

Stewardship Message
Given by Meg Critchley
October 29, 2017
8 and 10 AM Services



May the Lord bless us and bless our time together. Amen.

Well, it's October. There's a member of the congregation standing at the pulpit, and our celebrant is sitting down. It must be Stewardship Sunday...also known as The Beg-A-Thon.

Please forgive my cynicism, but I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't consider myself an eloquent person. I'm not a profound thinker like Dave who spoke of the "4 D's." I'm not clever like Paul who condensed stewardship into "Time, Talent, and Treasure." And I certainly don't have John's scholarliness to research St James' history and discover our "Constancy of Purpose." In fact I think when Paul first asked me to speak on stewardship, I declined. I think my exact words were "I'd rather not."

So you're probably thinking...if she doesn't perceive herself to be eloquent and she already declined, then why is she speaking now? Well, God had other plans for me that I'd like to tell you about. Please be patient...I'm Irish. I can't make a long story short.

So the morning after I refused Paul's request, I sat down to my usual daily Bible devotion...feeling very smug that I had gotten out of the task of this stewardship talk. Now I use Our Daily Bread for my morning prayers and that morning's meditation concerned the feelings of a woman who had been asked to host a Bible Study in her home. She was very conflicted because her house wasn't large enough and she didn't have enough chairs and what if she had to prepare refreshments. But most importantly she doubted her skills to facilitate the discussion. She didn't feel up to the task; she felt inadequate...she didn't have enough to do it.

I paused during this meditation as a small voice inside me wondered if this was why I refused. Then I moved on to the Bible study portion. I was guided to read Ephesians 4. Now we've all heard Ephesians 4..."We are all parts of one body, we have the same spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism...etc." But the next phrase made me stop and it stated..."However, Christ has given each of us special abilities - whatever He wants us to have out of His rich storehouse of gifts."

Well, God wasn't done with making His point yet because I read on..."Why is it that He gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for Him, building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity; until finally we all believe alike about our salvation and about our Savior, God's son, and all become full grown in the Lord - yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ."

Okay God...I get it. I think this is what Pentecostals term "being convicted."

Now just in case I wasn't completely convinced to take on this task of the Stewardship talk...something else happened.

I walked down to St James' to set up for Sunday's Eucharist and because Cameron, our grandson, was with us for the weekend, I brought him along. I was polishing the brass and Cameron was just hanging around the Sacristy. "Grandma...what does c-o-m-m-i-t-t-e-e spell? I thought a bit, visualized the word and replied "Committee." "Oh," he said sounding disappointed. "I thought it spelled community." Ah Ha... a teachable moment! "Cameron...What does community mean?"..."Well, it's a group...like my class in school or the kids at ju jit su "...and then he paused and looked around..."or like Church." Now I know Cameron is an old soul but this was too much for me to ignore regardless of how much I did not want to give this talk.

Probably the Biblical phrase most often taken out of context is from Isaiah. "And a little child shall lead them." This doesn't mean that children will be leading adults but rather that when Jesus removes the curse of sin from our world with His resurrection, all will live in harmony. Well, out of context or not, that morning God used a little child to lead me to do His will.

So okay, we here at St James' are a community - a group of people together having the common characteristics of fellowship with others. We share common attitudes, interests, goals, and faith. And we foster the spirit of fellowship to take care of this community, our family of St James'. And like any family we have do the mundane; we have to keep the lights on and the furnace pumping out heat and a roof over our heads although the roof has become a ten year project.

We have to eat; coffee hour, family breakfast, backpack program, meals brought to the home bound, Epiphany and St Patrick's Day dinner, and most importantly the Lord's Supper that will soon be celebrated and shared with all.

We have fun; Bunco night, parades, golf outing, and even maintenance mornings can be fun. In fact, maintenance mornings are the most fun I've had in the mud since I was six! We care for others...yarn twisters, PRAY-ERS, Tree of Giving, Colonial Manor. And we have our tribulations and difficulties....managing our debt and working to call a priest. So in the next few weeks when you receive your Stewardship packet, consider prayerfully how you wish to be a part of the St. James' community. And if you feel inadequate or think that what you have to offer isn't sufficient, remember that God asks us to give what we have in faithful obedience. He is the one who makes it enough.

I would like to close with the words of St. Paul. He says things much better than I:

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."

Thank you,

Meg Critchley