

Sermon

October 21 and 22, 2006

Mark 10:35-45

Stewardship Commitment Sunday

Would you please take a look  
at our Gospel reading again—  
—from Mark.

The second paragraph.

I'll read the first verse and a half.

Then, if you would please read what Jesus said,  
(which goes to the end of the reading):

**When the ten heard this,  
they began to be angry with James and John.  
So Jesus called them and said to them,  
“You know that among the Gentiles  
those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them,  
and their great ones are tyrants over them.  
But it is not so among you;  
but whoever wishes to become great among you  
must be your servant,  
and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.  
For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,  
and to give his life a ransom for many.”**

My hope is that we might not only read the words of Jesus,  
but that our lives might reflect the love of Jesus.

What does it mean to be great?

To serve.

To give.

To live for others.

I'm a Cardinals fan.

I did not have high hopes for them this postseason.  
So it's been fun to watch them do so well.  
I try to see as much of each game as I can.  
I hope they can win some more.

It seems so great to be #1.

In fact, back in 1996,  
when the Cardinals were in the playoffs,  
there was a song they used on the radio a lot  
to promo the games.

And one of the lines was:

**I wanna win.  
We're gonna win.  
Cause #1 is everything.**

It makes me wonder.

Do we really believe that?  
At one level, I think maybe we do.

**I wanna win.  
We're gonna win.  
Cause #1 is everything.**

On the other hand,

I think of Dick Hood.

It was such shocking news of his death this week.

On Monday, we heard he would be having bypass surgery.

On Tuesday, he had the surgery.

On Wednesday and Thursday, he was doing great.

On Friday, something went wrong,  
and he died.

In the midst of the grief,

I think about the things that Dick cared about.

He wanted to help.

He was a pioneer in the bread ministry here at Good Shepherd,  
taking the bread down to Otis.

And he was so excited

telling about how happy the people were  
to receive the bread and treats.

He put the treats out here each weekend,

And the revenue went to help a Colombian family.

He saw a need in the orphans of Colombia,  
and worked to help.

Sometimes he drove us crazy

because he didn't like the rules—  
—didn't do thing by the book.

But he saw a need  
and responded.

He wanted to help.

He wanted to make a difference.

And he did.

That sounds so different to my ear  
than:

**I wanna win.**

**We're gonna win.**

**Cause #1 is everything.**

There's gotta be something more  
than winning.

There is.

The disciples were the same as you and me.

They wanted to win, too.

James and John came up to Jesus

and asked him if they could be #1.  
They were willing to share #1.  
One sitting at the right hand of Jesus,  
and one at the left.  
But they wanted to stand out  
above the rest of the disciples.  
They wanted to win.  
They wanted to be most important.  
They wanted to be #1.

And what did Jesus say?

He said:

Do you know how to be #1?  
By serving.  
Just like I came not to be served, but to serve,  
and to give my life a ransom for many.

If you reflect that,  
you'll be #1.

That's Stewardship.

We've been talking about Stewardship during October.  
We've been talking about how to use our lives in service.  
How to give always,  
in everything we do.  
Stewardship is not just about money.  
It's about our whole life.  
It's about being a servant.  
Reflecting Christ's love.  
It's about giving.

And today,

I also want to make clear that it's about money, too.  
Because money is a part of our life.  
And it's a part of our stewardship.

It's important to give of our money  
as part of our spiritual relationship with God.  
And it's important to give of our money  
so that we can share in ministry together.

I think giving 10%,  
which we call a tithe,  
is a great thing.  
It's what Ruth and I use  
as we plan our giving.  
It's what we encourage our boys,  
Brent and Brian,  
to base their giving on.

But I don't believe it's a law for us.  
I don't believe God loves us less if we don't tithe.  
I don't believe God loves us more if we give more.

So why tithe?  
Or why give at all?  
I think it shows what we trust,  
and what we care about.

Do we feel that we need to hang on to our money  
to give us security?  
Is that what we trust?

Or do we want to hang on to our money,  
because we only want to spend it on ourselves?  
Do we put ourselves at the center of everything?

Or is God at the center?  
Do our lives reflect that God is God?  
That God is our God?  
That God is Lord in our lives?

Stewardship is how we use everything in our life.  
Our time,  
our talents,  
our possessions,  
our money.

And not just 10% of our money,  
but all of our money.  
God wants us to use everything we have  
in being servants.  
In caring and sharing.

But to give 10%,  
which may not be a whole lot  
in our society,  
is a way of giving up control.  
A way of showing trust in the God  
who is in control.

One man put it this way:

**There are 3 kinds of giving:  
grudge giving, duty giving, and thanksgiving.**

**Grudge giving says,  
“I hate to,  
but I have to.”**

**Duty giving says:  
“I ought to,  
so I guess I will.”**

**Thanksgiving says:  
“I want to,  
because God loves me so much.”**

On your estimate of giving card,  
which you may have already received,  
or will today,  
it says why we give.

It says:

**In response to God's love  
and as a concrete expression  
of my relationship with Christ and His Church,  
I commit to give...**

And the theme of the Stewardship emphasis reminds us  
to LET GOD LEAD.

So, I think the key reason to give  
is to reflect your relationship with God.  
But we also give through Good Shepherd,  
so that together, as a community,  
we can make a difference.

It was fun to help create the  
2006 Highlights of Ministry page  
that we distributed last week.  
You, Good Shepherd,  
have done a lot this past year.  
You are generous.  
You are caring.  
You are fun-filled with joy.  
What a beautiful reflection of the good news.

Next year,  
we hope to continue to reach out,  
to care for one another,  
and to look beyond ourselves.  
If everything works out,  
we hope to sponsor a Habitat for Humanity house in 2007.  
Providing money and work hours

to make it happen.

In 2007,  
we hope to create a new staff position for Good Shepherd,  
to focus on our Learning Ministries,  
deepening our lives of faith.

Next year,  
we are exploring the possibility of greater involvement  
in a program called Kids Against Hunger,  
buying, packaging and sending food around the world.

Next year,  
we are expanding our small group opportunities,  
giving lots of different ways to make new friends,  
share our faith journeys,  
and develop meaningful relationships.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.  
God is calling us to continue expanding ministry in 2007.  
And your gifts of time,  
and talent,  
and money,  
help make that happen.

It is our ministry.  
Together.

I am inspired by a church in Thailand  
with about 400 members  
where each person gives 10% of his or her income.  
These people receive less than 20 cents of income a week,  
but a tenth of it goes to their church.

As a result,  
they are able to take care of their own preacher,

and have also sent 2 missionary families to remote parts of the world.  
They do all sorts of work  
for those they call the unfortunate,  
and their Christian giving is known far and wide.

But what's most amazing about this church  
is that it's not only a church.  
It's a leper colony.  
Every single member has leprosy.

With every reason to be negative,  
and every reason to feel powerless,  
they take 2 cents each a week  
and reach out to make a positive difference  
in the lives of countless others  
who are in need.

Two cents can be a lot—  
—when it's given in response to God's love.

Together,  
as a community,  
giving from the relatively immense wealth we've been given,  
we can also make a difference  
as we reflect God's love.

I challenge you to use everything God has given you  
to make a difference.

Time,  
talents,  
money.

Because God has first loved  
and given to you and to me.

Thanks be to God  
for the opportunity  
and the reason to give.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen