

Flourish in Faith *Stewardship Narrative Series*

Proper 22 - Luke 17:5-10

Sunday, October 6, 2013

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"



God is a real world God, which means God is in the common things of this world. These common things show us God's genius and provide opportunities for our transformation.

Money is one of these things. Money is neither positive nor negative. Money is simply a tool. If the Bible says anything about money, it says that this tool, used wrongly, will wound our souls and our communities. Jesus talked a lot about money.

One indication of Christian maturity is how we handle money and how we talk about money, if at all. Sadly, too many Christian leaders and congregations have the tacit agreement, "You don't talk about money, and we won't give any."

Sadly, too many of us too frequently miss great opportunities to GROW. Jesus' friends asked him to "...increase their faith." I'll bet you Jesus just grinned with delight at that request. What a willingness to learn that request showcases!

Generosity is the learning and teaching in which the Church needs to lead the world. And we can. But Jesus can't do it for us. There are no magic words or sermons or stewardship programs. Each of us will have to be persuaded that the value we place on money is not worthy to be compared with the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

We share what we have, because everything we have is gift. We give graciously so as to bear witness to a generous God in the real world. It's always about God's abundance pouring through us! That's the evidence of us becoming new. I like the way St. Paul put it: "poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 6-10)

How do we get there? One step at a time! Begin where you are. Start with the disciples' request: Pray, "Lord, increase my faith."

Then, look at your checkbook. What does it say about your reliance on God? What does it say about your gratitude for all the blessings of this life? What does it say about your participation in building up God's kingdom in the here and now? Answer those questions honestly, and then you're ready to GROW. That's the point, after all.

Growing with God means growing to be more like God. Jesus never told us to worship him; Jesus said follow me. And in walking towards God, we find that love increases, healing increases, joy increases, generosity increases.

Practically, to grow in generosity means facing the chaos of our personal finances. It means weaning ourselves from the excesses we call necessary, while systematically working toward giving ten percent of our net income away every year.

If you're willing to partner with Jesus in this spiritual growth experiment called Stewardship, you'll find out, with St. Paul and thousands of us, that to give is to GROW, and growing is from God. And that "God loves a cheerful giver"

(2 Corinthians 9:7)



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Reflection Questions

- How are your faith and your finances connected?
- What risks are you willing to take to grow in generosity?
- How is intentional giving a way to grow towards God?