

Treasure
October 5, 2014
Homecoming Sunday

Mark 12:13-17 & 41-44

13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to entrap him in his talk. 14 And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, and let me look at it." 16 And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at him.

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

This weekend has been filled with fun. Our home team won their homecoming game! Not only that bit of excitement but we as a church are celebrating homecoming too! It is the first Sunday in October and it is when we Hooker Memorial Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) gather in fellowship as a body for worship and the delicious food that is just across the way for lunch. The purpose of homecoming in a church is that we are coming home to and celebrating where our faith foundations began. We are revisiting a place where we grew up or this place and the people here have become so central to our faith that no other church can quite feel like home. Some of us too are just here for the awesome food and I praise God that our fellowship hall is across the driveway so we are not terribly tormented by the scents of all that good stuff during worship.

Home is such an important place to all of us. It is a place of comfort a place of centrality. No matter how old we get we can walk in the doors of our parent's house and no matter how different it may be now, it still feels like and is always home.

We can in a lot of ways intrinsically understand that is it not the set up per say but the people that are there that make it home. But home, the set up and maintenance takes a lot of work and a lot of time. I think we realize this the older we get and the more we are on our own. All the little things that go into making a house a home can be overwhelming if you go at it all at once but doing things over time and continually working on it all turns that house, apartment, condo, duplex, rental, owned, whatever into our home.

We also have this place, this church home. Not just special once a year but all year round in the spiritual nurturing of our faith. We come here to learn, we come here to gather, to worship to be a part of the body of believers. We come here to have fun, to eat good food, to study the word of the Lord and to most importantly accept one another with arms open and filled with God's love and welcome each time we come in the door.

If you wander around you will see some small changes here and there to the building. One of the biggest changes has been the painting that we have begun in the education wing and as a body we have made a list of things that we need to do or would like to see happen. We have in small ways begun to look at our stewardship of this space and place for not just our congregation but for our community. Maintaining our home whether it is our personal home or our church home is important so that we can do all the things we need to do in this life. When space is usable we are better able to do ministry, when it is set up and functional we are better able to reach out and engage more together in fellowship and study. We have the space to do it in.

Stewardship of this space and place is so important because taking care of it helps make it home. Many of us know firsthand that home takes maintenance and work. Sometimes it seems a never ending battle. Many were here over the past weeks in our annual fall yard clean-up. Many of us pop in and out as time allows to do little things as our skills allow. We all have a role to play and things to give in the stewardship of our congregation and of this building.

Although it is Homecoming weekend we are not just kicking off footballs but are also kicking off our Stewardship Campaign in the life of our church. We over the next month will be exploring the different facets of stewardship. It is not just about giving of your money, your treasure to the church, but it is also about giving your talents, your time, and giving your trust into God's hands that it will all work out and come together.

So today we start with Treasure, with Money. While we can note that the things we give value or treasure in our life are not always money in light of our theme we are going to look at it through the lens of dollars and cents. We have two very well known scriptures here that of the widow giving all she had, and that of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's. In the understanding of stewardship and finances these two stories give us very different perspectives of how to give.

You see it is important to make a distinction here and recognize that one is about Tithing and the other is about Offering. Knowing the difference between tithing and offerings in the life of the church is important in our giving and in our stewardship. So often they get intermixed together in both our collection plates and in our own minds.

Tithing is giving to God what is Gods. In the traditional sense this equates to the first ten percent of our income. Say we made 100.00 each week that means 10.00 which is 10% goes to God. This can be difficult in our world when our expenditures often mean we live paycheck to paycheck and it is difficult to pay our bills let alone give to the church. So how do we give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's?

In the spirit of Christ knowledge and understanding he did not give us a hard and fast rule for what to tithe it is more about the spiritual discipline of tithing. Giving consistently and with intention. Jesus was very clear about engaging in good Stewardship of whatever we held be it vineyard, household, or church. Jesus expected and called us to Give to God what is God's. It is not always 10%. Sometimes that can be a financial struggle and we should feel no guilt in that but it is important to set aside and budget for giving.

Right now a trend to teach children about giving is using Mason Jars. You know you set up three jars marked, Save, Give, and Spend. So the youth/child will for every bit of money they earn realize what it is to not just put it all in one particular jar. This is a trend we can and probably should carry into adulthood.

But as adults we live with a lot of guilt about our giving. We feel bad that we can not give as much or enough or that we forgot. We instead of remembering this story of Giving to Caesar and Giving to God we often focus on the Story of the Poor Widow who gave her last two pennies. Then we live with the guild that we held onto our last couple of pennies.

Here is the reality of that story, it is not meant to make us feel guilty for saving for a rainy day or putting money aside for a family vacation. It is a story about offerings. Giving above and beyond our tithing even to our last couple of cents. That is the difference between tithing and offerings. Tithing is what we set aside specifically and give out of spiritual discipline. Offerings are the above and beyond our tithing and while offerings are also a spiritual discipline it is not that we have to give above and beyond every week. But Jesus saw with the poor widow how it was the spirit of offering everything to God that meant the most. For her it was to her last two pennies for some of us we might need those two pennies for next months taxes so we offer our time, or our talents giving other things we have to God in offering.

Tithing and Offerings whether they are our money, that treasure, or our time, or our talents help to transform this place from a building into our church home. They help make church possible every week and give us opportunities to share the Good News outside these walls. Amen.