are wandering in the wilderness. God has just given Moses the Law and the Commandments. Now God commands Moses to build a Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was the portable sanctuary, constructed by the people of Israel according to the instructions given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It was to be a portable worship center that would travel with them as they wandered until they reached the Promised Land. The Tabernacle was actually a large tent that could be set up and taken down as the people traveled.

It has an interesting history, not only in Judaism but also in Christianity. But that is not why I chose this passage for today. For several weeks now you have been hearing from the board of trustees about renovations, remodeling and repairs that need to be done at Lakewood.

The leadership of this church has determined it is time to take care of our building, not only for our present use, but also for generations to come. Some of the repairs need to be done to insure the integrity and stability of the building and the stained glass windows. Some of the renovations and remodeling are being done to prepare for a new generation of Lakewoodians. Just as several

previous generations have built and cared for and upgraded the facilities we now use for ministry, it is our generations' turn.

Today we are going to ask you for your support. I chose this passage from Exodus as my primary text. First of all, because this text is about a building program undertaken by the people of God. Since the beginning of our heritage, having beautiful and meaningful worship and ministry space has been important to God's people.

Secondly, God commanded Moses to go to the people and ask for their support. In chapter 35 we read, "From what you have, take an offering for the Lord," to do this project. God didn't tell the people what they had to give. The Lord gave suggestions, but take note of the words, "From what you have."

Each of us is expected to give according to what we have. Some of us have much to offer our capital campaign. Others are on a fixed income and may have only a little to contribute. Each is expected to give, "from what you have."

Verse 29 summarizes the response of God's people: "All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord, through Moses, had commanded them to do." It was a free gift, not a coerced gift. And *all who were willing* gave to meet the need.

Lakewood is embarking on a new capital campaign to restore, renovate and repair our church facilities. It's time to do this. Things are looking a little old and shabby in some places. Some of our rooms have the feel of 1965. Significant repairs are needed badly and needed soon, so that we don't cause future damage and greater expense. We don't want to kick the can down the road leaving it to a

future generation, whoever they are, to take care of the problems that we are responsible for today.

One aspect of stewardship is giving. Another aspect is taking care of what you have. We're asking you to do both. For several weeks now we have heard from fellow Lakewoodians what my Lakewood means to them. It's now *our* turn, all of us, to demonstrate what Lakewood means to us.

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Notice, Jesus did not say it the other way around: *where your heart is, there your treasure will be also*. Jesus is saying, where we invest our treasure indicates where our heart is.

I believe that God and the Lakewood United Methodist Church is our treasure, and I'm asking you to show that by investing your treasure here. Last week we heard a big number. Russ Fisher, the chairperson of the Capital Campaign told us the estimate for the work being considered is around \$400,000.

When Fred Garnon and the trustees first started meeting with the architect and getting an idea of what it was going to cost to refurbish the fellowship hall, my first inclination was that we wanted to be extremely conservative in our costs. We didn't want to scare the people with a big number. The number we got for that project was \$60,000.

As we met with the Capital Campaign Committee to begin discussing how we might raise that money, the trustees suggested, wisely so I might add, "If we're going to be raising this amount of money, why not do some of the other projects we've been talking about for a while?" And everyone, both trustees and capital

campaign committee alike, agreed we should do it at one time, rather than drag these various projects out over 10 or more years.

I watched and listened as they got more and more excited about the possibilities and what it would mean for Lakewood. Russ did some research and he discovered that a moderately successful capital campaign could raise one to two times as much money as the church's annual budget. A moderate to very successful campaign, could raise 3 to 4 times as much as we normally do in one year.

We went for a middle number, \$400,000. No one at the table was shocked at that number. They all felt that Lakewood is at a place in our history right now that we can do this. We are financially stable. We are strong in our various ministries. We continue to grow as a church. We continue to take in new members on a regular basis. We have visitors every Sunday, many of who return week after week.

Now is the time to do this. It is our time. We believe God is calling us to do this. And I'm asking for your help. I know, for some of you \$400,000 sounds like a lot of money. But I believe Lakewood can do this in three years, maybe less. I am encouraged by this verse.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)"

The Capital Campaign Committee made me a believer. I wanted to go small and they said, "No, God is able to do this, with our help." I watched and as I listened I heard a confidence and a faith that was stronger than my own. They were leading me. They were

pushing me to believe. Now, I am a believer. I believe we can do this.

So, I'm asking for your help. To kick-off our campaign, we are seeking one or several large donations to pay for the fellowship hall. We are calling this a "Legacy Ask." You may do this in honor, or in memory, of a loved one. Perhaps the Fellowship Hall will be named in honor of that person.

Where is this money going to come from? There aren't many parishioners who have \$60,000 in their checkbook, ready to give away. I am going to give you some suggestions of money you may not have thought about giving before.

It might come from a life insurance policy. Perhaps you would consider changing the beneficiary on one of your policies to the church. Maybe you have received an inheritance in the past several years, and you have some money sitting there that you don't absolutely need. Would you consider giving it to the church?

Perhaps you have property you'd like to sell, like jewelry, artwork, a coin collection, some antiques, mineral rights, or land property. For this cause, for this season, for this purpose, would you consider making a special gift to the Fellowship Hall fund?

Perhaps you have pension or savings that you don't absolutely need. To an older person who doesn't have any children, who will you give your money to when you're gone? Have you considered making Lakewood a beneficiary in your will? – You could donate a dollar amount, or a percentage. Maybe you have an annuity that is not needed, would you consider naming Lakewood as the recipient?

Here's an idea, would you consider taking out a loan, giving the money to the church, and paying off the loan yourself? I believe there might be someone able to do that.

The church carries the greatest treasure of the world – the gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry His message of love and hope and salvation out into the world. We are securing our base of ministry for decades to come.

Remember, the church is God's house. It is the house of the Lord. The words may sound a bit antiquated and outmoded, but they are still true. When we care for and maintain the integrity and beauty of our church, we are leaving a legacy, because we are enthusiastic about the future.

Will you leave a legacy gift to Lakewood, to help secure that future? If you're interested in making such a gift, you can speak to me, or to Russ Fisher or to Bob Kostek.

And I thank you in advance. God is preparing to do great and wonderful things among the people of God at Lakewood. To Him be the glory! Amen.